

NHS Volunteer Responders

Frequently asked questions (FAQs) for people self-isolating and members of the public

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If you, or someone you know, needs a hand with collecting shopping or prescriptions, or just wants someone to talk to, our NHS Volunteer Responders are here to help. Join the thousands of others throughout England who are already receiving support.

Call **0808 196 3646** or visit www.nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk Help is available if you have a medical condition which makes you vulnerable to COVID-19, especially if you are over 70. You also qualify if you are pregnant or have a disability.

What kind of help can I access?

1. What support is available from the NHS Volunteer Responders?

Volunteers can help with collecting and deliver shopping, medication or other essential supplies for people who are self-isolating. They can also provide telephone support to people and call you for a friendly chat.

If you need support to get to medical appointments, you will need to contact your GP and ask them to request support on your behalf.

There are six different volunteer roles:

- **Community Response Volunteer:** This role involves collecting shopping, medication or other essential supplies for someone who is self-isolating/vulnerable, and delivering these supplies to their home.
- **Community Response Plus Volunteer:** This role is for volunteers to collect and deliver shopping, medication or other essential supplies for patients with cognitive impairments and or significant vulnerabilities who are shielding.
- **Patient Transport Volunteer:** This role supports the NHS by providing transport to patients who are medically fit for discharge, as well as taking patients to their essential appointments.
- **NHS Transport Volunteer:** This role involves transporting equipment, supplies and/or medication between NHS services and sites, it may also involve assisting pharmacies with medication delivery.
- **Check in and Chat Volunteer:** This role provides short-term telephone support to individuals who are at risk of loneliness as a consequence of self-isolation.
- **Check in and Chat Plus Volunteer:** This is a peer-support role, provided by responders who are shielding themselves. Regular telephone support and a 'listening ear' is offered to clients who are also shielding or experiencing challenges as a result of COVID-19.

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How can I access support?

2. I need the help of a NHS Volunteer Responder, but I have not received a letter, how do I access their help?

Call our Support Team **0808 196 3646**, between 8am and 8pm, and you will be asked whether you:

The programme is open to anyone who needs to self-isolate for any reason. This includes anyone who:

- Has ever been advised to shield by a health professional.
- Is vulnerable for another reason, (for instance, due to disability, pregnancy, aged over 70, has a long-term condition such as Parkinson's or epilepsy, or are vulnerable due to a mental health condition).
- Is someone with caring responsibilities.
- Is self-isolating because they've been diagnosed with COVID-19 or have symptoms, or they've been in contact with someone who has.
- Has been instructed to self-isolate by the 'Test and Trace' service, because they've been near someone infected.
- Is self-isolating ahead of planned hospital care.
- Has been instructed to self-isolate following entry into the country.

The programme is also open to frontline health and care staff.

3. I have received a letter and have been identified as one of the 2.1 million people that have been asked to shield/isolate. How do I access support?

You can call our Support Team on **0808 196 3646** to request support. Please have your letter and your GP's name, surgery name and phone number to hand.

4. Can a carer make a referral on someone else's behalf?

People with caring responsibilities are able to make a referral for someone they care for who meets the criteria in question two. Carers can also make a referral for themselves, if this support helps them continue in their caring role. Please call **0808 196 3545** to make a referral or find more information on the [NHS Volunteer Responders website](#).

5. Can a family member refer in on behalf of a relative that meets the criteria?

Yes, as long as the individual being referred has given their consent.

6. I want to know if my health professional or GP has already referred me into the scheme?

You can call the Support Team on **0808 196 3382** and they will look into this for you.

7. I have been contacted by a volunteer asking how they can help. I haven't asked for any support?

Your GP or another health or care professional may have asked us to call you to offer support. Please call our Support Team on **0808 196 3382** and we can look into this for you.

8. Where can I find further information and guidance about the scheme?

You can visit our NHS Volunteer Responders website to find the latest guidance and frequently asked questions (FAQs) - www.nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk

9. Can I have a copy of the privacy notice?

Our privacy statement is available on our website but if you would like a copy to be posted, please contact our Support Team on **0808 196 3382** and they can arrange this for you.

10. How long will the NHS Volunteer Response service be available for?

The programme is expected to run until at least autumn 2020. Further details will be shared with volunteers, patients and referrers once a date has been confirmed.

11. When/how will patients be notified that the service is due to stop?

Further details will be shared with volunteers, patients and referrers once a date has been confirmed. It is likely that letters will be sent to patients with full details in the first instance.

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Support in action

12. I would like to request a Check In and Chat Volunteer on a regular basis, will the same volunteer call me all the time?

No, your requests for support are sent out to a group of volunteers who are in your local area. This means different people may pick them up each time. It's unlikely that the alert will be picked up by the same volunteer on each occasion.

13. Can I ask the same volunteer to continue supporting me?

Unfortunately, it's not possible for the same volunteer to support you on a regular basis. Your requests for support are sent out to a group of volunteers who are in your local area. This means different people may pick them up each time.

