

Key Safeguarding Considerations for Communities' Coronavirus response

18th March 2020

The light in the world today is all the people coming together and supporting one another through these uniquely challenging times. One would hope in such exceptional circumstances common sense, goodwill and the presumption of good intentions will prevail, but communities must also consider potential risks, and maintain our responsibility to keep all parties safe.

When thinking about how to apply Safeguarding in these difficult circumstances please remember **Safeguarding applies to children and adults at risk/vulnerable adults** (those with care and support needs). Most adults who are members of synagogues are unlikely to fall into the vulnerable category – many people are self-isolating but in usual circumstances manage well independently and are therefore not adults at risk/vulnerable adults. This is the NHS working definition of adults at risk can be [found here](#)

We still have a duty to provide processes which protect everyone, including the volunteers who will be helping. Many communities already offer community support and 'scaling up' should not mean changing policies which are already working. If you feel your usual policies aren't appropriate in this crisis, we must advise you to redraft your policy – you should not go against your policy. A redraft could include adding a paragraph amending the policy in circumstances of national emergency.

[The COVID-19 Mutual Aid UK](#) website has lots of information for community groups – there safeguarding section is still in progress so do keep an eye on it.

Infection Control

There is excellent guidance [here](#) regarding how to deliver items to people in isolation in the safest possible way.

Safeguarding

Please remember to remind new and old volunteers that they must refer any concerns to the coordinator or Designated Safeguarding Lead as appropriate. Please ensure your Safeguarding Policy is available via your website and sent to all volunteers so that they know to report any concerns.

Handling Money

Ensure you have clear agreements with both recipients and volunteers as to how the money will be managed if shopping is taking place. It is safest to use cash and provide receipts, or for recipients to make bank transfers online or by phone. You may wish to encourage the older non-digital members to set up telephone banking rather than internet banking or pay by cheque. Volunteers should never take people's credit/debit cards and/or PIN numbers to make payments or withdraw cash, or set up or access online/telephone banking. Any shopping should be agreed in advance with a financial limit. Recipients should not be expected to pay for volunteers' expenses such as travel – the synagogue may choose to cover this, in line with their usual policies.

When using cash or a cheque, it is best placed in an open envelope so it can be checked but is not handled, and the recipient can then choose if they wish to disinfect it according to [protocols](#) which should be shared with volunteers so they can make informed choices about their own protection.

DBS checks

DBS checks are needed when **supporting children or adults at risk/vulnerable adults in their homes**. It is likely that vulnerable adults would be safer isolating from social contact, as their need for care and support is likely to make them vulnerable to coronavirus too. It is best to provide social and emotional support by phone, and mutual support might be an appropriate model (where isolated people are put in touch with each other, rather than a community volunteer). Where shopping is being done for vulnerable adults, ideally the volunteers should be DBS checked, or the coordinator (who should be DBS checked) should oversee/coordinate financial transactions.

As you recruit new volunteers you may wish to ask if they happen to have a current DBS certificate as teachers and other professions require them.

Lone Working

Many synagogues have policies for Lone Working, which protect both the volunteer and recipient.

In brief, we recommend that volunteers make sure someone knows where they are and when they are expected back – it may be that volunteers pair up and provide this for each other. Alert the coordinator if you are concerned about the volunteer.

Expectations

It will be helpful to set clear expectations and boundaries at the start of the process, regarding time commitments, response times and practical tasks, to ensure we are able to maintain support during a potentially lengthy period, where volunteers are also likely to become unwell for some period.

Data Protection

[Latest ICO advice](#) regarding Data is here - a pragmatic approach for the current circumstances.

“The ICO is a reasonable and pragmatic regulator, one that does not operate in isolation from matters of serious public concern. Regarding compliance with data protection, we will take into account the compelling public interest in the current health emergency.”

‘Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh Bazeh’ - All of Israel is responsible for one another

Look after yourselves and each other