4.0 Volunteers

Volunteering Beyond the Pandemic

Overview

1. Introduction
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This revised guide aims to help organisations to re-establish volunteering, as coronavirus restrictions come to an end in Wales, whilst recognising that a cautious approach is still needed.

Introduction

There are four sections:

- **Re-establishing volunteering** – Some aspects that you will need to consider.
- **Frequently Asked Questions** - A basic response to the most common questions.
- **Where to find out more?** - A digest of web sources which should be consulted for detailed information and the latest guidance on specific areas.
- **Useful resources** – Some examples of templates and tools that may be helpful.

Be sure to consult the latest guidance:
Welsh Government - Coronavirus Information

External Link
Your local volunteer centre is available for advice and support if you need it.
Find Your Local Volunteer Centre

Re-establishing volunteering

How you reestablish volunteering involves consideration of:

- The volunteers
- The locations in which volunteering take place
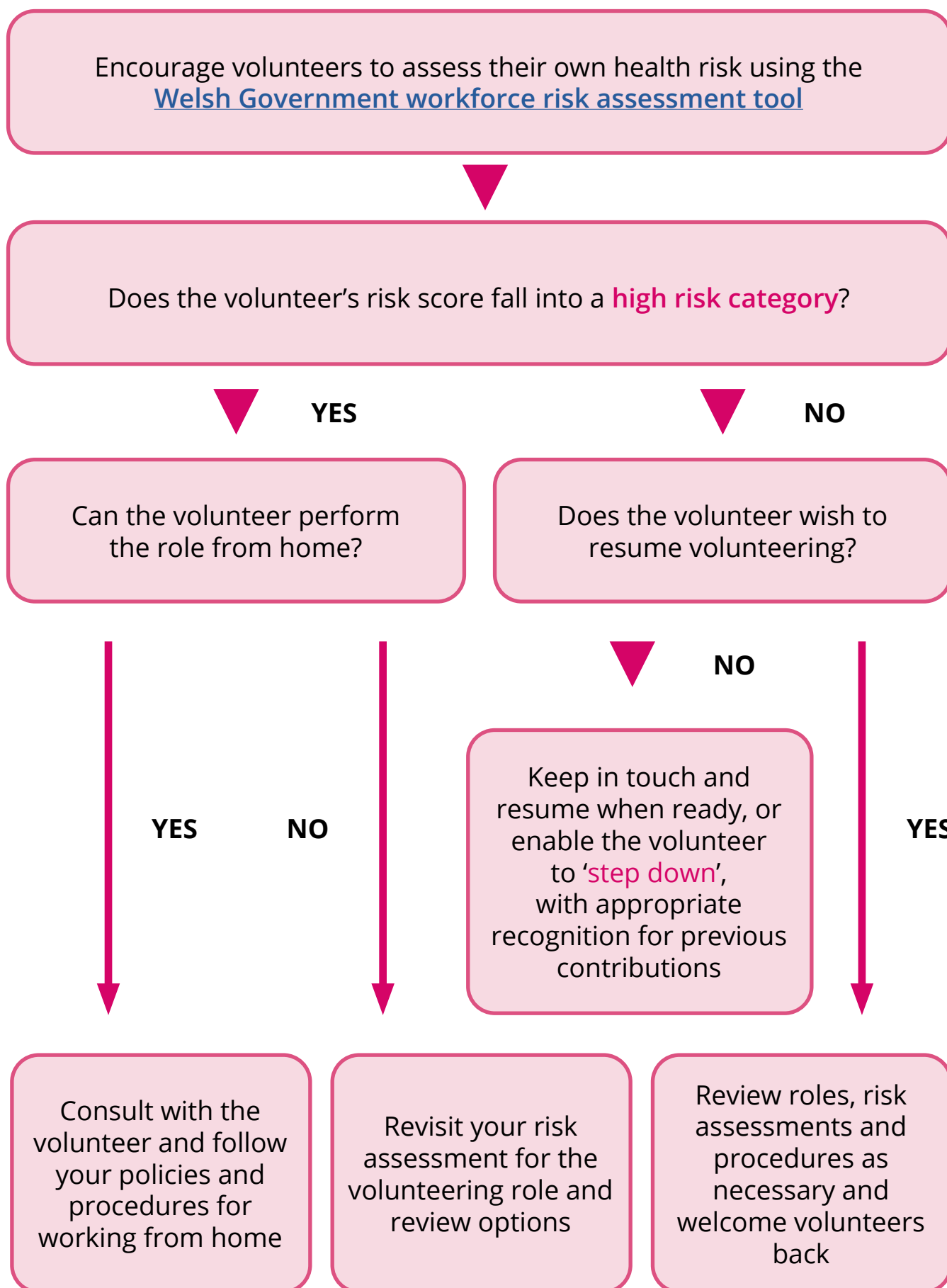- The activities undertaken

