

The Importance of Volunteering in Winter



DOING GOOD DOES YOU GOOD



Volunteer *Centre*
Dorset

Agenda

- Quick Overview of Volunteer Centre Dorset
- What is loneliness?
- Why is loneliness more apparent in winter?
- Christmas and Winter
- Volunteering roles in winter
- Volunteering safely in winter
- Next Steps
- Useful Links



Quick Overview

- Volunteer Centre Dorset (VCD) supports volunteers and charitable organisations across Dorset. We are passionate about all things volunteering! Whether you are an individual looking for a fulfilling voluntary role, or an organisation needing volunteers, we can help.
- We believe that there is a volunteering role for everyone, irrespective of age, background, ability, or health, and we will find the best role that suits you. We love to promote opportunities for all, you will see us out and about across Dorset inspiring people in our community to get volunteering.
- The aim of the Volunteer Centre is to support individuals find rewarding volunteering opportunities and help them through this role. We also help charitable organisations gain volunteers and support them in looking after their volunteers, whether this is through general guidance or offering training courses to the organisation and their volunteers.
- We also offer services, including a wide variety of training courses, DBS checks and ID badges.



Quick Overview

- Since Lockdown in March this year, we have had over 2,000 volunteer register through the centre and we have been placing them with individuals, community groups and specific tasks such as assisting at the Household Recycling Centres, Flu Clinics etc
- We have been part of the coordinated community response, working in partnership with Dorset Council, Age UK etc
- We handle referrals from Dorset Council and are responsible for the distribution of emergency food parcels
- We're also working with the numerous community groups who have set up as a result of this pandemic. We are in awe of the work the groups are doing and are supporting this by being a point of contact for questions, helping recruit volunteers and we have worked with Help and Kindness and Dorset Community Action to set up the Dorset Covid Community Response Groups forum, which is an online message platform for groups to ask questions, look for information and support each other through these difficult times



My Notes

- Working with the Council and the Community groups has meant that we have been able to identify a lot of the more vulnerable individuals in our community
- It is key to keep this contact and communication going with these individuals, especially now as we go into the winter months
- We don't have a magic wand, we can't make everything better, but if we can help people know they are thought of and to feel less lonely, it would be quite something



What is loneliness?

- Loneliness is not the same as social isolation. People can be isolated (alone) yet not feel lonely. People can be surrounded by other people, yet still feel lonely.
- Loneliness is a subjective feeling about the gap between a person's desired levels of social contact and their actual level of social contact. It refers to the perceived quality of the person's relationships. Loneliness is never desired and lessening these feelings can take a long time.
- Feelings of loneliness are personal, so everyone's experience of loneliness will be different. Because there is no single common cause, prevention and treatment can vary depending on the individual.





**“The most terrible poverty is loneliness, and the feeling of being unloved.”
— Mother Teresa**

Why is loneliness more apparent in winter?

- The days are shorter and the nights are longer
- The inclement weather; ice, mud, wet leaves etc can make it seem more risky to go out
- People are worried about catching winter illnesses such as colds and the flu
- The cold weather can impact ongoing medical conditions like arthritis
- The lack of sunshine can affect people mentally (Seasonal Affective Disorder)
- People have additional worries (cost of heating, Christmas etc) which they can feel alone in going through
- It is a celebrational season which, if you don't have anyone to celebrate with, can feel incredibly lonely



Christmas and Winter

- There are 51 days until Christmas.
- Lockdown, social isolating and keeping safe to combat the Coronavirus means that Christmas this year will be very different for each and every one of us
- As much as it is tempting to ignore the rules and the guidelines, they are there to keep us all safe and we can get through one Christmas if it means we can all be together for many more Christmases to come
- A lot of people who are lonely come forward to volunteer over Christmas, helping others helps them not to feel alone
- With most Christmas events already cancelled – carol concerts, festive lunches, Christmas markets, office parties etc - we need to put our heads together (at a safe distance) to come up with ideas on how to support each other through the festive period and winter



