

Covid-19: Voluntary Organisations and Data Protection

Stroud District Council (the Council) is aiming to support communities through the Covid-19 outbreak. In order to do this, the Council is working with voluntary organisations to ensure that the most vulnerable people in the district can access help with shopping, collecting prescriptions and maintaining their homes.

When personal data is passed to voluntary organisations in order to assist with supporting the community, they must ensure that they comply with the legal obligations set out by the General Data Protection Regulations and the Data Protection Act 2018. The following guidance will help voluntary organisations to comply with the applicable legislation, but it is not an exhaustive list and voluntary organisations have ultimate responsibility for ensuring compliance.

- You should read the Information Commissioner's Office's (ICO) blog on community groups and Covid-19 to familiarise yourself with what you need to know about data protection. This can be found at: <https://ico.org.uk/about-the-ico/news-and-events/news-and-blogs/2020/03/community-groups-and-covid-19/>.
- You should also read the government factsheet on DBS and safeguarding for community volunteers which can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-factsheet-community-volunteers-during-covid-19-outbreak/safeguarding-and-dbs-factsheet-faqs>
- Personal data is information that relates to an identified or identifiable individual. All organisations or groups handling personal data need a data protection policy. It is best to have this written down in a document called a privacy notice. A template privacy notice can be found in the ICO's blog for community groups.
- Whether you are a small community group or an established charity, you need to know who is acting in your organisation's name. Organisations can ask volunteers for personal data so they can carry out their role.
- Decide what type of personal data will help you identify volunteers. You could ask for a utility bill with their name on it. If you are engaging a driver, ask to see their driving licence.
- Store personal data securely. Try to use password-protected documents/hardware. If using paper, lock it away.
- Health data is classed as sensitive personal data. Make sure your volunteers are handling sensitive personal data responsibly and that no one's health status is used against them.
- Explain that volunteers are not to ask for or share any personal data or health data, unless there is a specific reason why this data needs to be collected.
- It is ok to ask volunteers if they have experienced any coronavirus symptoms, so you can advise them if they need to self-isolate. If they're well enough, they may be able to volunteer from home.
- The ICO recognises that organisations may struggle to maintain data protection standards at this time. They have said they will not penalise organisations where they have had to divert efforts away from activities such as responding to subject access requests.