

Safeguarding and DBS Factsheet: FAQs – For Groups

This FAQ document is designed to address specific concerns that people involved in supporting their community may have at this time.

We know that many people will want to volunteer to support their local communities, either individually or as part of an organised group. There are many ways to help, but it is important it is done safely for all involved. The [‘how to help safely’ guidance](#) explains this.

It is vital to remember that you must stay home to protect the NHS and save lives, except for very limited purposes. While you can still provide care or help to a vulnerable person, you must avoid all non-essential contact. Check [NHS guidance](#).

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. You can have a look at the [DBS eligibility guidance](#) to confirm whether the activities your group propose to do are captured.

If your group’s activities are captured, under normal circumstances we would advise that having volunteers DBS checked is a prudent safeguarding step. There is, however, no legal requirement for you to have a DBS check. Regardless of whether you choose to have volunteers DBS checked, you should ensure your group follow simple, practical 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.

I want to carry out DBS checks on volunteers who are carrying out activities that are eligible, such as looking after children or providing help with washing and dressing vulnerable people. Who should pay for the checks?

Day-to-day contact with other people should be reduced to reduce the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19). **Personal care of this sort should only be provided by professionals, or specialist volunteers with the appropriate skills, training and checks.**

Standard or enhanced applications that meet the DBS definition of a volunteer are free-of-charge. To qualify as a volunteer:

- you must not receive any payment or allowances for carrying out an activity, other than travel or out-of-pocket expenses and
- the activity must benefit a third party other than, or as well as a family member.

For more details about applying, please see [how to obtain a DBS check](#).

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

Yes, please contact the [Volunteer Centre Dorset](#) for advice and guidance. They can if necessary apply on behalf of your group.

However, in order to submit a DBS check it is essential that someone is making decisions about whether people are suitable to carry out certain activities. It is important to note that on its own, the DBS check does not mean someone is suitable for volunteering work. It is important that good safeguarding practice and awareness continues, even during these circumstances.

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

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. If the same person now wishes to supervise children, then the organisation should assess this change in role and consider whether a new DBS check is appropriate.

If someone who has been working in a nursery wishes to help in a school, for example, then a practical decision can be made about accepting their current certificate for the new role.

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

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

If someone has a check from their current or previous role with children or adults, then new voluntary groups can make a practical decision about accepting this for their new role. 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 to do, based on the information on the check and the surrounding 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.

Please remember that gatherings of more than two people in public are currently banned, with these measures being enforced by the police.

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

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older than three years a decision should be made based on the individual and the role they will be carrying out.

Please remember that gatherings of more than two people in public are currently banned, with these measures being enforced by the police.

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. However, some activities, such as helping someone with their personal care needs (like washing or bathing, or helping someone with eating their meals), may mean a DBS check should be done. The [DBS eligibility tool](#) will help you work out if what you are doing is eligible for a check.

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

Dorset Coordinated Community Response - Information

There has been a fantastic response from Dorset's Communities to COVID-19 and many people have signed up to volunteer their help.

If you would like to volunteer your support, are part of a community group that would like to offer their support or a group that needs help maintaining volunteers, you can sign up with the Volunteer Centre Dorset.

Registering your interest to volunteer- Visit [Community Volunteer Signup Form](#)
Registering your community group- Visit [Voluntary Organisations Information](#)

Do you know someone who may need support?

Dorset Council have set up a special web page to help people find key information, this includes contact details for [Age UK](#) (North, South & West Dorset) who are coordinating requests for help with issues relating to loneliness, medication or food and [Citizens Advice](#) for help with benefits, debt, employment advice. These details can be found on: [Dorset Council Coordinated Community Response](#) page.

Are you a Community Group that needs help? - Keep up to date here with [Dorset Community Action](#)'s guidance, links and free webinar sessions.

Promoting Your Group or Finding Local Groups –

[Help & Kindness](#) have set up an easy search directory of local groups and businesses offering support.