Christmas and Winter

- Work with local schools to see if the children can make cards and write letters and deliver them to care homes or neighbours who live on their own
- Work with local businesses and donations to make hampers for people on their own, NHS workers, blue light workers etc
- Speak to local craft groups to see if there is anything they can make of a festive nature which can be given to people who are in hospital, living on their own etc
- Create a Christmas Card Chain and ask each house on a road to give a card to the next house along
- Work with Digital Champions to identify people who could benefit from some guidance with technology so they can contact love ones via video call
- Offer a chair at your dining table (depending on guidelines) or make a meal for a neighbour



Christmas and Winter

- Virtual carol singing – invite people to join in via Zoom, Teams etc and sing along or pre-record carols and share them with your community
- Door step carol singing – people stand on their door steps and sing together
- Create virtual events for Christmas cake baking, mince pie making etc
- Create a regular email or newsletter with Christmas stories, pictures, jokes, puzzles, craft ideas etc
- Establish a ‘twinning’ project between a school and a care home / nursing home so letters, cards etc could be exchanged
- Volunteer Centre Dorset is working with other agencies on a Christmas Volunteer Programme which will be formalised shortly. The plan is to keep it neighbourly and to work with volunteers and community groups. If you would like to hear more about this programme, please register your interest by emailing info@volunteeringdorset.org.uk



Volunteering roles in winter

- Flu Clinics – a lot of these have already taken place, but some are still running
- Christmas activities
- Prescription collections
- Food shopping
- Phone befriending



Volunteering safely in winter

- Only volunteer if you feel well enough and are not self-isolating
- Keep washing your hands often for 20 seconds
- Stay at least 2m – about three steps – away from people you're helping. Where 2m is not possible, stay at least 1m apart with precautions.
- Stay outside of people's homes.
- Try and plan volunteering during daylight hours and always tell someone where you are going and what time you anticipate being back
- Make allowances for winter weather and allow time for potential disruptions
- Ensure you (and your car) are equipped for the winter weather, your safety health and well-being is important



Lockdown 2.0

- New restrictions come into effect in England at 00:01am tomorrow morning.
- Where possible, people should volunteer from home. If they cannot do so, they can volunteer outside their home if they follow the social distancing guidance and no one in their household has symptoms of coronavirus or has tested positive for coronavirus.
- Voluntary and charitable activities are exempt from a number of the new restrictions. This means that, where volunteers are able to volunteer outside their home (see above) they can:
 - meet in groups of any size indoors or outdoors while volunteering
 - travel to volunteer or while volunteering
- It should always be a volunteer's personal choice whether they wish to volunteer, including outside their home, and they should not be compelled to do so by their organisation or group



Lockdown 2.0

- Volunteer-involving organisations must ensure their workplaces meet coronavirus safety standards.
- People over the age of 60 and those who are clinically vulnerable do not face any specific restrictions on volunteering and should follow the same guidelines. However, as this group could be at higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus, they may need additional support to follow social distancing rules and minimise contact with others.
- There is a further group of people who are defined, on medical grounds, as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) to coronavirus – that is, people with specific serious health conditions. Clinically extremely vulnerable people can volunteer from home; they are advised not to volunteer outside their home.
- Existing GOV.UK coronavirus volunteering guidance pages will be updated in line with the new announcements later this week when the new rules come into effect.



Next Steps

- Dorset Covid Community Response Groups platform – we're setting up a thread to share support and ideas over the winter period
- Reviewing and updating our guidance as new information is issued and communicating this to groups and volunteers
- Planning to move our training offer online along with bite-size learning sessions – more details to follow shortly



Useful Links

- [Volunteer Centre Dorset](#)
- [Government - How to help safely](#)
- [Dorset Council - Communities and Volunteering](#)
- [Dorset Community Action](#)
- [Help and Kindness](#)
- [NCVO - Know How](#)



Stay In Touch



- www.volunteeringdorset.org.uk
- <https://twitter.com/vcdorset>
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