



**Coronavirus (COVID-19):
Advice for volunteers
and the voluntary sector**
Frequently Asked Questions

www.bromley.gov.uk/covid-19

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Section 1: Registering for help

Where can people register for assistance if they are medically vulnerable?

The Government has produced a set of criteria for individuals to be identified as medically vulnerable. The individuals that meet the criteria are described as 'Shielding' by the Government. The criteria can be found at www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable.

If people meet these criteria, they can register for help at www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable.

What happens if a vulnerable person has not received a Shielding letter from the Government?

People can self refer without a letter. If people meet the medically vulnerable criteria, they can register for help at www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable.

If they do not meet these criteria, they should register on the Council website by visiting <https://bit.ly/LBB-COVID19Assistance>.

The NHS has supplied the names of additional people to the Council that meet the criteria. The Council will be checking with those people to make sure they know how to register for Shielding assistance if they need it.

Section 2: Help with food and shopping

How do vulnerable client groups access food?

We encourage people to go through the following steps:

1. Individuals should link with their neighbours or relatives.
2. If Shielding, register as per section 1 above for support with food.
3. Individuals can join a local group, perhaps through their local Residents' Association or a Mutual Aid Group - see <https://covidmutualaid.org>§.
4. Individuals should use the Bromley Assistance Helpline so that they can be matched with a local volunteer who can provide support with shopping (if the person needing assistance has the means to pay). If shielding, we will help people to register by providing information over the phone if they qualify on medical grounds.
5. Individuals can use a local food bank which accepts vouchers from those already referred by an agency - see <https://bromleyborough.foodbank.org.uk>
Referrals can also be arranged by the Council's assistance helpline.
6. For those who have no access to funds, and cannot link into any of the above, food packages may be able to be dropped off - this should be registered as a very urgent food request on the Bromley Assistance Helpline.

§ *These groups are not organised by the Council. They are groups of people who have come together at a local level to support their local community.*

How do individuals pay for their shopping?

People who have the ability to pay for what they need either in cash, by cheque made payable to the volunteer, or by bank transfer, can ask for assistance with shopping via the Bromley Assistance Helpline. Payments should be made in advance of the volunteer completing the shopping.

They should register on the Council website by visiting <https://bit.ly/LBB-COVID19Assistance>.

Alternatively, they can call 020 8313 4484.

Whilst volunteers have to gain checks from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), if anyone receiving assistance from a volunteer has any concerns that they may have been subject to a scam, then they should contact the Council's Trading Standards rapid response team on **07903 852090**.

For those who do not have the ability to pay, they will be assessed by the Council's Adult Early Intervention Team. Immediate help will be available for those who have an urgent need for food via the food banks that are operating in Bromley. They can find out more at <https://bromleyborough.foodbank.org.uk>.

Residents requiring the food bank service will also be sign posted to the Citizens Advice Bureau who can provide further support with financial issues to reduce reliance on the food banks longer term.

Foodbank vouchers

Residents can also find out how they can register for foodbank vouchers at <https://bromleyborough.foodbank.org.uk/how-to-get-help> or by calling 020 3920 8696.

Post Office: Ask a Friend

The Post Office has set up a system called Ask a Friend. The individual needs to register their interest in this on the Post Office website. They would then be advised whether or not their bank is participating in this.

If the answer is yes, they will need to telephone their bank to arrange a sum of money to be drawn from the Post Office in cash. The bank then sends a code number to the client and the volunteer so that the volunteer can go to the Post Office and draw out cash on behalf of the client.

Find out more at www.postoffice.co.uk/coronavirus-help-support/banking-services.

E-gift card for volunteers

A number of supermarkets, including Asda, Marks & Spencer, Sainsbury's and The Coop, have launched an e-gift card for volunteers.

The individual (or a family member) can purchase the gift card online. This is then sent to the volunteer to use in the specific supermarket.

The individual can then top-up the gift card as and when needed.

Age UK Bromley & Greenwich (B&G) are purchasing supermarket vouchers online and forwarding them on to the volunteers. The volunteer then sends Age UK B&G a copy of the receipt. Age UK B&G then invoice the client for the amount. Volunteers signing up through the Council will be advised of how to access this scheme.

Are volunteers able to visit shops on behalf of a vulnerable person?

Yes. All volunteers, care home workers and home care workers will receive a letter from the Council which will allow them to shop on behalf of a vulnerable person.

If you are undertaking shopping tasks on behalf of a vulnerable person and do not receive this letter, please contact the Bromley Volunteer Hub on **020 8315 1900**.

Is there a list of food banks across the borough?

Yes. We will be producing a single page on our website shortly with the full list.

In the meantime, you can find out how to contact the Bromley Borough Foodbank by visiting <https://bromleyborough.foodbank.org.uk>.

