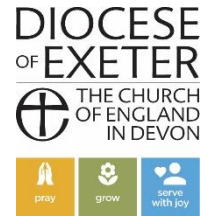


## #ViralKindness – Safeguarding Guidance for PCCs

### Loving our Neighbours – Loving our Volunteers



We are keen to promote the #ViralKindness scheme to offer support to our neighbours who may be in self-isolation or quarantined, but in doing so we need to employ some pragmatic Safeguarding procedures to protect vulnerable people and to protect our volunteers.

When appointing volunteers to talk or pray with people via telephone, please set clear bounds on expectations of your volunteers.

- Caution volunteers against providing advice or guidance they are not qualified to offer – equip your volunteers with the links to the official government and Church of England guidance so they can signpost people to these information sources instead.  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>  
<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>
- Counsel your volunteers about looking after themselves in terms of over-dependency, ensuring they know they can pass someone on to a member of clergy or scheme coordinator if they are over-whelmed by the demands someone places on them.
- Discourage volunteers from providing their own private telephone numbers or email addresses. Try to limit communication to being through the church's scheme coordinator/advertised point of contact.

Before permitting volunteers to undertake tasks on behalf of the church that require them to handle money, proper thought needs to be given to the processes around this and the necessary checks to undertake. Sadly we are already seeing cases of people stealing money or bank cards from vulnerable people, so we need to protect our neighbours accessing our help, and protect our church and volunteers from accusations of theft or abuse.

- Handling the money of vulnerable adults is Regulated Activity in the legislation, so volunteers doing so need to have an Enhanced DBS check with check of the Barred List for the Adult workforce. (Speak to your DBS Verifier to discuss ways to implement pragmatic and timely DBS checks if more are needed.)
- Ensure volunteers handling money are recording what money they receive from vulnerable people and what change (if cash is given) that they have returned. Receipts should be issued and copies kept by the volunteer and/or the scheme coordinator.
- Records of visits/service provision should be logged with the scheme coordinator for the church. This provides transparency and accountability that protects the volunteer from accusation of theft or abuse, but also may be necessary to inform Public Health England of possible contact and transmission opportunities if a volunteer is subsequently diagnosed with the virus.
- Local practice needs to be established of how isolated people are going to pay for any shopping/goods requested/fetched by volunteers. We need to protect

volunteers from being left out of pocket if payment isn't forthcoming from the service user.

- People handing over their bank card to a stranger is obviously too risky as it presents a significant risk of theft or accusation of such.
  - Cash presents an infection transmission route and isolated people may soon run out of cash to give out.
  - Personal cheques present the risk of bouncing.
  - Consideration could be given to low-risk account details, such as a PCC account being given to people accessing the service so they could pay shopping money into that account by BACS transfer if they have access to online banking.
  - We are not going to recommend any one option, but ask that you work with your volunteers locally to establish the safest money handling procedure that you and they are happy to operate.
- Check with your church's insurance company about liability cover and any steps they might expect you to take. Such a service to church attenders is likely to come under normal pastoral care, but you should check cover with them before advertising to the wider community.

Do consider infection control if any service offering will involve somebody attending an isolated person's home.

- Discourage your volunteers from entering an isolated person's home (and this will also reduce risk of any abuse/theft accusation).
- Determine a locally agreed process for exchanging goods and money between volunteers and service users that minimises contact, i.e. leaving goods on doorstep, wearing gloves when carrying bags or disinfect bags/containers with wipes before leaving them.

PCCs should complete an activity risk assessment before embarking on this scheme, detailing their thought processes covering the above considerations and any other identified areas of risk. A template risk assessment form is available here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-09/3.%20Model%20Activity%20Risk%20Assessment%20Template.docx>

Wider risk assessment guidance to consider is available in the Safer Environment and Activities Practice Guidance: [https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/Safer%20Environment%20and%20Activities%20Oct19\\_0.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/Safer%20Environment%20and%20Activities%20Oct19_0.pdf)

This may seem like a lot to consider and do in a time of impending need, but none of us want to see a vulnerable person or volunteer coming to harm through lack of forethought, and nobody wants a headline like, "Church volunteer accused of robbing 94-year old", appearing and stopping people in need from trusting the local church to help them at this crucial time.

Please contact the Safeguarding team if you require further guidance:

[SafeguardingEnquiry@exeter.anglican.org](mailto:SafeguardingEnquiry@exeter.anglican.org)