



## Volunteering at Guide Dogs - COVID Principles

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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 allow you to continue with your volunteering activities in all locations/environments.

These principles must be applied to any volunteer-related activity, training or meeting at any Guide Dogs site, third-party venue, or public space, 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.

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.

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. Therefore, you will still have some restrictions/different ways of undertaking your activities that may not apply during your social interactions.

## 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
- Provide training on COVID-19 hazards and control measures for all employees and volunteers and information for service users
- Monitor and react to any national/local rise in infection or restrictions/lockdown
- Observe distancing between people, wherever reasonably practicable
- Use face masks in indoor communal areas on our premises, when visiting someone's domestic premises, indoor or crowded public spaces, public transport, vehicles when transporting someone, and during close contact with another person (indoors and outdoors) during work activities
- Provide facilities handwashing and sanitising and promote handwashing and personal hygiene
- Have robust and regular cleaning regimes on all premises, and promote regular cleaning of vehicles and work equipment by users
- Have suitable and sufficient ventilation in all indoor work areas
- Set up our premises to reduce the likelihood of contact with the virus (COVID controls)
- Ensure that anyone who has symptoms, are waiting for a test or result, have tested positive or isolating due to a positive case do not leave home for their isolation period to attend a site or undertake work/volunteering activities
- Ensure anyone classed as a close contact of someone who has tested positive are able to follow their nations guidance on testing and isolation
- Support and enable staff to work from home wherever reasonable possible and required
- Strongly encourage people to LFD test and vaccinate as per Nations Government guidance
- Report and monitor all absence relating to COVID-19
- Encourage employees who are unwell, including non-COVID symptoms, to stay away from the workplace until symptoms subside

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

## 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

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

Where possible, you should maintain a 1m distance from other people during 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:

- Guide Dogs supplied 3ply disposable face mask worn by both parties
- Face to face positioning avoided where possible - back-to-back or side to side working adopted
- Robust handwashing/sanitising is undertaken before, during and after activity
- Well ventilated environments/work areas are used
- Where you can, you are requested to undertake an LFD test prior to close contact activities

## Hygiene and cleaning

You are encouraged to maintain a high standard of personal hygiene.

Disposable cleaning items are available to you, for use on equipment, including touch points in vehicles, and work areas as required.

Robust cleaning schedules are in place on all premises, indoors and outside areas.

## Face masks

### Face masks

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 for Guide Dog activities
- moving around in communal indoor areas - Guide Dog premises and 3<sup>rd</sup> party/public venues. Personal disposable/reusable or Guide Dogs supplied 3ply disposable face masks are permitted in this situation. Face masks can be removed when sitting or in designated work areas when maintaining required distance from other people
- in indoor places with people not normally met (shops, cafes, shopping centres, domestic premises etc.)
- inside another person domestic premises during Guide Dogs activities
- undertaking in-person close contact/physical contact activities. Only Guide Dog supplied 3ply disposable face coverings permitted in this situation

Stock of disposable 3ply face masks is on every Guide Dogs premises and can be ordered for collection/delivery directly from your Key Contact.

### 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

Symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

If you develop symptoms of COVID-19 or advised to isolate by the relevant test and trace service whilst volunteering, you 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 follow relevant Governments rules on isolation/testing.

## 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 to reduce the risk of catching or spreading COVID-19, particularly if you are 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 following a positive case

If you are isolating due to a positive case, you must not return to a Guide Dogs site or undertake volunteering activities outside the home for your isolation period.

### England, Northern Ireland, and Wales

This will be full isolation of 10 days or early end isolation after 5 days where there are 2 consecutive negative Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test results taken no earlier than day 5 onwards, taken 24 hours apart, and no high temperature for a minimum of 48 hours.

## Scotland

This will be full isolation of 10 days or early end isolation after 7 days where there are 2 consecutive negative Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test results taken no earlier than day 6 onwards, taken 24 hours apart, and no high temperature for a minimum of 48 hours.