Volunteers

The number and range of individuals who are willing and available to volunteer may have altered. Some may simply choose, for whatever reason, not to return to volunteering, or may be unsure about resuming some aspects of what they did previously.

On the other hand, new volunteers may have approached your organisation during recent months. There may also be people who have signed up to volunteer locally during COVID-19, who are willing to continue to volunteer, perhaps with a different organisation.

Your local volunteer centre may know of individuals who want to volunteer but who have not yet been placed with a volunteering opportunity.

Figure 1, summarises an approach to assessing and involving volunteers after a COVID-19 related pause.

Cefnogi Trydydd Sector Cymru Third Sector Support Wales

Figure 1: Assessing volunteers before resuming volunteering

Encourage volunteers to assess their own health risk using the
[Welsh Government workforce risk assessment tool](#)

▼

Does the volunteer's risk score fall into a **high risk category**?

▼ **YES** ▼ **NO**

Can the volunteer perform the role from home?

Does the volunteer wish to resume volunteering?

▼ **NO**

YES **NO**

Keep in touch and resume when ready, or enable the volunteer to 'step down', with appropriate recognition for previous contributions

YES

Consult with the volunteer and follow your policies and procedures for working from home

Revisit your risk assessment for the volunteering role and review options

Review roles, risk assessments and procedures as necessary and welcome volunteers back

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Location

If volunteering already takes place from home, this can continue. Otherwise considerations such as social distancing and infection control measures may still be required.

Activities out of doors may allow for social distancing more easily, but access to toilet facilities, equipment, refreshments and parking /drop off arrangements may need consideration.

Some specific guidance is available in relation to:

- **Community transport**
- **Charity shops**
- **Community gardens and city farms**
- **Places of worship**

WWW

External Link
See Welsh Government guidance for Alert Level 0:
Welsh Government Guidance

Volunteering activities

Minimising direct social contact is likely to be important for many months to come. Where activities can continue to be conducted online or by phone this helps to minimise risk. Where this is not possible, **social distancing** should be maintained where possible. This may mean modifying or redesigning patterns of service delivery.

If social distancing cannot be maintained, then consider the use of **protective equipment** such as **face coverings** and ensure that any individuals with a higher degree of risk from exposure to COVID-19 are in roles which can be undertaken with proper **social distancing**.

Assessing and managing risk

Even when coronavirus measures are no longer required by legislation, you need to decide what is most appropriate for your situation. Assessment of risk should address risks relating to volunteers, beneficiaries, the location and volunteering activities.

Where appropriate it should be carried out in consultation with staff colleagues, volunteers and trade unions.

Some measures to control COVID-19 related risks include:

- Physical distancing, and measures to reduce risk where this is not possible
- Managing the use of space e.g. one-way systems, erecting screens or limiting numbers
- Hygiene procedures including cleaning, hand washing, use of hand sanitiser
- Wearing personal protective equipment or face coverings
- Adapting activity and supporting volunteers to volunteer from home
- Changing the nature of activities undertaken to reduce the degree of face to face interaction with members of the public
- Re allocating volunteers to roles based on their vulnerability to Covid 19 with 'personal risk'
- Reviewing insurance cover, especially if activities have been modified
- Reviewing training (e.g. on cleaning and workplace procedures) and supervision arrangements for volunteers
- Record keeping to enable you to take appropriate action should you be made aware of someone contracting a reportable illness (even though the Covid 19 related requirement to record contact details of those who gather in one place ends with the ending of Coronavirus regulations).

Information
You will find examples of check-lists and risk assessments for different areas of activity under 'where to find out more', and can use these as a guide for producing your own.
Where to Find Out More

You may need time to think about how you want to reorganise volunteering, in order to manage risks on a long term basis. It will be important to communicate your intentions, and your reasons for any changes, with volunteers and other stakeholders.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Can we ask volunteers about their health?