Is the Council coordinating work with big supermarkets?

The Council has looked at what the big retailers are doing:

Asda

Asda has:

- changed their store opening hours to 8am to 10pm Monday to Saturday
- introduced dedicated NHS and carer hours in their larger stores every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8am to 9am, as well as Sundays from 9am to 10am for browsing.
- implemented purchasing limits of a maximum of 3 items on certain handwashing and baby milk products in store and a maximum of 3 items on all products for online

You can find out more about Asda's response to coronavirus by visiting www.asda.com/feeding-the-nation.

Co-op

The Co-op has:

- introduced temporary opening hours from 7am to 8pm
- introduced a dedicated shopping hour for vulnerable customers, carers and NHS staff from 8am to 9am on Monday to Saturday and from 10am to 11am on Sundays
- implemented purchasing limits for some in-store items to 2 per person
- started to limit the number of people allowed in the store at one time

You can find out more about The Co-op's response to coronavirus by visiting www.coop.co.uk/coronavirus.

Morrisons

Morrisons has started to provide food box deliveries. These are designed to provide everyday essentials with groceries or prepared meals delivered directly to the home. Find out more by visiting www.morrisons.com/food-boxes.

Morrisons has also:

- extended their home delivery service
- introduced temporary purchase limits on products where there is high demand

You can find more about Morrisons' response to coronavirus by visiting <https://bit.ly/morrisons-covid19>.

Sainsbury's

Sainsbury's has:

- introduced a dedicated shopping hour for vulnerable customers and their carers from 8am to 9am every Monday, Wednesday and Friday
- introduced a dedicated shopping time for NHS and social care workers from 7.30am to 8am on Monday to Saturday
- given vulnerable people priority access to online home delivery service
- introduced temporary purchase limits on products where there is high demand
- increased access to their Click & Collect service

You can find out more about Sainsbury's response to coronavirus by visiting <https://bit.ly/sainsburys-covid19>.

Tesco

Tesco has:

- extended their home delivery service
- increased access to their Click & Collect service
- introduced a limit of 80 items per online order
- limited the number of people in-store
- introduced a dedicated shopping hour for vulnerable customers and their carers from 9am to 10am every Monday, Wednesday and Friday
- introduced a dedicated shopping time for NHS workers from 9am to 10am on Monday to Saturday

You can find out more about Tesco's response to coronavirus by visiting www.tesco.com/help/covid-19.

Other supermarkets

Other supermarkets, such as Waitrose, Iceland and Marks & Spencer, have also introduced a range of measures. You can find out more on their websites.

Section 3: Support for volunteers

How can we share good volunteer practice?

The voluntary sector has lots of experience of developing good practice for volunteers. We will be liaising with the voluntary sector across the borough, including Community Links Bromley, and will circulate guidelines shortly that can be adapted to the needs of individual organisations.

The Covid-19 Mutual Aid website also has some helpful advice - <https://covidmutualaid.org>.

How is the Council making sure that it is sharing what is happening across the voluntary and statutory sectors?

Community Links Bromley (CLB) will cascade to all member voluntary sector agencies regarding the latest developments. Mutual aid groups can apply to CLB for associate membership which enables access to support with policies, procedures and fundraising options.

Groups are encouraged to sign up to the Community Links twice weekly bulletin. This includes a COVID-19 alert. Register by visiting <https://bit.ly/clbnewsletter-signup>.

Is there a register of the various community groups and service providers describing where they are and what they are able to do?

Yes there will be one. Once this is developed, the Council will circulate it and publicise it on the Council's website.

Will there be regular updates about the changing picture and current needs?

Yes. Community Links Bromley will provide regular updates to its members. The Council will also use its email newsletter to keep people informed.

How is the Council addressing the issue of volunteer ID cards?

The Council is encouraging volunteers to use their existing proof of identity. Residents requiring assistance will know the name of their volunteer in advance. DBS checks are required for all Bromley Council/CLB volunteers.

How can Volunteer Groups be supported?

Groups should self-identify what support they require. If it is training, advice and signposting, this is covered by the actions above.

If it is Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) support, the Council does not have access to PPE for all community volunteers as the UK stocks are being assigned to healthcare workers that are interacting with the most vulnerable. Therefore, the Government's advice on social distancing must be adhered to.

Groups should undertake risk assessments for their activities (for COVID-19 Mutual Aid groups, this can be found at <https://covidmutualaid.org>).

If there is financial assistance required, this is available from the Government and through local grants if businesses have offered donations, but it is only available to established registered charities. Informal COVID-19 groups that are not registered charities should visit <https://covidmutualaid.org> for the advice on this which suggests the adoption of crowdfunding if they wish to raise funds locally or to apply for grant funding through an existing charity - a partnership which they must establish themselves.