## Start of isolation

If the positive case was confirmed via an LFD test where there were no symptoms, isolation starts from the date of the test. If infection was confirmed by a positive Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test taken due to symptoms, isolation starts from the onset of symptoms.

## Early end isolation additional controls for volunteering related activities

Where an isolation period ends early the following should be applied for days 6-10 for work activities:

- Volunteering from home, where this is possible
- Limiting close contact with other people
- Continue with robust personal hygiene and wear a mask where required
- Avoid volunteering with anyone known to be at higher risk of severe illness if they are infected with COVID- 19 (vulnerable people)

## Close contact isolation requirements at Guide Dogs

### Nation requirements

If you are identified as a close contact of someone with a positive case of COVID-19 you are expected to follow your Nations Government guidance in relation to testing and isolation for non-volunteering activities.

### Specific requirements of ‘close contacts’ for the workplace/volunteering activities

- Those identified as close contacts are required to take an LFD test every day for 7 days, or until 10 days since the last contact with the person who tested positive for COVID-19 if this is earlier, or the end of a positive household member’s self-isolation period prior to

leaving home or meeting with another person for any volunteering activities

- If at any time symptoms are experienced, isolate immediately and book a PCR even if the lateral flow device (LFD) test is negative
- If any LFD tests are positive, self-isolate as required from the date of your positive test result
- Your key contact must be informed if you are identified as a close contact
- Volunteer from home where able during this period
- Continue with robust personal hygiene and wear a mask where required
- Limit close contact with people outside of the household, especially in crowded, enclosed, domestic, or poorly ventilated spaces
- During the full 10-day period from contact with a positive case, limit contact with anyone known at higher risk of severe illness if they are infected with COVID- 19 (vulnerable people)

## 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:

### Questions

- Do you have any of the symptoms of COVID-19?
  - High temperature
  - A new, continuous cough
  - A loss or change to your sense of smell or taste
- Are you currently self-isolating or been advised to isolate by a relevant testing service?
- Are you or waiting to undertake a COVID PCR test or waiting for test results?
- Have you been identified as a close contact of a person with COVID-19 during the last 10 days?

If you answer yes to any of the questions 1-3 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.



If you answer yes to question 4, the rules in the close contact isolation requirements section must be referred to and followed.

**Important: Health questions on return from self-isolation following a positive COVID-19 result**

Where a person is still experiencing symptoms related to COVID-19, other than a high temperature, following completion of their isolation period and testing requirements they can return to normal activities.

If you develop symptoms whilst undertaking a service/activity, you must cease the activity/go straight home and follow local Government guidance on testing and self-isolation.

You are encouraged to stay away from Guide Dog's workplaces/not undertake face to face volunteering activities if you feel unwell (non-COVID symptoms) until symptoms subside.

## **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.

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.

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

Group work is permissible in all types of venues. There is no limit to the number of people that can attend a meeting/event/training, but space must be considered and 1m distance or mask wearing applied along with other relevant principles.

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 advising COVID-19 related rules for the day including, health questions, distancing, face coverings, hygiene, and LFD test requirements.

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.

## **3<sup>rd</sup> party venues, services, and public venues**

All types of venues, Guide Dogs and 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 always applied.

Prior to using a 3<sup>rd</sup> party venue/service provided you should request copies of the risk assessment and protocols that cover COVID, and these reviewed your key contact.

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 and expect volunteers to follow good practice and lateral flow test twice a week and prior to spending time in crowded and enclosed spaces, Guide Dogs sites, someone's home, visiting/working with someone who is vulnerable or undertaking close contact activities.

Anyone attending residential training, or any face-to-face group training/meetings at any location are required and expected to LFD test prior to leaving home.

## Vaccines

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

## Useful links

### Government Coronavirus information websites:

[Follow this link for Scotland](#)

[Follow this link for England](#)

[Follow this link for Wales](#)

[Follow this link for Northern Ireland](#)

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