

COVID-19: Ideas for Informal Volunteering

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yorkcvs

Introduction:

York CVS is a social action organisation; supporting and championing York's voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector to make positive change, challenge issues and grow new ideas for the future in order to strengthen communities.

We do this by supporting new and existing VCSE groups and organisations with guidance about legal structures, governance issues, policies and procedures and by identifying potential funding sources and developing funding bids. We also bring organisations together to discuss and challenge local issues through our events and voluntary sector forums.

Many people have offered to volunteer during the COVID-19 pandemic to support their local communities. The following guidance and information is for individuals who are looking to volunteer informally during this time.

Formal volunteering is where you attach yourself to a local group or organisation and follow their guidelines. You will usually have a role description and the organisation will provide training. You can find local volunteering opportunities on our website at: www.yorkcvs.org.uk/volunteers.

You may find that these formal volunteering opportunities are not suitable and that organisations are not actively recruiting volunteers due to resources and capacity. You may want to do something more informal. Maybe you are happy to link to an organisation but you want to do something from your own home. We have termed this 'informal volunteering'.

Ideas for informal volunteering:

If you have never volunteered before or you are not currently volunteering for a voluntary sector group or organisation, here are a few ideas of how you can make a positive difference through informal volunteering:

1. Viral kindness card

This card is something that you can print out and put through your neighbours' doors, especially if you are aware of households that may be isolating, lonely or struggling in some other way. You can amend the card to offer anything that you feel able to and that is appropriate. From shopping, telephone calls, video support with home schooling or helping to cut their lawn.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1L_8Go1zQ572fBZtEIFfQZI9vNEwK7Rf/view?fbclid=IwAR0JfoHZOxsaewhBK7I1-PiYKFq7KqFIWH3AWclgvfplSZsfm9jxGZcPCgA

Also see our guidance on shopping for others: <https://www.yorkcvs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/York-CVS-Guide-to-shopping-for-others-safeguarding.pdf>

2. Neighbourly volunteering

Similar to the viral kindness card but aimed at older people, AGE UK have created a 'Neighbourly volunteering' video. This includes a printable card with additional information for older people. The video gives you tips on how to approach an older neighbour. It gives you advice on how to stay safe whilst supporting an older person and how to ensure their safety. The video also suggests being a 'digital buddy' to an older person. Helping them to navigate the world of video calls for example can help them keep in touch with family and friends. Or maybe just helping them to do an on-line shop. You can view the video here: <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer/neighbourly-volunteering/>

3. Help to make PPE and other items

There is concern about the lack of PPE in hospitals and elsewhere. Could you help out by sewing? Contact York Scrubs at: <http://www.yorkscrubs.co.uk/>. They are looking for help.

Crafting – [organisations](#) are looking for people to knit or crochet items from [premature baby clothes](#) to [dog blankets](#), from [hats for drinks](#) to twiddle muffs for people living with dementia.

Before making any items it is suggested you contact the organisations to confirm their needs at this time.

4. Fundraising

Charities and voluntary groups are losing money at the moment. In particular, those who rely on revenue from charity shops or renting out space to other groups. If you have a charity that is close to your heart then maybe check out their website to see if they have any fundraising ideas and get involved!

5. Become an online virtual volunteer

There are lots of opportunities for you to contribute from your phone or laptop. Here are just a few of the ones we've found but there are many others available:

- You can help [make maps](#) to inform the relief efforts of organisations such as the Red Cross.
- If you have research, training or project management skills you might like to contribute to a bigger project such as the [UN](#), a site packed with worldwide opportunities.
- Through the [Be My Eyes](#) app you can help a visually impaired person to go about their everyday life.
- Track [bird sightings](#) and other citizen science [actions](#).
- Become a [mentor](#) for a young person through the Princes Trust.

6. Support a charity and the voluntary sector

Get in touch with a local charity or a local community or voluntary group to see if there is anything you can do remotely to help them at this time. In addition to donations and sharing their activity, they may welcome help with social and other media, research, redesigning information and handbooks, stuffing envelopes, setting up virtual quizzes or events for their supporters and volunteers.

Please note that the website links given are an indication of the type of places you may like to start looking, they are not endorsed or validated by York CVS. With thanks to [Community First Yorkshire](#) and [WCAVA](#).

7. Stay Safe whilst you are Volunteering Independently

We want you to stay safe whilst you are helping others in your local community. [Read the government guidance](#). If you have any questions regarding safeguarding, please get in touch with our Funding and Development Officer, Jane Granville (jane.granville@yorkcvs.org.uk) who can provide information on training.