You have an obligation to take reasonable steps to keep volunteers, staff and beneficiaries safe. In this regard it is reasonable (and necessary) to ask volunteers some relevant questions which will enable you to assess risk and make appropriate decisions about how to manage it.

Advice for people who are at increased risk of coronavirus is now the same as for the general population, with particular attention to social distancing and hand hygiene.

WWW

External Link
Government guidance on vulnerable groups can be found on the Welsh Government website.
WCVA: Living with Covid 19: risks, rights and volunteers
Welsh Government - People at increased risk from coronavirus

You can ask volunteers to use a simple self assessment **All Wales COVID-19 workforce risk assessment tool**, which gives a risk score. This can inform discussion with the volunteer about personal risks and mitigating steps that could be taken.

Information about health is classed as sensitive, or **special category data under GDPR**. With the ending of Coronavirus regulations, GDPR becomes once again the primary reference regarding collection and use of personal information.

Q: Can we prevent 'high risk' volunteers from returning to volunteering?

WWW

External Link
Government guidance on protecting those previously known as 'shielding':
Welsh Government - Extremely Vulnerable Groups

Those who are clinically vulnerable and at higher risk from coronavirus are subject to the same advice as the general population.

Encourage the volunteer to use the **Welsh Government risk assessment tool** as basis for discussion of the risks and how to manage them.

Take care to make your judgements based upon risk not assumptions and to ensure that individuals are not treated with discrimination. You can continue, for example, to make reasonable adjustments to enable volunteers with mental health challenges or a physical disability to participate fully.

Information
If you identify someone who wishes to volunteer but is unable to undertake a suitable role with your organisation, refer them to your local volunteer centre who may be able to suggest alternative opportunities.
Find Your Local Volunteer Centre

Q: Do volunteers need PPE?

Outside of clinical settings and unless personal care is being undertaken, the precautionary use of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) is not required. The use of PPE required for roles unrelated to COVID-19 however, such as food preparation, should continue.

Face coverings (which are not the same as PPE) are not mandatory but if volunteers choose to wear them, they should be supported in doing so. It may be advisable in circumstances where it is difficult to maintain a 2m distance. Face coverings, however, are **not a substitute** for social distancing and regular hand washing.

Information
If your risk assessment does suggest that PPE is required, this should be provided free of charge to volunteers. You may be eligible to receive a supply from your local authority. Make sure that it meets the required quality standard.

There is a **legal requirement** that employees (or volunteers) are provided with compliant protective equipment.

Q: How can we support volunteers' wellbeing at this time?

The experience of this pandemic is stressful for many people and will continue to be so in many ways, with continuing anxieties relating not only to health but also employment, finance and loneliness.

Checking in with volunteers remains important, whether or not they are actively volunteering. Social 'meet ups' help people to stay connected and mutually supported.

Remind volunteers from time to time about the importance of diet, sleep, exercise, routine and keeping in touch with loved ones, all of which have significant impact on our wellbeing.

Information
Mind have some useful information and tips
on their website.
Mind - Coronavirus and Your Mental Health

Q: Can we recruit new volunteers?

You can recruit new volunteers if you have suitable roles and processes in place. Review your recruitment process, adapting it as necessary to make use of digital potential or, if necessary, face to face meetings with social distancing measures in place. Tailor recruitment to your current need and your capacity to manage, support and oversee volunteers.

Information
Develop a role description for each and make use of Volunteering Wales and social media to publicise the opportunities
Volunteering Wales website

Q: What if a volunteer becomes unwell

Use the **NHS Coronavirus symptom checker** and follow the advice given. Encourage volunteers who have symptoms associated with coronavirus or other infectious disease to stay away, or to volunteer from home if that is possible.

WWW

Information
Welsh Government guidance on what to do if you have Covid-19 symptoms, have tested positive or have been in close contact with someone who has Covid 19:
Welsh Government: Self Isolation

Q: How might volunteering change in the longer term?

There will be a need for organisations to be responsive to changing times, including the demands of possible future outbreaks of coronavirus or other infection.

Some of the changes that have been necessary during the Covid 19 pandemic could become embedded as new ways of working in the longer term. This is an opportunity to take stock! Digital options, for example, may allow for more prompt and individually tailored services, but are not accessible to everyone.

