**Welcome document for volunteers**

First, thank you so much for joining in the community response to support local people who are affected by the Corona-19 Virus outbreak. Your time, and community spirit, are very gratefully acknowledged and received by all of us in the voluntary sector in Bexley. The Bexley Volunteer Centre has created a [Volunteer Hub](https://bvsc.co.uk/covid-19), to provide information and to link those that would like to support the volunteering effort, with the charities, community groups and residents that need help. This information is provided to support the work that local charities are doing and does not in any way detract from, or over-ride, the instructions given to you by the charity that you are working with.

Safety

First, it is essential that you keep yourself and the person you are volunteering with, safe during your volunteering service. Do not volunteer in direct contact with other people if you have any symptoms of Covid-19, or have been in contact with anyone who does. Telephone volunteering, if you feel well enough, and your allocated charity agrees, should be fine. This is vitally important to help to reduce the transmission of the illness in line with advice from Public Health England and Gov.co.uk. Details of key guidance on the Covid -19 outbreak can be found on the Government website here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

Simple acts, like frequent, thorough, hand washing, keeping a good distance away from individuals who may be unwell, and dropping shopping at the door of people who are unwell are sensible precautions to restrict the spread of infection.

Support for you

What you should expect when you join an organisation to volunteer:

* You should be given a named member of staff (usually your volunteer co-ordinator) who will support you through your volunteering journey and help you with any training and queries you might have.
* All should give you details of what your volunteering role will be and support you to carry it out. If you have any questions (or are unhappy with what you are being asked to do) then please do talk to them about it. Please see information about specific policies below.
* Most will have expenses policies so if this is important to you, please check what is offered (many, but not all, will be able to offer reasonable expenses such as travel, subject to the production of receipts)
* Organisations should also have problem solving policies that will be given to you, in the event that things are not going smoothly and you need to talk to someone for help.

If you need any support or help with your volunteering, you should, in the first instance, refer to the organisation that you are volunteering with. However, if there are any problems that can’t be resolved in this way, we are here to help you at the Volunteer Centre in Bexley. Our core working hours are 10-4 Monday to Friday and we can be contacted on 0300 302 0056**,** so do please call us if you need advice or support.

Lone Working

Many volunteers may be volunteering alone, so it is important that you follow the lone working policy of the organisation you are volunteering with. If the role requires it a copy will be provided by your volunteer co-ordinator. However, as general advice it would be sensible to:

* Ensure you check in with someone at the start and end of your session
* Have your ID badge on display throughout the session (if provided)
* Ensure you always have a working and fully charged mobile phone
* Have emergency contact numbers to hand

Training

It is wonderful that this community response to difficulty is so well supported. Working together, we will do a great deal of good through delivering food, and other provisions etc. However, please remember that we are all still required to work and volunteer within current legislative practice. At minimum, to protect yourself, the person you volunteer with, and the charity you are helping, you will need training in a few simple basics that are required throughout the voluntary sector so that everyone is protected as far as possible.

* Data protection: This means keeping all personal details and information about people you are helping, both safely and securely. Do not share them with anyone other than your volunteer co-ordinator. So, for example, it is ok to tell other people that you are helping an elderly person with their shopping, but not ok to say which elderly person it is, or where they live.
* This also applies to social media posts, no selfies with the person you are helping. Because you are in a privileged position, an individual might feel that they have to give consent if you ask whether they would be happy to be on your Facebook feed etc., so please don’t ask.
* Respect and anti-discrimination issues: Bexley is full of lovely people and we would hope that you will all automatically be treating each other well. The fact that you are volunteering to help other people says a lot about your consideration and respect for others. Given this, I know you will understand that it is important to honour the letter and spirit of the law on these matters. All organisations will have policies around these issues. It is important that you read and follow these carefully.
* Safeguarding: please see the document at Annex 1. Your organisation is also likely to give you instructions on how to deal with an issue that may need a safeguarding response, or you are worried about someone’s wellbeing. There will be a variety of responses that might be appropriate in many situations and it is important to follow the guidance directly. As a volunteer coming through the Volunteer Centre in Bexley, we expect you to be sure that you have read, and comply with, the safeguarding information contained in Annex 1 to this welcome sheet.

**And Finally….**

Enjoy your volunteering. Laugh, have fun, and help to build our community resilience with every small and large step your take. You’re doing a great job everyone. Thank you for volunteering 😊

Please note that this is a community response and you should continue at all times to follow the advice being given by Public Health England, which can be found here: [https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england&sa=D&ust=1584358611411000&usg=AFQjCNFsaZrVb1cWkZiTi6hfNzhaU85Hvg)

Annex 1

Safeguarding Guidance for Working with Vulnerable People During the Covid-19 Community Response

Background

This is a simple guide to help you to understand what is expected of you when working with vulnerable adults. Please also follow the health advice at page 1 of this information. You must agree that you will comply with this guidance if you wish to volunteer through the Bexley Volunteer Centre Community Hub response to Covid-19.

Safeguarding is an umbrella term that means both “promoting welfare” and “protecting from harm”. The Care Act 2014 puts adult safeguarding onto a statutory footing meaning that local authorities have legal duties under a number of headings to ensure that adults, as well as children, within their community are safe, and to make the right enquiries if concerns are raised about the welfare of an individual or group of individuals (further information can be found here: [www.safeguardingadultsinbexley.com](http://www.safeguardingadultsinbexley.com/))

If you volunteer for longer periods with this group of people you will be expected to undertake at minimum, training to level 1 Safeguarding Adults, which will be organised by your organisation.

What is safeguarding?

