Welcome and thank you!

Welcome to Royal Voluntary Service and thank you so much for choosing to be part of one of Britain’s largest volunteer organisations.

Founded in 1938 as WVS, the charity mobilised over one million volunteers to help with almost every aspect of wartime life. Today, Royal Voluntary Service still inspires and enables people to give the gift of voluntary service to meet the needs of the day. Never has that been more important than now, when we find ourselves in frightening and challenging times with the impact of COVID-19.

As our founder said in 1938,

‘As a nation we require voluntary service today as much as we have ever done in the past’. Lady Stella Reading

This guide will help to keep you protected whilst you carry out your voluntary service with us.

Please take the time to read and understand the content thoroughly so that we can help people effectively and safely.

At the end of this guide you will find fact sheets and important information to support you in your role.

Thank you for joining us, we hope that by coming together we can keep our communities safe and comforted during this difficult time.

Kindest Regards,

Catherine Johnstone CBE
Chief Executive
Let's start with some key information that will help protect you and the people you are supporting.

### DATA PROTECTION & CONFIDENTIALITY

During your volunteering you will come across personal and sensitive information about individuals as part of the support you will offer. We want to make sure that all information stays safe and confidential in line with the Data Protection Act 1998 and GDPR Regulations 2018. We want you to treat other people’s personal information in the same way you would want yours to be treated. If you do acquire information about an individual you may be supporting (for example, names, addresses and possible medical information), we ask that you maintain confidentiality and do not discuss or disclose any data or information with anyone outside of Royal Voluntary Service or with anyone who doesn’t need to know.

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<th><strong>DO</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Keep any data secure and treat other people’s information in the same way you would want yours to be treated.</td>
<td>Discuss any information or data with anyone outside of Royal Voluntary Service or with anyone who doesn’t need to know.</td>
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<td>If you think there has been a mistake or breach of data protection tell Royal Voluntary Service about it so we can manage this.</td>
<td>Leave any messages on answerphones with any personal information if you are not sure who is going to be able to hear them. Ensure others cannot hear you and avoid calls on loudspeaker if you live with others.</td>
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**With-holding your phone number**

We recommend that you call the isolating person from a withheld number. To withhold your number on individual calls just dial 141 before the telephone number you want to call.

### EQUALITY

You will support a diverse range of individuals in diverse communities and we ask that you respect every individual’s beliefs and that nobody is treated less favourably or excluded in anyway. We are all different and all have the right to be treated with dignity and respect. If you witness any behaviours where you feel someone is being treated less favourably or excluded, then you must inform Royal Voluntary Service of this immediately so we can tackle this and take appropriate action.

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<th><strong>DO</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Treat others the same way you would want to be treated.</td>
<td>Treat anyone less favourably or exclude anyone who we are supporting in our communities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respect everyone regardless of who they are, their backgrounds and the communities in which they live.</td>
<td>Ignore any unacceptable behaviours towards anyone, and ensure that you report it to Royal Voluntary Service.</td>
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At Royal Voluntary Service we place the safeguarding and well-being of volunteers, employees and people we support above anything else. You may come across vulnerable adults or adults at risk of harm and they should never experience abuse of any kind. We want you to be alert to any signs or patterns of abuse or anything that may concern you and always raise your suspicions. Be assured you will always be supported by the charity and not raising your concerns is worse than raising a suspicion that is incorrect. If anyone tells you of any type of abuse then remain calm, listen and reassure them that it will be taken seriously. Don’t promise confidentiality as you will need to speak to a limited number of people once you have this information and we ask that you ALWAYS report this to Royal Voluntary Service.