The local authority is not issuing direct funding to local voluntary groups but is providing support to the voluntary and community sector through our existing partnership with CLB (who are the volunteering hub that will issue any corporate donations in an approved way with robust governance to ensure funds are allocated appropriately).

What is the Council's longer term strategy for working with and supporting the voluntary sector?

The Council will be discussing the development of a longer term strategy with the voluntary sector in due course. We are keen to ensure that our vulnerable residents are supported

longer term, not just during COVID-19. We will be issuing more information about our thoughts and plans when the current emergency subsides.

How can the voluntary and community sector receive support with their current funding and fundraising activities?

Grants are available from central government, regional government and other funding sources. Weekly funding updates to support charities are provided through the CLB bulletin. Support is available from CLB with applications as required.

CLB are also progressing discussions to access local funding from corporate sources. If this is successful, it will be distributed in line with robust governance requirements and criteria.

Section 4: Keeping safe

How will we reduce the risk of infection amongst volunteers and vulnerable people?

Community Links Bromley has developed specific safeguarding training for volunteers which is available on their website - visit www.communitylinksbromley.org.uk.

The NHS has produced a range of guidance on infection control - visit www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/primary-care/infection-control.

The Covid-19 Mutual Aid website has provided a set of free safeguarding training for their groups - visit <https://covidmutualaid.org/resources/#tab-con-8>.

How can people escalate their concerns if they are worried about someone who is vulnerable?

Members of the public

Members of the public can call the following numbers:

Adult social care

During working hours, people should contact the Council's Adult Early Intervention service by completing the adult social care initial information form - visit <https://bit.ly/LBB-AEISform>.

Alternatively, they can call 020 8461 7777.

Outside of working hours, people can call the Council's Out of Hours Service on 0300 303 8671.

Health care

For health related concerns, people should contact NHS 111 - visit www.nhs.uk/111.

Alternatively, they can call 111.

Volunteers

Volunteers should:

A person who meets the shielding criteria

The volunteer should offer to help them with getting registered on the Government's Shielding list - visit www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable.

A person who does not meet the shielding criteria

Volunteers should refer non-shielding clients who are still vulnerable to the Bromley Assistance Helpline - visit <https://bit.ly/LBB-COVID19Assistance>.

How will the Council and other partners maintain client confidentiality when working across organisations? This is a particular concern for victims of domestic violence.

All agencies involved will continue to adhere to strict GDPR principles and will not be permitted to share data with those that do not need it.

Can voluntary sector agencies access Safeguarding Training?

Yes. Go to www.bromley.gov.uk/bsab for providers of services to adults and www.bromleysafeguarding.org/articles.php?id=586 for providers of services to children and young people.

Section 5: Staying healthy and well

What mental health support is available for volunteers working with vulnerable people?

Volunteers can access a range of free mental health support by visiting www.nhs.uk/coronavirus.

They can also visit <https://bit.ly/COVID19-mentalhealth>.

Some communities have volunteer coordinators who are coordinating responses in local areas - how does this fit with what the Council is doing?

Community Links Bromley has been commissioned by the Council to carry out the delivery of the volunteer hub of Bromley registered volunteers and support for the Voluntary and Community Sector. The Council will be looking at additional requirements for support that have arisen due to the coronavirus situation and will work with Community Links to ensure a sustainable volunteering programme for the future and ensure that all groups are linked up to the Council and the support available.

The Council supports the hard work of all community groups and encourages them to continue so that we can help as many residents as possible. We would also encourage all those requiring long term assistance to register with the Council so that we can ensure volunteer or social care support is available on an ongoing basis, even after the current crisis.

Will the Council be mapping out pathways for services and support?

We have a rapidly changing landscape so pathway mapping may not capture everything. We also have a plethora of services that have developed as part of the Covid-19 response.

What we will have is a list of agencies with what they offer and a list of services that may be helpful if volunteers or other groups want to escalate an issue.

Section 6: Other questions

How does Operation Shielding align with other work being done?

Operation Shielding is directly helping those in need that are extremely medically vulnerable. Those clients can choose whether they receive urgent support from the Government in the form of food parcels or medicine pickups which they will receive for free. Or, they can choose not to receive that government support where they already have a support network (or would like to use the voluntary and community sector or a Council volunteer).

All volunteers helping any client should be aware of the Shielding programme in case their clients need to be registered with it. All clients calling the Bromley Assistance Helpline are asked about Operation Shielding and whether they need assistance with registering (if they meet the criteria).

The Council is calling those on the Shielding list to check if they are getting the support they need.

CLB are advising all their members and partners about the Operation Shielding website address and when they should refer clients who need it.