It is very unlikely that you will come across a safeguarding issue while you are volunteering but we want you to know how to keep people safe, and what to do if a situation arises. Safeguarding is an umbrella term which means protecting people in our community who may be vulnerable to harm from others (or themselves), for a variety of reasons. Anyone could become vulnerable to harm at any time through their lives. There are legal responsibilities attached to safeguarding which are there to protect us all. We are all responsible for safeguarding other people, but some people when working or volunteering may be more likely to come across people who are at risk, and therefore may need more information and guidance about how to act, and what to do if an apparent problem presents.

We have a duty of care towards everyone who is helped by our services and organisations we signpost them to, and believe that it is unacceptable for any child or adult to experience any kind of abuse. Given the potential vulnerability of some people who use volunteer services, our duty towards them is enhanced. Therefore, we must put in place measures to keep them safe, and this policy forms part of that work. The policy covers all volunteers.

**Definition of a Child**

The Children Act 1989 defines a child as anyone who has not reached their 18th birthday. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital, in prison or in a Young Offenders Institution does not change his or her status or entitlement to service or protection.

**Definition of an Adult at Risk**

We take our definition of an adult at risk from the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) interpretation: ***‘people who, because of issues such as dementia, learning disability, mental ill-health or substance abuse, have care and support needs that may make them more vulnerable to abuse or neglect.’***This may include people who:

* *are elderly and frail due to ill health, physical disability or cognitive impairment*
* *have a learning disability*
* *have a physical disability and/or a sensory impairment*
* *have mental health needs including dementia or a personality disorder*
* *have a long-term illness/condition*
* *misuse substances or alcohol*
* *are a carer such as a family member/friend who provides personal assistance and care to adults and is subject to abuse*
* *are unable to demonstrate the capacity to make a decision and is in need of care and support.*

*(This list is not exhaustive.)*

We are committed to keeping the people we work with safe from harm. Such harm can take many forms; again, we use definitions from SCIE:

* Physical abuse
* Domestic violence or abuse
* Sexual abuse
* Psychological or emotional abuse
* Financial or material abuse
* Modern slavery
* Neglect and acts of omission
* Discriminatory abuse
* Organisational or institutional abuse
* Self-neglect

Further information on signs and indicators of abuse can be found at [www.scie.org.uk/safeguarding/adults/introduction/types-and-indicators-of-abuse](http://www.scie.org.uk/safeguarding/adults/introduction/types-and-indicators-of-abuse)

We are also committed to ensuring that the following values underpin our work with people who use our services;

* Respect - for the individual’s needs, opinions, wishes, choices, culture, race and religion
* Dignity
* Independence – to make their own decisions and take their own actions
* Equality – please see your organisation’s Equal Opportunities Policy
* Choice – to have the right to make their own choices and be given information enabling this decision making
* Welfare – the welfare of children and young people or adults at risk is paramount
*

**Meeting the duty of care**

All suspicions and allegations of abuse must be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately and this is how you should handle things:

**Procedure for dealing with concerns**

This procedure is not intended to frighten people. You are unlikely to ever come across a situation where you have safeguarding concerns. However, it is important to know what to do if the situation arises.

If you believe someone is in immediate danger you should call the police on 999.

If someone discloses information to you that suggests abuse is, or has, taken place:

* Listen carefully to what you are being told and reassure the person that you are taking what they say seriously.
* Do not agree to keep what you are told a secret – you cannot do this. Explain to them that you will have to pass the information on. If possible, name the person you will pass the information to.
* Allow the person to talk in their own words. Don’t interrupt, finish sentences for them or ask leading questions.
* As soon as possible, write down what you have seen or heard. Use the person’s own words rather than your own interpretation of what they said. Include any details about time, place and circumstances. If you have seen any injuries note their location and appearance. If you have witnessed an incident identify anyone else who was there at the time. Sign and date your report, noting the time and the location, and keep it securely either on line or in a locked cupboard.
* It is important that you do not damage any evidence so please do not wash clothing etc..
* Report what has happened to your organisation’s designated safeguarding lead. Do not discuss what you have been told with anyone else unless it is as part of an official investigation.

**Procedure for handling reports**

If an incident or concern is reported and a person is believed to be in immediate danger, or a crime has been committed, the appropriate emergency services must be called.

If for some reason you do not believe you can talk to someone within the organisation you should contact the London Borough of Bexley’s Adult Social Care or Children’s Social Care teams on 020 8303 7777 .

**Volunteers**

If you are a volunteer and have concerns – e.g. about the behaviour of someone else – you must raise them with your organisational contact. Never assume that if there is a problem someone else will have noticed and act. It is the responsibility of us all to keep people safe. If for some reason you do not believe you can talk to someone within the organisation you should contact the London Borough of Bexley Social Services: [www.safeguardingadultsinbexley.com](http://www.safeguardingadultsinbexley.com/)

For further information you can also contact the London Borough of Bexley Safeguarding Team on 0208 303 7777
The safeguarding Contact Centre based at the Bexley Civic Offices is open to take calls between 8.00am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday. Outside these hours and on Sundays and Bank Holidays, in emergency only, please contact their Out of Hours Duty Service on 0208 303 7171.Wider information on safeguarding in Bexley can also be found here: <https://carehub.bexley.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/help/safe/adabuse>

Additionally, the following services are here to help:

Ring Bexley Contact Centre on:
0203 045 5159; where trained professionals will assist you with your concern, or using data protection processes at all times, email bexleycare.spc@nhs.net

* Mental Health Teams 01322 356 100
* Mental Health (out of hours) 0845 608 0525
* Metropolitan Police 999 or 101
* Care Quality Commission 03000 616 161