

Volunteering at Guide Dogs - COVID

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Introduction

This document provides details of the principles Guide Dogs has adopted to manage the risks from COVID-19. These principles will allow you to return to most of your activities in all locations/environments.

These principles must be applied to any volunteer-related activity or meeting at any Guide Dogs site or third-party venue, indoors and outdoors.

Due to the nature of the pandemic, the Nations Governments advice is that organisations still follow the relevant working safety during coronavirus guidance. This and any other support they give will be closely monitored, and these principles will be reviewed and updated as required.

It is important for you to understand that although in some areas of the UK there may not be any legal requirements placed on individuals in relation to COVID-19 restrictions, there is still guidance to follow and a legal requirement for Organisations to risk assess and control the risks presented by COVID-19. This is why you will still have some restrictions/different ways of undertaking your activities that may not apply during your social interactions.

Specific Nation requirements

Due to England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland adopting different timelines and measures it is necessary to have additional restrictions in different regions of the Organisation. These restrictions are detailed in this section and must be followed in conjunction with these principles where applicable.

Scotland:

There is still a requirement to wear facemasks in certain environments, so please ensure you know and follow these rules when undertaking your activities in Scotland. Certain events and venues will require the use of a COVID passport as a mitigation for the risk posed by COVID-19 so please mindful of this and speak to your Guide Dogs contact if planning an event. Specific rules regarding isolation when there is a positive case of COVID in the household are in place,

dependant on vaccination status, so please ensure you are aware and follow these rules. **Important note:** Guide Dogs principles still apply in that you must not leave your home for volunteering activities if you have a COVID case in your household.

Wales:

There is a legal requirement to wear masks in certain environments. Therefore, if you are carrying out activities in Wales you wear a face mask as legally required. Certain events and venues will require the use of a COVID passport as a mitigation for the risk posed by COVID-19 so please mindful of this and speak to your Guide Dogs contact if planning an event. Specific rules regarding isolation when there is a positive case of COVID in the household are in place, dependant on vaccination status, so please ensure you are aware and follow these rules. **Important note:** Guide Dogs principles still apply in that you must not leave your home for volunteering activities if you have a COVID case in your household.

Northern Ireland:

There is still a requirement to wear facemasks in certain environment, so please ensure you know and follow these rules when undertaking your activities. Specific rules regarding isolation when there is a positive case of COVID in the household are in place, dependant on vaccination status, so please ensure you are aware and follow these rules. Certain events and venues will require the use of a COVID passport as a mitigation for the risk posed by COVID-19 so please be mindful of this and speak to your Guide Dogs contact if planning an event. **Important note:** Guide Dogs principles still apply in that you must not leave your home for volunteering activities if you have a COVID case in your household.

England:

There are temporary restrictions in place regarding the legal requirement for use of facemasks in certain environments and isolations rules for close contacts of those who tested positive for the Omicron variant. **Important note:** Guide Dogs principles still apply in that you must not leave your home for volunteering activities if you have a COVID case in your household.

If you have any questions or require clarification, please speak with your key contact.

Overview of principles

Guide Dogs overarching principles to manage the risk posed by the COVID-19 virus are to:

- Undertake, monitor, and regularly review an overarching COVID-19 risk assessment and provide relevant information and instruction
- Monitor and react to any national/local rise in infection or restrictions/lockdown
- Observe social distancing of one metre, wherever reasonably practicable
- Use additional mitigation of face mask when undertaking activities within 1m of another person (close contact)
- Promote handwashing and personal hygiene
- Promote regular cleaning of vehicles and equipment by users
- Use face masks in communal areas in Guide Dogs premises, indoor crowded public spaces, public transport, vehicles (when carrying passengers) and when in close contact with another person during activities
- Ensure employees, volunteer and service users do not leave their home to work/volunteer if they have symptoms, are waiting for a test or result, have tested positive or have been advised to isolate
- Strongly encourage people to test and vaccinate as per Government guidance
- Report to your volunteer manager any COVID-19 related illness or requirement to self-isolate

Further detailed information on these key principles can be found within the next sections of this document.

Risk assessment

Guide Dogs has undertaken a risk assessment on COVID-19 risk which has taken into consideration the hazards posed by work/volunteering activities and all Nations Governments guidance on how we can manage the risk. This risk assessment can be provided by your key contact.

Information and instruction

This document replaces the return to role readiness document you would have used previously.

