

DBS Checks for community volunteers during COVID-19 outbreak

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Adapted from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-factsheet-community-volunteers-during-covid-19-outbreak>

Also extracted from the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012)

DBS Checks for community volunteers during COVID-19 outbreak Frequently Asked Questions for Community Groups

When organising a community volunteer group

DBS checks are just one tool to help you keep people safe.

We advise you check photo ID for every volunteer to ensure they are who they say they are.

We also advise that you seek at least one reference.

Ensure your group follows precautions such as working safely in pairs, keeping records of money spent and providing shopping receipts to safeguard all involved. *If they are not from the same household, volunteers must stay two metres apart at all times.*

Please remember that gatherings of more than two people in public are currently banned, with these measures being enforced by the police. It may be advisable to provide your volunteers with some documentation to show that they are making a legitimate journey.

1. I would like to set up a community group where volunteers can offer to provide meals or pick up prescriptions for those unable to leave their homes. Do I need to carry out Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks on the volunteers?

No, there is no legal requirement for you to carry out DBS checks on volunteers

2. I'm organising a group of volunteers. I understand that there isn't a legal requirement for me to have my volunteers DBS checked, but should I do so anyway?

Many of the roles that volunteers will carry out in their local communities do not raise safeguarding issues and do not need a DBS check. Under normal circumstances we would advise that having volunteers DBS checked is a prudent safeguarding step **but there is no legal requirement for you to have a DBS check.**

3. Could councils or other local organisations which regularly use DBS services work with my community group to make checks?

Yes, there will be opportunity for organisations that regularly use DBS services to submit checks on behalf of new community groups. But a DBS check alone does not mean someone is suitable for volunteering work. It is important that good safeguarding practice and awareness continues.

4. Are organisations and their staff/volunteers able to change the activities they are doing to meet community needs without asking for new DBS checks?

Note: Adapted from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-factsheet-community-volunteers-during-covid-19-outbreak>

DBS checks are applicable to the **group of people** a volunteer or employee is going to be working with, such as children or vulnerable adults.

For example, if someone usually drives adults to and from hospital, but they are now also helping with shopping, a new DBS check would not be needed.

Remember - You should only leave the house to help a vulnerable person when absolutely necessary.

5. Are DBS checks transferrable between the organisation that obtained it and the new voluntary group or charity?

If someone has a check from a previous role then voluntary groups can make a practical decision about accepting this. Although ordinarily a check for a role with children would not be sufficient for working with adults, groups may consider this is a reasonably safe thing in the circumstances.

Some individuals may have linked their DBS check to the Update Service, which shows whether their certificate is still valid or if there is new information that could be disclosed.

6. How long do DBS checks last for?

DBS checks do not have an expiry date.

In the case of new voluntary or community groups, we suggest that if a check is older than three years a decision should be made based on the individual and the role they will be carrying out.

7. Would a volunteer in my group be eligible for a DBS check if they visit a house where a child or vulnerable adult, e.g. someone with dementia, lives?

It is important to remember that Public Health England guidance is to practice social distancing and limit contact with others.

Simply entering someone's home would not make someone eligible to be asked for a DBS check.

REMEMBER Everyone must stay at home, except for very limited purposes. If you are providing care or to help a vulnerable person, you should still be following social distancing rules where possible.

DBS Checks and Community volunteers during COVID-19 outbreak Frequently Asked Questions for Individuals

1. I would like to volunteer to help those in my street who are unable to leave their homes by delivering shopping or walking their dogs. Do I need a DBS Check?

No, there is no legal requirement for you to have a DBS Check

2. What if I have a criminal record? Will that stop me from volunteering?

If you have a criminal record you can still volunteer for most roles. The only people who are legally prevented from volunteering with children and vulnerable adults are those who have been barred from doing so. If you have been barred by DBS from certain types of work, then you would be committing an offence by trying to do that work.

3. Do I need a DBS check if I'm helping with personal care, such as washing and dressing?

If you are helping in this way for a friend or family member, then you don't apply for a DBS check. **However, it is not expected that community volunteers will be offering personal care to strangers. These activities should be provided by professionals.**

If someone requires that type of personal care and they don't have the necessary services in place, you should help them to contact the appropriate health and social care services.

4. My DBS check has recently expired. Do I need to apply for a new one?

As DBS checks do not have an expiry date, speak with the organisation that you are going to be volunteering for.

5. Do I need a DBS check if I'm helping with medical care?

Medical care should only be provided by professionals, or specialist volunteers with the appropriate skills, training and checks.

More detailed Information on DBS checks

Eligibility for DBS Checks

There are 6 activities defined as 'Regulated Activity' that are eligible for an Enhanced DBS check (that includes an Adults' Barred List Check):

1. Providing Healthcare by a health care professional

- But not a volunteer e.g. A worker employed for another purpose who volunteers, or is designated, to be that organisation's first aider is not in regulated activity. E.g. a person working in a shop whose role includes being a first aider is not engaging in regulated activity.
- All staff who work in community pharmacies and opticians who are not regulated health care professionals will be excluded from regulated activity. For example, a person who works in a high street pharmacy providing health advice to customers over the pharmacy counter will not be in regulated activity

2. Providing Personal Care

- A beauty therapist who attends a day care centre once a week and provides manicures for anyone who would like one, instead of for people who need them because of their age, illness or disability, is not engaging in regulated activity.
- A volunteer who prepares and serves a meal to an adult in their own home (but does not feed the adult) is not engaging in regulated activity. To be engaged in regulated activity you must provide physical assistance e.g. spoon feeding

3. Providers of Social Work to clients

4. Assistance with General Household Matters

- a. Anyone who provides day to day assistance that includes at least one of the following, is in regulated activity:
 - a) managing the person's cash b) paying the person's bills, c) shopping on their behalf.
- A volunteer who collects shopping lists and the cash to pay for the shopping from older adults' homes would be engaging in regulated activity.

5. Assistant in the Conduct of a Person's Own Affairs

- c. E.g. Power of Attorney or Mental Capacity Advocate

Note: Extracted from the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012)

6. Conveying

- Any drivers and any assistants who transport an adult because of their age, illness or disability to or from health care are in regulated activity. The driver does, or the person assists in, such conveying on behalf of an organisation and for the purpose of enabling the adult to receive services
 - A volunteer who takes an adult to and from their GP appointment on behalf of a community group is in regulated activity. It would not matter if that person knows, or is friends with, the adult they were taking to the appointment if the conveying is on behalf of the group.
 - A friend who takes their neighbour to a hospital appointment would not be in regulated activity, as this is a personal relationship.