

The Emergency Response and your organisation:

The current pandemic is changing our working practices and creating new opportunities for volunteering.

This briefing note provides guidance and links to further information on safe volunteering. It covers:

- An update about DBS processes (all guidelines about activity that requires a DBS check are still in place):
- Safeguarding issues that must be addressed if your museum is planning to deliver services online
- Volunteering to support the Emergency response and your workforce – information and guidance

The below content is based on a webinar held by Bates Wells (<https://bateswells.co.uk/>) and NCVO (<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/>) on Tuesday 31st March.

Compiled and adapted by Eleanor Moore, Sustainable Volunteering Officer for South West Museum Development.

Please note: we advise that for specific technical safeguarding and DBS questions you should always try to seek expert advice. Adapt this document to correspond to your own guidelines, working practices and policies.

An update about DBS processes

(all guidelines about activity that requires a DBS check are still in place)

The Chief Executive of the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) has issued a statement saying that systems are being put in place to ensure: **the Disclosure and Barring Service will prioritise applications for checks for those who are assisting in responding to this national emergency**, making sure where possible, checks are carried out within 24 hours. DBS will also be checking the Barred lists to make sure applicants are not already barred from working in regulated activity:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/covid-19-a-statement-from-our-chief-executive-eric-robinson>

If your organisation has DBS applications in progress, the timescale on which these are processed may be affected by the prioritisation of applications for those assisting in responding to the national emergency.

Identification elements of the DBS process are currently being relaxed where possible, in response to travel restrictions: it is now possible to send in images of identification documents for verification, rather than in person.

The definition of Regulated Activity, which requires a DBS check on the person carrying out this activity, is enshrined in law and therefore still stands during the current emergency. Many activities that you would usually carry out that rely on DBS checked staff and volunteers are likely to have been suspended. Once the activities resume, you will need to follow up the progress of current DBS applications for relevant roles, in line with your Safeguarding policies. Useful information on DBS checking can be found here:

<https://safecic.co.uk/support/faq-blog>

It is worth noting that individuals who are shielding or self-isolating are **not automatically** defined as vulnerable adults because of this. Therefore volunteer roles to support these groups will not automatically be defined as Regulated activity and so a DBS check is not automatically required. The following guidance may be helpful: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-factsheet-community-volunteers-during-covid-19-outbreak/safeguarding-and-dbs-factsheet-faqs>

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Safeguarding issues that must be addressed if your organisation is planning to deliver activities online:

Museums must close under the new government regulations. Museums will be cancelling or postponing exhibitions, events and other public gatherings.

Museums may now be considering taking some activities online and adapting and increasing their online communications. The following information updates and links will help you to consider some of the **safeguarding implications** of your planned changes.

- This NSPCC news update signposts to guidance on livestreaming safely, as part of a suite of information for schools on safe remote teaching - <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/news/2020/march/undertaking-remote-teaching-safely/>
- For any activity your organisation plans to carry out, you should be guided by **safeguarding policies for children and for vulnerable adults**; these will determine your **safe working procedures**.
- This webpage from the NSPCC is an excellent place to start – it defines safeguarding and introduces specific further guidance in key areas, including online safety and working with young volunteers: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/>

NSPCC

Links to specific guidance:

[Writing a safeguarding policy](#)

[Working with young people](#)

[Online safety for organisations and groups](#)

These resources are all part of *NSPCC Learning* <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/> – a collection of resources developed by the NSPCC to help you to develop your understanding of safeguarding and safe working practices.

NCVO also provides guidance on safeguarding for your organisation:

<https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/safeguarding>

Kids in Museums provides a good overview of safeguarding, your responsibilities and where to start: <https://kidsinmuseums.org.uk/resources/safeguarding-overview/>; their guides to digital takeover activities, particularly on Twitter and Instagram, may be useful for your planning.

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Volunteering to support the emergency response and your workforce – information and guidance:

Local Authority museum staff may be 'redeployed' to support the emergency response.

The latest Local Government Association workforce guidance can be found here:

<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/research/coronavirus-information-councils/covid-19-workforce>

In addition, recently retired medical personnel, social workers and local government employees are being asked to return to work in these sectors to support the emergency response. Some of your trustees, staff and volunteers may have worked in these sectors and decide to return. If so, plan for the impact on your organisation's capacity in the short to medium term.

Individual museum trustees, staff and volunteers, if they are under 70, fit, symptom-free and not pregnant, may wish to **volunteer** to help the emergency response.

Government guidelines on this kind of volunteering to share with those who want to help:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-how-to-help-safely--2/coronavirus-how-to-help-safely>

The Coronavirus Act 2020 includes provision for emergency volunteering leave of up to 4 weeks and for compensation for emergency volunteers. The relevant part of the new legislation can be found here:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2020/7/part/1/crossheading/emergency-volunteers/enacted>

In summary, this will enable employees and workers to take Emergency Volunteer Leave in blocks of 2, 3 or 4 weeks' statutory unpaid leave and establish a UK-wide compensation fund to compensate for loss of earnings and expenses incurred at a flat rate for those who volunteer through an appropriate authority. This will ensure that volunteers do not suffer financial disadvantage as a result of performing a public good. Volunteers play a critical role in the delivery of health and social care services and are particularly important in caring for the most vulnerable in our society, such as the elderly, those with multiple long-term conditions or those suffering from mental ill-health.

- Details of how this will be managed in practice on the ground have not yet come forward.
- Employers cannot require their employees to volunteer in the emergency response; volunteering must be voluntary.
- As an employer you may be able to support an individual by supplying a reference if asked to do so.

Businesses are also being asked, by a consortium of voluntary sector bodies, to consider what skills they can share to support the emergency response, and to register if they wish to help. Further details can be found here.

<https://volunteeringmatters.org.uk/what-we-do/support-us/working-together/>

If staff have been furloughed

It is important to note that charities should **not** be using volunteers, whether through businesses providing pro bono support, or individuals volunteering, to 'backfill' for roles that are currently furloughed. The furlough scheme is designed to support organisations to pay wages of employees who cannot be paid because the work has disappeared due to coronavirus; volunteering would suggest an attempt to benefit from the scheme but still maintain normal activity and is advised against.