Local outbreaks/restrictions or controls

We have a process in place to monitor and react to changing guidance, local or nation restrictions of lockdown and any changes will be notified to you as soon as is possible

Distancing

1m - Maintaining 1m from another person during an activity

Where possible you should maintain minimum of 1m distance from other people during your activities. When this distance is maintained, there are no additional mitigations required, unless face coverings are required due to the environment being used.

Close contact - within 1m distance/physical contact with another person

Where there is a need to be within 1m distance of another person the following mitigations must be implemented:

- Keep the activity to the minimum amount of time possible
- Wear a Guide Dogs supplied 3ply disposable face mask
- Avoid face to face positioning where possible - back to back or side to side working adopted
- Carry out robust handwashing/sanitising before, during and after the activity
- Use well ventilated environments

Hygiene and cleaning

We encourage you to continue to maintain a high standard of personal hygiene by:

- Washing hands:
 - On leaving and arriving back to your home
 - Before touching food or drink

- When there is a change of activity or area
- After contact with any surface/object that another person may have touched
- Avoiding touching your face or eyes
- Always sneezing or coughing into a tissue, disposing of the tissue, and washing hands immediately afterwards
- Using disposable cleaning items provided to clean any equipment before and after use and disposing of used items appropriately
- Only carrying essential personal items whilst volunteering
- Cleaning any shared equipment/items before and after use

Disposable cleaning items are available to all volunteers, please speak to your key contact to arrange a supply if required.

Our sites have robust cleaning schedules in place in indoors and outside areas.

Barrier items

Face coverings

There are times where you are expected to wear a face covering when undertaking your volunteering activities, this is to protect you and others. You must wear a face covering when:

- Using public transport for Guide Dog activities
- Using a vehicle and carrying passengers on behalf of Guide Dogs
- In communal indoor areas and moving around on Guide Dog premises. Face masks can be removed when sitting or in designated work areas maintaining at least 1m distance from other people
- In enclosed or crowded places with people you wouldn't normally meet (shops, cafes, shopping centres etc.)
- Undertaking in-person activities within a 1m distance of another person (close contact/physical contact). Both parties are required to wear a mask in this situation. Only Guide Dog supplied 3ply disposable face coverings permitted in this situation. Your key contact can supply you with these masks on request.

Face mask exemptions and continuation of activities

If you feel that you cannot wear a mask or if the person you are providing a service to feels likewise, you must discuss this with your key contact. They will discuss the situation with the relevant team

and an assessment will be undertaken. Once this has happened you will be advised on alternative methods of protection/delivery of the service that could be used to allow the activity to continue.

Where the assessment has identified that the risk posed is too high, it may not be possible for the activity to continue.

Face shields cannot be used as an alternative to a face mask unless agreed in advance with your key contact.

COVID-19 symptoms/suspected case

If you develop symptoms of COVID-19 or advised to isolate by the relevant test and trace service whilst volunteering must cease the activity and go straight home to follow local Government guidance on testing and self-isolation.

If you test positive or live in a household where someone else develops symptoms/has tested positive with COVID-19 you must stay at home and isolate as per Government guidance.

Clinically extremely and clinically vulnerable persons

Vulnerable individuals, who are at higher risk of severe illness are advised to take extra care in observing social distancing and other mitigations put in place.

You can choose to limit the close contact you have with those you do not usually live with in order to reduce the risk of catching or spreading COVID-19, particularly if you are clinically extremely vulnerable. Guide Dogs recognise the importance to respect and be considerate of those who may wish to take a more cautious approach as restrictions are lifted so please speak with your key contact if you have any concerns.

Self-isolation and Close Contact Exemptions

You may be exempt from isolation following contact with a positive case, due to being fully vaccinated, however you must not attend any Guide dog workplace or undertake any in-person visit, service or activity until you have received a negative PCR test. This is because you can still be infected and transfer the virus to others.

Following the negative test result, you may return to your normal volunteering activities/services, but you must limit your interactions with others and not undertake any close contact activities (going within 1m of another person) especially with those persons that are classed as clinically extremely vulnerable during what would be the ten days 'isolation period'. You must follow all other advice on precautions provided by the relevant testing service.

If the positive case is from your household, you must not leave your home for any Guide Dog related activities or undertake any services on behalf of Guide Dogs for what would be the ten days 'isolation period'.

Health checklist

To help prevent the spread of infection COVID-19 you should ask yourself the following question before leaving you home to undertake your activities:

1. Have you or any member of your household had any of the symptoms of COVID-19 in the last 10 days?
 - High temperature
 - A new, continuous cough
 - A loss or change to your sense of smell or taste
2. Have you been contacted by the relevant testing service and asked to self-isolate or are you already self-isolating?
3. Are you or any member of your household waiting to undertake a COVID test or waiting for test results?

