



Chartered Accountants

COVID19 UPDATE FOR CHARITIES

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Charity volunteers in England are exempt from rules about mixing households during the pandemic but should volunteer from home if possible, according to the latest government guidance.

The Guidance, which sets out the rules on “safe and effective volunteering” during the second national lockdown, was published late last week.

It says that “while volunteering, people can meet in groups of any size from different households, indoors or outdoors”. This is different from the lockdown rules for England as a whole, which ban people from more than one household mixing indoors unless they belong to a pre-existing support bubble.

The government urges volunteers who meet in groups to take extra care following social distancing and hand-washing rules.

Volunteer from home if possible

The guidance warns charities to make sure no volunteer feels “compelled to volunteer outside their home by their organisation or group”.

It says that people should volunteer from home if that is possible but volunteering outside the home is acceptable provided the individual is not clinically extremely vulnerable, does not need to self-isolate, and is following social distancing guidelines.

It recommends that volunteers over 70 years old may need additional support to minimise social contact and protect them from the virus.

Individuals are not be able to volunteer if the charity is among the venues required to close as part of the lockdown.

People are advised to walk or cycle to their volunteering if possible, rather than driving or using public transport.

Testing for ‘essential’ volunteers

Volunteers carrying out “essential work” like social care or in NHS settings, or in “critical frontline services” like drug treatment, may be prioritised for coronavirus testing.

No change to furlough rules

The guidance reminds employees currently on furlough that they can volunteer for charity but cannot volunteer at the organisation from which they have been furloughed. These rules have not changed, despite charity leaders lobbying for changes.

Charities using volunteers during lockdown are reminded that they have “a duty of care to volunteers to ensure as far as reasonably practicable they are not exposed to risks to their health and safety”

Burgis & Bullock, Chartered Accountants
Phone: 0345 177 5500

Web: www.burgisbullock.com
Email: info@burgisbullock.com

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