As you build up volunteering once again, you could take the opportunity to consult with others about how and why you involve volunteers and what else may be possible. The WCVA/Wales TUC **Charter for Volunteering and Workplace Relationships** sets out guiding principles to ensure harmonious relationships between paid workers and volunteers. The **Investing in Volunteers** standard is a UK wide benchmark for good practice in volunteer management.

You may want to think afresh about **developing a volunteer strategy**, **creating a volunteering policy** or **how to ensure volunteer satisfaction**.

Where to Find Out More

Charity Shops
The Charity Retail Association

The Charity Retail Association maintains up to date guidance on reopening charity shops.

Appendices one and two include a summary of risk areas and suitable control measures and a template for conducting a risk assessment. These and other parts of the document will be useful to other contexts also. Be mindful however that the links are to guidance for England, which may be different from Wales.

Information: Summary of latest Covid 19 guidance relating to charity retail

Community Transport
The Community Transport Association

The Community Transport Association website includes regularly updated guidance for community transport. It includes links to Welsh Government guidance for public transport operators.

Information: Coronavirus/COVID-19: Guidance for Community Transport

Child Care
Welsh Government

General guidance from Welsh Government on protective measures in childcare settings.

Information: Guidance for childcare and playwork: Coronavirus

Befriending
Befriending Network

Downloadable resources from the Befriending Network including telephone befriending guidance which includes suggestions to help you switch from face to face visits to telephone befriending and a toolkit to guide decision making and risk assessment processes

Download: Telephone Befriending Guidance

Government Guidance

Coronavirus - General

Coronavirus Regulations
Welsh Government
Information: Covid 19 alert levels

Travelling Safely (Coronavirus): Guidance for the Public
Welsh Government
Information: Travelling Safely (Coronavirus)

Self-Isolation: Stay at Home Guidance for Households With Possible Coronavirus
Welsh Government
Information: Self Isolation

Coronavirus Symptom Checker
NHS 111
Information: NHS Coronavirus symptom checker

Coronavirus Information
Public Health Wales
Public Health Wales latest information, including how to apply for a Coronavirus test
Informration: COVID-19 Latest Information

Workplace Guidance

Workplace Guidance
Business Wales - Welsh Government
Guidance for employers on returning to work, with links relevant to different sectors
Information: Workplace Guidance

Risk Assessment Tool
Welsh Government
An interactive workforce risk assessment tool, developed by Welsh Government to help people working in the NHS and Social Care, to see if they are at higher risk of developing more serious symptoms if they come into contact with COVID-19 virus. This tool helps managers to exercise their duty of care in assigning volunteers or staff to particular roles or locations according to their level of risk.
Information: COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool

Risk Assessment Template
Health and Safety Executive
A general risk assessment template, guidance and examples can be found on the HSE website.
Information: Risk Assessment Template

Useful Resources

Volunteering - Risk Assessment

Information Sheet - Risk Assessment
Third Sector Support Wales
TSSW information sheet Risk Assessment - Volunteers Working from Home.

https://thirdsectorsupport.wales/resources/risk-assessment-volunteers-based-at-home/

Volunteering Risk Assessment Templates
Wales Council for Voluntary Action
A sample risk assessment for working from home.

https://wcva.cymru/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Sample-risk-assessment-for-staff-or-volunteers-working-from-home.pdf

Health and Wellbeing

Coronavirus and Your Mental Health
Mind
Mind have published information and resources to help maintain mental wellbeing.

https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/

Your Mental Health
Mental Health Foundation
The Mental Health Foundation have published information and resources to help maintain mental wellbeing.

https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/your-mental-health

Third Sector Support Wales

Local Volunteer Centres
Third Sector Support Wales
Contact details for your local volunteer centre.

https://thirdsectorsupport.wales/contact/

Cefnogi Trydydd Sector **Cymru** Third Sector Support Wales

Third Sector Support Wales is a network of support organisations for the whole of the third sector in Wales.

It consists of the 19 local and regional support bodies across Wales, the County Voluntary Councils (CVCs) and the national support body, Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA).

For further information contact
https://thirdsectorsupport.wales/contact/

Disclaimer

The information provided in this sheet is intended for guidance only. It is not a substitute for professional advice and we cannot accept any responsibility for loss occasioned as a result of any person acting or refraining from acting upon it.

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