

FAQ's for volunteers and potential volunteers during the Covid-19 pandemic

We have put together the following information to help people who are already volunteers and anyone who wants to help out during the current Covid-19 pandemic

I am already a volunteer what should I do?

In the first instance you should contact the organization you volunteer with to find out if they are still open and whether you should attend your normal place of volunteering. If you are still required it is likely that your volunteer role will change, for example you may be asked to contact service users by phone rather than face-to-face, or if possible you may be asked to work remotely.

It is also likely that organisations will require volunteers to do new and different roles, please consider what roles are available and whether you would be able to help out.

I'm not currently a volunteer what can I do to help?

If you are not currently volunteering but would like to help out then thank you, that is fantastic. Our advice is very simple: **Think and act locally!** Basic neighbourliness is absolutely vital in a crisis, whether it is extreme weather or coronavirus. There are many ways in which you can make a real impact right where you live:

Check on neighbours, especially anyone who may live alone (regardless of their age), anyone elderly or anyone that may be potentially vulnerable. If someone is self-isolating or unable to get out for whatever reason – can you help by doing practical yet vital tasks such as:

- Collecting a prescription or over the counter medications that may be needed.
- Doing some basic grocery shopping.
- If you are making a meal offer to make a portion for someone who may not be feeling able to cook for themselves.
- Take their bins out on bin day.
- Offering to exercise their dog if they have one and are not able to do this themselves.

It is often the little acts of kindness that have the most impact.

When will I be needed?

The current Government advice it is likely that this situation will be ongoing for several months. Please be prepared that your help may not be required immediately, but over the coming weeks and months it is likely that you will be needed at some point.

What if I don't know my neighbours?

This is your chance to connect with them! Pop a note through their letterbox, exchange contact details and keep in touch. Just as you may be able to support them, they can support you if you have to self-isolate at any time. If there isn't anyone in your immediate area that requires help, check noticeboards in your local area for anyone looking for help, or look on online forums such as [Nextdoor](#), [Helpfulpeeps](#) or the [Gumtree](#) community pages. We have listed some Edinburgh specific pages and groups further down this document.

I want to help but I want to protect myself too

Please follow the latest [Scottish Government](#) and [NHS Scotland](#) health advice at all times. We would ask that you make sensible decisions and minimise the risk to your own and others health at all times.

If you are unable to help at this time, remember that your help may be needed in the weeks to come.

I don't know anyone older?

It is not just elderly people who can feel lonely and isolated. Check on all neighbours who may need help, or who are having to self-isolate. There will be neighbours around you who are living on their own and may not have a network of friends to call on. If you are having to self-isolate and have no one to help you, it doesn't matter what age you are.

I want to do more than just help neighbours?

We understand that many people would like to do much more. While this situation develops rapidly other opportunities will emerge where there is a clear need for volunteers. We will be updating this page and our website continually and highlighting where there is a need for help. It is also important to remember that to minimize exposure and spread people should limit travel, therefore helping in your immediate neighbourhood is a fantastic way to make a difference.

How can I use social media?

Firstly, please share this information far and wide with anyone who may be thinking about volunteering or helping out during the current situation.

There are a number of local groups which have been set up to try and coordinate those willing to help out and match them with people who may need a bit of extra support.

So far we are aware of the following groups:

- [Corona Volunteering Edinburgh](#) Facebook page
- [Page to help find local groups and volunteers by postcode](#) - Facebook
- [Coronavirus support EH11 East](#) - Facebook
- [EH6 Coronavirus Support Network](#) - Nextdoor

There are more groups and pages being set up all the time so please keep an eye out for other pages. We will try keep this page updated with new groups as best we can.

What if I find out someone needs help?

In the first instance ask, "What can I do to help?" There may be a need which you can help with directly for example phoning a utility company on someone's behalf, contacting a local foodbank, or doing a delivery for them.

If you have concerns for someone's welfare please refer to the information below:

In an emergency

If the crisis is life threatening, call **999**.

If you are worried about someone who is ill, call NHS 24 on **111**.

Urgent social care or someone at risk of harm

If someone needs urgent social care or you think an adult or child needs protection call Social Care Direct on **0131 200 2324**

In the evening and at weekends or public holidays, you can call Emergency Social Work, free of charge from a landline. Your mobile phone provider may charge for 0800 calls. **0800 731 6969**.

Monday to Thursday 5pm to 8.30am, weekends from Friday 3.55pm to Monday 8.30am.

What other activities can I do?

If you are unable to help an individual directly, there are other things you could do to help out in the local community, for example;

- Litter picking - take a bin bag and some gloves on a walk and pick up litter while you go.
- Encourage others to stay active with online exercise classes which can be done from home.
- Revive the lost art of letter writing – send a message to someone who lives a bit further away, and even include a nice photo.
- Microvolunteering – have a look at this [list](#) of informal volunteering opportunities (N.B some of these may be currently unavailable.)
- Take an online course and learn something new – please see the list at the end of this document for some ideas.

Useful links

[Coronavirus and your wellbeing](#)

[Looking after your mental health during the Coronavirus outbreak](#)

[Coronavirus and claiming benefits](#)

FREE online education resources:

BBC Learning

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/coursesearch/>



This site is old and no longer updated and yet there's so much still available, from language learning to BBC Bitesize for revision. No TV licence required except for content on BBC iPlayer.

Crash Course

<https://thecrashcourse.com>

You Tube videos on many subjects

Tinkercad

<https://www.tinkercad.com>

All kinds of making.

British Council

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/find>

Resources for English language learning

Digital Unite

<https://digitalunite.com/technology-guides>

Offers free (easy to use) guides on digital skills

Goodwill Community Foundation (GFC)

<http://www.gcflearnfree.org/computers>

Offers free online computer training (very basic to intermediate level)

Includes Computer Basics, typing tutorials, understanding the basics – from getting to know computers / operating systems / apps / web apps and the cloud, to getting to grips with a desktop computer and mobile devices, connecting to the internet, computer safety and maintenance, and basic troubleshooting tips.

Futurelearn

<https://www.futurelearn.com>

Offers free access hundreds of courses (you only need to pay to upgrade if you'd like a certificate in your name (own account from age 14+ but younger learners can use a parent account)).

Open Learn

<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/>

Free taster courses aimed at those considering Open University but everyone can access it. Adult level, but some e.g. nature and environment courses could well be of interest to young people.

Udemy

<https://www.udemy.com/>

great selection of courses, some free, some reasonably priced. I've been doing quite a few Udemy courses (including restorative yoga, voice warm-ups and techniques amongst others) I love the accessible format, short videos, easy downloads, own pace, no pressure.

Duolingo for learning languages

<https://www.duolingo.com>

Learn languages for free. Web or app.

Ted Ed

<https://ed.ted.com>

Lots of engaging educational videos: watch – think – dig deeper - discuss



And of course, TED talks "stir your curiosity"
<https://www.ted.com/talks>

Please get in touch if you have any other ideas, we will be updating this page and are happy to share any suggestions.