As a Check In and Chat Volunteer you will not be supporting people in the community. However, we are committed to keeping you safe and below we have outlined some guidance to support you:

**How to protect yourself – General Guidance**

- Wash hands frequently for at least 20 seconds with soap and water at regular intervals throughout the day.
- If running water and soap is not available then ensure you have alcohol-based hand wipes or sanitiser to kill viruses that may be on your hands.
- Avoid touching your face and keep hands away from eyes, mouth and nose to avoid spread of any virus.
- If you cough, use a tissue and dispose of the tissue immediately. If the cough becomes persistent then you should follow government self-isolation precautions. If no tissue is available, cough into your arm.
- Consider social distancing by maintaining at least 2 metres distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.
- If you feel unwell and have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and follow NHS guidance whilst avoiding any contact with people.
What should I do if I think I have COVID-19 Symptoms?

If you are concerned about your health in relation to COVID-19 and believe you have symptoms then you need to pause your voluntary service and self-isolate for the required period of time. Please check out the Public Health Guidance to identify how long you need to isolate for.


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**OUR VOLUNTEERING AGREEMENT**

We want to make your volunteering experience with us enjoyable, rewarding and safe. This below outlines what we can expect from each other whilst you volunteer with us.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You can expect us to provide you with:</th>
<th>As a volunteer with Royal Voluntary Service we ask that you agree to:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• A safe, respectful, fair and non-discriminatory volunteering environment.</td>
<td>• Recognise that the needs of the charity’s beneficiaries are our priority.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• A clear explanation of what your role involves, what is expected of you and who you need to speak to if you need support.</td>
<td>• Perform your volunteering role to the best of your ability.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reimbursement of your out of pocket transport expenses.</td>
<td>• Be accountable for your actions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The ability to stop volunteering with us without pressure or judgement.</td>
<td>• Support and abide by the charity’s instructions within the documents provided to you.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Not accepting any gifts or monetary gifts from people you are supporting.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Respect and maintain confidentiality, keeping any information you gain about the charity, its services and those we help confidential, even after you leave.</td>
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**ACCEPTANCE AND AGREEMENT**

I confirm that I have read and understood the requirements of the role/s for which I have applied to volunteer. I understand the boundaries and responsibilities associated with this role, and know of no reason that I am unable to safely and competently carry out these duties.
Check in and Chat Information

Thank you for offering your time to provide telephone support to a person who is isolating. A check in and chat call can make all the difference to someone who is lonely at this time.

Telephone support is a positive step to engage with people who may have little or no contact with others, a consequence of self-isolating may lead to issues with confidence, self-esteem, and loneliness.

This support you will be giving is a one off phone call that can be flexible to suit the time you have available to give, and also the time that the interaction takes place. The aim is to ensure that the wellbeing of the isolated person is taken into consideration and possibly identify any practical support they may require.

HINTS AND TIPS

Calls should be made at times that are mutually convenient to both the isolating person and yourself.

1. It is important to uphold the confidentiality of the individual at all times. You may receive/hear personal information or details through conversations, forms or other means. All forms of personal information must be treated with respect and be handled in a highly confidential way.
2. We recommend calling from a landline number, unless you have free minutes available on a mobile phone and are willing to use these.
3. Ensure you with-hold your number. See guidance in the Data Protection and Confidentiality section.
4. Think about how you safely store peoples contact details, do not leave these in a place that other people can access. If you are able to lock these away in a safe place, please do so. If you need to destroy this information please ensure it is shredded in a confidential manner.
5. The person you’re supporting could be at risk of isolation for any reason, including cognitive difficulties or dementia. Be aware that when you have a conversation you may need to repeat yourself, revisit elements of the conversation or communicate more clearly than you may be used to in order to have a successful chat.
6. If you call and don’t get an answer, try calling the isolating person 3 times, if no response, “PASS TO ANOTHER VOLUNTEER”. This will then be picked up by another volunteer later that day.
Introduce yourself and let person know that you are a volunteer who is supporting the NHS Volunteer Responders programme. You are calling to check in with the person to chat and make sure they are ok.

It’s difficult to pre-empt what types of calls or queries you are likely to get from an individual, they may need some factual information or just some reassurance during these challenging times. Rest assured that there will be people available to support you if you are faced with a query that raises concerns. Contact the Support Team if you have concerns over the people you are supporting.

