



Guidance to GNS and community groups in response to people offering their services as volunteers during the Coronavirus outbreak

Current information surrounding Coronavirus is constantly changing and therefore Action in rural Sussex recommend that everyone should follow all guidance issued by Public Health England and the NHS and keep abreast of the ever-changing situation.

We (AirS) will endeavour to keep updated on the changing advice and support being issued and will pass this on to you at regular intervals. Underpinning all this will be the official advice given out by the UK Government and NHS England.

Most GNS schemes and groups are responding to this crisis admirably. However, there are some common themes and concerns emerging. We will do our best to try and help groups manage these issues by sharing ideas and advice being circulated.

One of the (positive) challenges that a lot of groups are facing is an influx of new volunteers as many people have been contacting them to offer their services. There are also many local initiatives springing up in many areas, which, while demonstrating the resilience and true community spirit, can lead to difficulties in how best to co-ordinate and manage these new resources, bearing in mind that the safety of clients within the community is paramount.

Recruitment Policy - Photo ID / proof of address: The essential thing is to ensure that no one is put at risk. Schemes allocating volunteers will need details of the individual volunteers. Most schemes will already have their recruitment policy in place which will include the completion of an application form with proof of name, address and date of birth being confirmed via original copies. It may be easiest to follow the procedure already in use, although this may be streamlined if this can be done appropriately.

DBS checks: The best practice is for groups to follow DBS check guidelines as they have always done. Volunteers (including the influx of new recruits) working directly with vulnerable individuals within the community should be considered for a DBS check.

Whilst bypassing this process might seem tempting in these difficult times, if a volunteer is acting under your umbrella and someone in need has contacted you for support, you still hold responsibility for putting them in touch with each other.

Of course most people are genuine and it is the minority of people who look to exploit others for their own gain. However, it is known that there are numerous reports of fraudulent behaviour and scams and, whilst this is not new, the current situation provides additional opportunities for this type of behaviour. It is important to warn vulnerable people about potential scams, without scaring them. Confidence in your Good Neighbour Scheme is priceless.

In summary, and considering that self-isolating is a situation likely to go on for some time, we recommend following your usual processes, even if you don't wait for DBS checks to be completed before allowing volunteers to take on certain roles. Contact DBS@eastsussex.gov.uk for details/advice

It is worth knowing that shopping for someone due to their age, illness or disability is specifically referred to in the governments DBS guide for adult workforce roles for registered bodies and employers as an eligible reason to request a DBS check

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-workforce-guidance>

However, we have been advised that "if a volunteer is carrying out a **delivery** role for example where they will be leaving goods at the door, as is a common sense approach then there is no need for a DBS and a DBS should not be applied for".

Obviously we are in an unprecedented situation. We will continue to check government information and update this on our website www.ruralsussex.org.uk. In the meantime we wanted to make you aware of this and hope that potential volunteers who find this frustrating will still support people they know already, until you are satisfied with the checks you've made.

The type of additional requests from self-isolating community members may include: shopping; collection of prescriptions and social contact. Due to the Government guidance on social distancing it may also be worth reviewing tasks that volunteers undertake and consider how they could be carried out to minimise social contact. For example, shopping can be left on the door step whilst the volunteer rings the bell and retreats to a safe distance. Or social contact could be made via the telephone or skype rather than face to face.

Finances: It is possible that groups may need to spend money in order to meet the developing needs of the community (for example on DBS checks for new volunteers; to update equipment etc). Airs holds some funds to support GNS start up and development so please contact us if you need this kind of assistance.

Insurance for schemes: Contact individual insurers for advice if the system for recruitment or scheme is being altered in any way likely to affect the terms of the policy.

Confidentiality: Not all new volunteers will know of the importance of this. It may be worth ensuring that people coming into volunteering are aware of the importance of confidentiality to avoid them inadvertently passing on information about vulnerable people within the community. As we are all aware, this could lead to the individual being compromised in many ways.

Associated Risk:

Volunteers contracting the virus/passing it on: the Government advice is available to all and AirS website provides information: <http://www.ruralsussex.org.uk/>

It is important to keep up to date on the latest levels of risk and how best to manage them.

We have been specifically asked about car schemes and whether these should continue. As far as we are aware there is no absolute ban on this but some thought needs to be given to the risk of passing on the virus. The following protocol is being used by some schemes so may be helpful.


Volunteer drivers: Close proximity of drivers/passengers and air circulation within the cars require serious consideration and need to be taken into account when dealing with requests.

- If the drivers are under 70 , are fit and well and showing no signs of the virus– it is up to them to decide if they want to volunteer their services
- The clients need to be symptom free
- Both drivers and clients need to wash hands prior to leaving home and hand sanitise etc
- Have hand sanitiser in car and use
- Have spare box of tissues in car in case client has forgotten and needs them
- Have a bag in car to collect used tissues safely
- Wipe down the car regularly (door handles etc..)
- For Hospital trips – ideally drop client at the door
- Always use hand sanitisers more than usual in hospitals
- If using wheel chairs – wipe handles with sanitisers

Ongoing support and advice: We would like to invite the lead volunteers from each good neighbour and befriending scheme in Sussex to be part of a Facebook networking and support group.

In order to do this, you would need to become a friend of Petrina AIRS (our Chief Executive), on Facebook by making a friend request. We would then invite you to become part of the group. We have decided to limit the group to lead volunteers so that the discussions on it are relevant to you and it becomes a place where you can ask questions, share your experience, gain new ideas and support each other. AIRS would be the administrator for the group, and also offer support. You could leave at any time if it does not feel useful or relevant to you.

To join

1. In the search box type Petrina airs sussex. You'll see our log  next to the name.
2. Click on the name to open our page.
3. Click Add Friend.
4. We'll accept you and then invite you to join the group.

If you have any difficulties joining the group, please contact Village agent: Karen Laver on 07854 249014 or email karen.laver@ruralsussex.org.uk

If you do not use Facebook but would like to be part of an online network, please let us know.

Please do stay safe and take care.

Action in rural Sussex – Village Agent Team