If you answer yes to any of the questions you must **stay at home**, follow Government guidance on testing and isolation and speak with your key contact before undertaking any activity on behalf of Guide Dogs.

Premises and COVID safety

All Guide Dogs sites are set up with controls to manage the risks associated with COVID-19. Regular reviews of the site are undertaken to ensure continued compliance and safety.

If you attend a site, you will be advised of the controls you need to follow.

Attendance on site is by pre-arrangement only. This is to allow social distancing to be maintained. Please do not attend a site unless you have confirmation to do so from your key contact.

Processes are in place for accepting donated items or cash/cheques, but we ask that you talk to your key contact before coming to site to ensure someone is available to assist you.

We are still operating contactless drop off/collection of dogs so please follow the advice provided to you by your key contact.

Public transport

We encourage you to follow the following guidance when using public transport for Guide Dogs activities

- Maintain a distance of 1m where possible
- Wear a face covering throughout the whole journey, including entry and exit
- Where possible plan to travel during off peak times
- If the planned service is particularly busy take the next service if possible
- Select routes that keep changes and the journey time to a minimum
- Book tickets online or pay contactless
- Avoid using personal items for the duration of the journey
- Sit by and open windows
- Avoiding being face to face with another person - stand/sit side by side or back to back
- Avoid touching non-essential surfaces
- Keep conversation to a minimum
- Do not eat or drink

Taxi

The preferred seating position is sitting in the back behind the passenger seat, or as per the driver's instruction if separation barriers are present.

Ferry and air travel

Follow specific guidance provided by the carrier on booking and during the journey.

Vehicles

If you use your vehicle or drive one of our fleet vehicles as part of your volunteering activities, it is important that you follow this guidance:

- If carrying passengers, you must all wear Guide Dogs supplied 3ply disposable face mask throughout the whole journey
- Keep passengers to a minimum
- Sit passengers in the back, where possible
- Follow robust hygiene measures throughout the journey
- Keep windows open to increase ventilation, where this is not possible the vehicle ventilation system should be used to ensure fresh air flow
- Keep the duration of the journey to the minimum amount of time possible
- Keep the use of personal items to a minimum
- Do not eat or drink
- When refuelling, use disposable gloves provided at the petrol station and pay contactless wherever possible

Disposable cleaning items and sanitiser is provided in all Guide Dogs vehicles and drivers are responsible for cleaning touch points and keys before and after use. If you require items for use in your own vehicle, please speak to your key contact

Group activities, meetings, or events (3 or more people)

Group work, meetings or training is permissible in all types of venues, Guide Dogs, 3rd party and public spaces, but those selected for use

must have suitable COVID control measures in place and these principles applied at all times.

Outside environments used must be easily managed to prevent access by members of the public into the group space.

All attendees must be communicated with prior to the group work, meeting or training commencing, advising attendees of the COVID-19 related rules for the day including distancing, face coverings, and hygiene.

Health questions must be asked of all attendees, individually or per household, as they arrive.

Cleaning items and equipment, including disposal of waste, should be available and robust cleaning undertaken during the group work as applicable.

Sanitiser and face masks must be available for use by attendees.

3rd party venues, services, and public venues

All types of venues, Guide Dogs and 3rd party and public spaces, can be used for work activities but those selected for use must have suitable COVID control measures in place and these principles applied at all times.

A risk assessment and protocols that cover the 3rd party services COVID risk must be requested from the 3rd party by the person responsible for arranging the service.

If you use public spaces (shops/cafes/shopping centres etc.) for activities please ensure basic COVID controls (hygiene, cleaning, signage) are in place. If you are not happy, leave the area.

Public spaces should be avoided during busy/crowded and peak times.

Use of COVID apps.

Volunteers are strongly encouraged to download and use available COVID testing and tracing apps.

Testing

We strongly encourage volunteers to follow good practice and lateral flow test twice a week, prior to spending time in crowded and enclosed spaces, someone's home or visiting/working with someone who is clinically or clinically extremely vulnerable.

Vaccines

As per government guidance, volunteers are strongly encouraged to have COVID-19 vaccine when offered.

Useful links

Government Coronavirus information

[Follow this link for Scotland](#)

[Follow this link for England](#)

[Follow this link for Wales](#)

[Follow this link for Northern Ireland](#)

End of document.