Some questions to help the conversation

- How are you doing today?
- Are you managing to get around the house ok?
- How are you feeling today?
- Have you managed to speak to any of your friends or family?
- What is a typical day like for you? Do you enjoy reading or watching TV?
- Are you managing to prepare your meals?
- Do you have all the medication you need?
- Are you able to get out to the garden for some fresh air?

Supporting a person living with Dementia?

Living with dementia at any time brings everyday challenges for the person and those around them. COVID-19 is making daily life much harder. People may feel anxious, scared or lonely. COVID-19 may mean that people affected by dementia are no longer able to take part in activities which supported them to live well, and their carers and families may be caring for them 24/7 with no respite.

It’s important to note that dementia isn’t a natural part of ageing and similar symptoms can be brought on by depression. Dementia is caused by diseases of the brain and doesn’t just cause memory problems - it can affect anything and everything the brain controls, including mood and changes in behaviour. Dementia can make individuals forget details, but they will remember the feeling of reassurance and support provided by your call. This really will help to stop negative feelings caused by isolation.

If you are worried about the person you’re supporting and their memory, or if they inform you they are struggling with their dementia or someone they care for with dementia, please call the Support Team. If you want more information about dementia, please visit www.alzheimers.org.uk
Supporting a person living with poor mental health?

Within your role you may be asked to support someone who is living with poor mental health, 1 in 4 people experience mental health problems each year and a friendly chat can help individuals through this difficult time. You may not be aware of an individual’s mental health and this may not even be discussed during your conversation. One of the amazing things you can offer as a Check in and Chat volunteer is your listening skills and try to do this in a non-judgemental manner.

- Ask questions to gather information about how the person is feeling?
- Ask open questions – What, where, when, why, how?
- Listen without interrupting and repeat what has been said to check you have understood
- Show someone you understand by telling them (e.g. “I can see how that’s been hard to deal with”) and don’t make judgements about what you’re told.

You could suggest the below to promote Mental Health Wellness:

- Try and stick to a routine, go to bed and wake up at a reasonable time. Allow time throughout the day for self-care
- Try and move around and stay active, for approx. 30 minutes a day
- Try and get outside for some fresh air. It’s amazing how much fresh air can do for your spirits.
- Reach out to others, spend time speaking to friends and family.
- Stay hydrated and eat well

You don’t need any specialist skills - The only qualification needed for these roles is to be caring and willing to give some of your time to help others. You are not expected to have the answers to everything, and you are not expected to be the person to support someone who is in severe distress or experiencing a crisis. Being supportive as a volunteer is much like being supportive as a family member, friend or colleague. You don’t have to have solutions to people’s problems. If you can signpost the person to other advice and support, that’s great, but sometimes a friendly ear is enough. A list of signposting support is available here.

Staying Well - There are many resources to support people to stay well in the current situation – these may be of use to the people you connect with, and of course to yourself and your family and friends.

NHS.uk ‘Every Mind Matters’ offers advice on mental health and wellbeing, including advice on helping others.

Read the latest Public Health England advice for the public on mental health and wellbeing.
SUPPORTING PEOPLE WHO ARE EXPERIENCING SEVERE DISTRESS

If anyone you are supporting through your volunteering is experiencing severe distress, or if you have concerns about their mental health, please remember these things:

- You are not expected to provide specialist help to people who are experiencing serious distress or poor mental health.
- Signposting people to expert support, or raising concerns so that expert support can be provided, is the key thing you can do to help the mental health and wellbeing of a person.

If you have concerns about any of the people you are supporting in your volunteering, let RVS know by calling 0808 196 3382.

The Samaritans have tips on how to listen and talk to people when you are worried about their feelings. Listen, giving people the time to speak. Don’t be afraid of silence – sometimes a pause of a few seconds will give a person time to put things into words that they are finding difficult.

You may wish to follow the training provided by the Zero Suicide Alliance. This short training outlines the things everyone can do to support someone who is in distress and may be considering ending their life by suicide.

ONGOING SUPPORT

What should I do if an isolating person asks me to continue supporting them?