Please do not ask volunteers to give you their phone number or contact details as they are not permitted to do so. The programme is set up to ensure we are safeguarding you and the person who is supporting you. If you need ongoing support please call our Support Team on **0808 196 3382**.

14. What if a volunteer says that they can continue to support me?

Please call our Support Team on **0808 196 3382** to discuss this. We need to ensure everyone receiving support from the NHS Volunteer Responders programme is safeguarded and we will need to politely ask the volunteer to not continue with this arrangement. If you require ongoing support please speak to our Support Team.

15. Can I give a volunteer money or a gift for the support they have provided?

You can always make a donation to a charity of your choice including [Royal Voluntary Service Covid-19 Emergency Appeal](#).

16. Will I know what time the volunteer will be arriving?

Our Support Team will not be able to give you a time. However, a volunteer will contact you by telephone and you can discuss a convenient time then.

17. I would like a volunteer to take me to an appointment, how do I know if a volunteer will be turning up?

Your GP, or another medical professional, will need to ask for help with transport on your behalf. Once this has happened a volunteer will call you. They will find out the date and time of your appointment and agree to help if they are available. If they are unable to help they will

pass your request to another volunteer. If you have not heard from a volunteer a few days before your appointment, please call the Support Team.

18. I need my medication collected today, is this possible?

We cannot guarantee that we can fulfil this request but will mark this task as high priority which means typically a volunteer will be in touch, if available within the same day.

19. Do you offer assistance with pet walking or have volunteers that I could go for a walk with?

Unfortunately we are not able to support these tasks as these activities are not available through the NHS Volunteer Responders programme.

20. I have been receiving the government food parcel but they have finished and I don't know what to do?

Government food parcels finished on 31st July. We can ask a volunteer to help you with shopping if you're not able to do this yourself. If you are able to pay for your shopping you can call our Support Team on 0808 196 3646 who can discuss payment options with you. If you can't pay for your shopping you could try to contact your local council, (<https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council>), to find out what support services are available in your area.

21. Can I request a food parcel from you?

Unfortunately we are not able to arrange this for you. We can ask a volunteer to help you with shopping if you're not able to do this yourself. If you are able to pay for your shopping, please call our Support Team who can raise a self-referral for someone to go and do your shopping for you.

22. I do not have any food and do not have the funds to purchase any?

You can try to contact your local authority and local food banks who may be able to source a food parcel for you.

23. Do you check volunteers driving licences are valid?

All volunteers will receive a 'Getting You Started' pack appropriate to the roles they sign up to. Volunteers who will be driving as part of their role are asked to confirm as part of the terms and conditions of volunteering:

- That the vehicle being used is roadworthy as outlined by UK law, has a valid MOT certificate where appropriate and is taxed for use on the roads.
- That their driving license is valid, in date and appropriate for the vehicle they're using.

24. Are all volunteers over 18?

Yes, all volunteers must be over 18 years old and fit and well with no symptoms.

25. What training will volunteers undergo?

All volunteers will receive a 'Getting You Started' pack appropriate to the roles they sign up to so they will have specific, clear and detailed guidance which will enable them to provide support safely. Please note that our volunteers are there to provide a preventative service to isolation/shielding and not a treatment or care delivery service for those with; significant mental health conditions; receiving treatment for suicidal thoughts or actions; receiving support for drug and/or alcohol abuse and or have life limiting health conditions, disabilities or cognitive impairment where a carer is responsible for their daily care needs/support in normal circumstances.

26. What checks have you put the volunteers through?

We have carried out identity checks for all volunteers, including checking their passports or driving license etc. Patient Transport volunteers must also have an Enhanced **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)** certificate, with adult barred or both barred.

27. How do you safeguard patients?

The safeguarding of patients and/or volunteers is paramount. Royal Voluntary Service have a safeguarding framework to support NHS Volunteer Responders which includes;

- A trained safeguarding team working 7 days a week picking up concerns from volunteers and or patients
- A patient safety letter detailing what patients can expect from a volunteer and what to do if their volunteer experience falls below this expectation.
- No 1-2-1 volunteer to patient relationships. GoodSAM is a dynamic platform of matching available volunteers to tasks that are live.
- All volunteers have an identification page within the App which they must show the patient
- Safe guidelines around payment of shopping and prescriptions
- A volunteer agreement which details expected behaviours of volunteers
- A volunteer problems solving team to help with low level volunteer concerns or issues
- A process for removal and or banning of volunteers or patients from the service for inappropriate conduct or behaviour.

28. How do I raise a safeguarding concern with Royal Voluntary Service?

Safeguarding concerns can be raised by calling the Support Team (**0808 196 3382**) who will pass you to the safeguarding team.

29. How can I check volunteers are genuinely part of the scheme?

Any volunteer engaged in an active task under this scheme will be able to evidence this by showing you the NHS Volunteer Responders app on their mobile phone, where you can see that they are actively carrying out an assigned task.

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It will look like this:

