

Keeping in touch with your non-active volunteers during the Covid-19 crisis

Many organisations are now out of physical contact with their volunteers as we self-isolate, but we know groups are still working to keep their volunteers engaged ready to step back into the fray when the situation improves.

Groups are also concerned volunteers may also be missing the camaraderie of volunteering and have started to think about ways to address this. This is a starting point and not intended to be an exhaustive list, please let us have your ideas and recommendations.

Keeping your volunteers in the loop

Volunteers will be keen to know how your beneficiaries are doing and what steps your organisation is putting in place to help beneficiaries where you can. Use tools such as email, Face book, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp, or for those offline, phone or post newsletters or cards to keep volunteers engaged with what is going on in your organisation. Find ways to make sure they feel valued such as sending messages from beneficiaries you are in touch with or from your senior team. Make sure you share any good news stories.

For volunteers that have access to a computer or tablet but struggle with IT consider buddying them up over the phone with another volunteer who is more IT literate to get them online.

Encourage your volunteers to volunteer short term elsewhere

Volunteer as an emergency community volunteer

See [How people can volunteer](#) on our site

Virtual volunteering

Even though your organisation is unable to utilise your volunteers' talents at present there are ways they could lend support without leaving their homes

Loving Hands www.lovinghands.org.uk

Is a website for people who like knitting, sewing etc. They have members from all over the UK who make items for various charities, from premature baby clothes to elephant blankets, bags for baby puffins, fiddle mats and muffs, toys. They work with over 36 different charities including the RSPCA, The Salvation Army, SANDS, Operation Orphan and many others.

A new initiative to support the bereaved from the Covid-19 crisis is [knitted hearts for those who lose loved ones](#)

Adopt a Grandparent was recently launched by CHD living homes to help combat loneliness amongst their residents. They pair people up to communicate via phone or post <https://chdliving.co.uk/adopt-grandparent>

Create social opportunities online

Virtual meet ups Host a virtual meet up such as tea party or coffee morning using a video conferencing tool such as Zoom, Skype or Microsoft Teams

Create shared stories Post photographs or stories via Instagram and ask people to contribute their memories. Rowan are sharing photos around a theme creating a Feel Good Friday post
<https://mailchi.mp/f9fb834eb15d/rowans-feel-good-friday>

Encourage peer support via tools such as Face Book or WhatsApp

Get people to share skills you could even use the produce in a later fundraiser – who doesn't love a macramé plant hanger!

Create a quiz that can be done online email or via social media such as Whatapp or even posted
 For example <https://www.power2inspire.org.uk/sports-quiz-1/>

There are lots of free quizzes to download for example [Quiz 57](#) and [Free pub quiz emoji quizzes](#) are particularly well suited to social media - The one below is TV programmes!



Support volunteers 'wellbeing

Support good mental health [NHS guidance on mental wellbeing while staying at home](#)

Self help guide for people worried about COVID-19 <https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/>

Lifecraft have a list of support available <https://lifecraft.org.uk/our-services/information/resources-to-use-at-home/>

Qwell – Online Wellbeing Support

Adults in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough can now sign up to Qwell – a free online support and wellbeing community which is provided by CPSL Mind as part of its Good Life Service.

Online learning for fun or relevant to roles

For Community Emergency Volunteer training

[Communities prepared](#) are a national community resilience programme, resources include:

[Public Health Volunteer Training](#) to help Community Emergency Volunteers and spontaneous local groups better understand public health emergencies and their potential role in supporting community resilience during the Covid-19 crisis.

Encourage volunteers to update or learn skills relevant to your organisation

[NCVO](#) have a list of free online resources

Volunteer Scotland has joined forces with The Open University to create [Involving Volunteers](#), a digital learning module aimed at improving the volunteering journey.

Reed have free courses on a wide variety of subjects including bookkeeping, understanding autism nutrition and health and IT skills <https://www.reed.co.uk/courses/free>

Open University has lots of free courses some are for general interest such as history of art but others could be more vocational such as a course on young peoples wellbeing or an introduction to the voluntary sector <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses/full-catalogue>

[Life Hack](#) lists over 20 free learning sites

Future Learning has lots of free online courses from universities and organisations globally. Including working supportively with refugees, understanding gender inequality to understanding fashion <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses>

Create your own learning opportunities online

This is an opportunity for volunteers to update or learn new skills relevant to your organisation. If you don't have existing training resources you can create some by making your own videos and webinars – they do not have to be slick - for example see our short video created on the free version of Zoom [Managing difficult conversations](#)

If you want to create a series of modules and assess and track your volunteers progress there are many learning platforms available. [Moodle](#) is one of the best -nown free platforms.

Create podcasts <https://www.bbc.co.uk/academy-guides/podcasting-what-do-i-need-to-know>

Make you volunteers aware of interesting online activities

Exercise classes [NHS Home Workout videos](#) and [Royal Voluntary Service Easy exercises](#) and [Vivacity](#) are suitable for most people. For the more active [Active Fenland selection](#) has exercises from yoga to circuit training

Singing Getting together to sofa sing <https://www.thesofasingers.net/> and Gareth Malone's Great British Home Chorus for voices and instruments <https://decca.com/greatbritishhomechorus/>

Games online for example [Scrabble](#)

Virtual tours of museums and galleries

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<https://artsandculture.google.com/project/frida-kahlo>

<https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/andy-warhol/exhibition-guide>

Star gazing <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/starstruck/>

First site the contemporary visual arts organisation had artist activity packs that can be downloaded for free <https://firstsite.uk/art-is-where-the-home-is/>

Volunteers fundraising online

Some volunteers might like to get creative or socialise and raise some much-needed funding at the same time. See these links for some ideas

<https://www.civilsociety.co.uk/news/charities-resort-to-stay-at-home-campaigns-to-raise-funds.html>

<https://eveappeal.org.uk/getting-involved/organise-your-own-eve-event/make-time-for-tea/holding-a-virtual-make-time-for-tea-party/>

Online communication tools

[Esmee Fairbairn](#) have a great review of online communication tools

[SCVO](#) have really good information on digital service delivery

What about offline volunteers?

Teleconference If many of your volunteers are not online you could explore teleconferencing which just requires people to ring a number to access a conference call. The Phone Coop offers a service that costs from 8p per minute per participant and people just need a pin number to access the call using their landline or mobile. No contract or minimum call length or number of participants required <https://www.thephone.coop/business/conferencing> Obviously other providers are available! You could use the teleconference to share updates, run training or for more social activities such as a quiz, bingo or a book group.

Posted communications – newsletters, postcards, birthday cards, quizzes. Send them kits to complete practical tasks such as those on www.lovinghands.org.uk. Get your senior managers to send them a note to keep them updated and express appreciation for their work to date.

Telephone – check in calls, arrange groups of volunteers to offer each other peer support via the phone.

If you have ideas to add to this document please contact christine@cambridgecvs.org.uk