Please advise the individual that you are not able to offer this as a NHS Volunteer Responder. We ask that you do not pass your contact details to any one you support, nor maintain an ongoing relationship with them.

The programme has been designed so that recipients get a different volunteer each time as part of our safeguarding for the programme and to protect you and the person you are supporting.

Furthermore, healthcare professionals are referring people into the programme on the understanding that these safeguards are in place and upheld. Failure to do so risks undermining their confidence in making future referrals.

We recognise that many of you will want to help as much as you can but most isolating people have been referred and set up in the system to receive regular calls or support which means they will benefit from a different volunteer calling each time. Continuing to contact them will only mean they receive multiple contacts from different volunteers.
Royal Voluntary Service – Getting started as a Check in and Chat volunteer – V1.14 – S Lloyd

**POTENTIAL QUESTIONS AND SITUATIONS THAT MAY ARISE**

I’m concerned that I’m not going to see anyone for a long time.
Recognise their concerns and let them that you are here to listen them. It’s ok to go outside if they have a garden and get some fresh air and they can exercise outside as well, keeping the 2 metre minimum distance.

I need some practical help, I can’t get to the shops or get my prescription.
Contact the Support Team so the individual can be referred to a Community Response Volunteer.

I’ve been told to stay at home but I always go to the community centre on a Wednesday, can I still go?
If you have been told to stay at home we recommend you follow the guidance from the NHS. Community centres are closed at this time. You can still go out in your garden if you have one and for exercise only, you must keep 2 metres away from any other people.

I like talking to you, can you call me again next week?
That’s lovely to hear, I’ve enjoyed talking with you too but I’m unable to call frequently. If the person who referred you has asked that you receive a check in call frequently then you’ll hear from another volunteer, but that may not be me. Would you like me to check whether you have this arranged and if not, arrange this for you? Contact the Support Team to check whether the individual has more call requests logged and if not, place a request for weekly/monthly calls (dependent on what the individual has asked for).

Can I take down your phone number, so I can call you if I need anything?
Establish what they mean by ‘need anything’ i.e. is this practical support we can offer by matching them with a Community Response Volunteer. Politely tell the individual that you are not permitted to give out your personal contact details.

I’m lonely and I don’t have anyone I can call.
Ask who they would usually talk to/spend time with and see if they can contact any of these people via phone. Suggest the [Let's talk loneliness website](#) for some useful advice on how to cope with loneliness.

I’m worried about my neighbour, can you call them if I give you their number?
At the moment we are only able to support people that have been referred to us from a Health board, GP or the NHS. I would suggest your neighbour could call 111 or speak to their GP If they have concerns about their health and wellbeing.

I’m feeling very sad/depressed/hopeless, I think I need some help.
Talk to them to understand their needs, Do they need practical support we could see if there is a volunteer available to do this. If required, call the Support Team to refer the individual for practical support. Or suggest they speak to their GP.
Thank you! You have stepped forward to help your community and NHS through COVID-19.

If you have any issues or queries please contact the Support Team on:

0808 196 3382

Take a moment to read the information below to make sure you are familiar with how you will receive alerts, the options to accept or reject and how the app works.

Referrer raises a request for support for either:

- Community Response Volunteer – Shopping and prescription collection for an isolated person
  - Check in and Chat Volunteer – Telephone check in
- Patient transport – Transporting patients to and from a hospital/appointments
- NHS transport – This role involves transporting equipment, supplies and/or medication between NHS service, also supporting pharmacies with medication deliveries.

Request for support will alert the closest volunteer and give them the option to accept or reject

- Reject
  - Request will bounce to the next volunteer
- Accept
  - Volunteer will be sent information on how to contact the isolating person/referrer to confirm what support is required

Volunteer has attempted to call the isolating person/referrer 3 times and is unable to make contact. Click “PASS TO ANOTHER VOLUNTEER” on GoodSAM app.
Installing the GoodSAM app

1. Now that you have registered as a volunteer, you will need to download the GoodSAM Responder app. Downloading the app will mean you will be able to receive alerts and request for support.

2. To do this go to your relevant app store and search for the GoodSAM responder app and download.

The app will look like this:
3. Open the app and sign in using your email address and the password you set up during the sign up process. Please note – you do not need to register on the app – only sign in.

4. You may be prompted to give location access and notifications for the app, please ensure you select ‘Allow’ in order for you to receive alerts/requests to your phone.

5. Check that you have switched all notifications on under your settings. This may look different dependent on the mobile phone you are using.
6. Spend some time familiarising yourself with the settings on the app, this will ensure that you are alerted when a request to support is near you. See further information below.

**ON DUTY**

Report on duty needs to be toggled to ON for you to receive any notifications. If you know you are not available to help on a specific day please toggle this to OFF.

**On SILENT**

Make sure the settings are correct to receive an alert or request of support.

7. You now need to set up your profile. This is essential as it becomes you identification for the police and for the person you are supporting. Go into the app and click on the ‘ME’ tab. Tap the circle and **upload your photo** (this must be a photo of yourself).

**NOTE:** You must show your ID to the person you are supporting. You should do this at a safe distance, for instance, by placing the phone on the doorstep and standing 2 metres back.

If the person you are supporting requires further verification, you can call their phone number to prove that you were the volunteer that contacted them earlier in the day.

You can also show the individual a copy of the alert/request for support if they require further identification.
8. When a request for support is raised you will receive an alert. You will have the option to accept or reject the alert.

9. Once you have accepted the task, the first part of the message will show what support is required (Community Response, Check In & Chat, NHS Transport or Patient Transport). The details will be shown through a message within the app or you can find this under the ‘comms’ section. If at this stage, you decide the task is not for you, then please “PASS TO ANOTHER VOLUNTEER” (shown in point 13) and this will move to the next volunteer.

Please note that some referrers may request tasks that are incorrect for the support requested. Call the isolating person and explain that you can only carry out, what you have been assigned. E.g Check in and Chat Support.

10. Once you have completed the task click “CONTACTED – PROVIDED HELP”. This will prevent the task being passed to another volunteer. Please note that the message/information you have on the request will disappear once “CONTACTED – PROVIDED HELP” is clicked.

11. If you make contact and find out that support is no longer required please click on the “CONTACTED – NO HELP NEEDED”. Please also call the support team to inform them, the individual may have regular tasks that need amending – 0808 196 3382.
12. If you know you are unable to support a request (e.g. you have accidentally left your device as ‘on duty’), please reject the call – this will move to the next volunteer.

Rejecting an alert will not prevent further requests coming through to you, if you know you are not available to support, please toggle to “OFF DUTY” as stated in the guidance above.

13. As mentioned above, if you accept a request but then find you are unable to complete the task, please go into the more section of the app and select “PASS TO ANOTHER VOLUNTEER”.

*Please note the “I have a defibrillator” is not relevant to you in your role.*

NOTE: The app is used by other organisations including medical professionals – If you are signed up as a NHS Responder Volunteer only then you will NEVER receive alerts relating to any medical emergencies. This is a completely separate programme.

### Top tips for using the GoodSAM app

If you are experiencing app issues such as not being able to log on, app freezing or not being able to receive or access alerts, try and troubleshoot by checking the below:

- If unable to log in check that you have actually received an email that you have been approved and not just an email saying that your email has been verified. You won’t be able to log in until you have received the approval email.
- Do not attempt to register on the GoodSAM app. As you have already registered, just sign in using the email and password you supplied when you registered.
- Check you are using a phone that is compatible with the app either an IPhone 5 upwards or a google compatible smartphone that will allow you to download the app from play store.
- Check you have enabled settings to receive alerts and notifications by going to phone settings > apps > permissions and ensuring location is switched ON and ensure that notifications toggle is ON.
- Check that battery saving mode is not set to “ON” on your phone as this restricts location access and automatically turns it off, so the app would not be able to see location.

Please refer to the Volunteer FAQ’s for more information.