

Everybody Needs a Good Neighbour

Tips for safe and effective help in your neighbourhood during the COVID-19 outbreak

A definition of a good neighbour: someone to be trusted, a courteous friendly source of help when help is needed. Someone you can count on, someone who cares (Edward B Rust)

Richmond has always been proud of its community spirit and hundreds of people are mobilising in the borough to help those affected by COVID-19 and the impact of self-isolation. Whilst this is heartening to see, unfortunately it has created an environment in which unscrupulous individuals can gain access to the elderly and the vulnerable. There have already been incidences across the UK of financial theft and robbery.

A helpful guide on how to stay safe on your doorstep can be found on the Age UK website at <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/money-legal/scams-fraud/doorstep-scams/>.

We want to make sure that you can help in a safe and effective way. The kind of activities that neighbourhood volunteers are likely to help with are roles such as food delivery, donations of food, toiletries and cleaning products. Following these simple tips will help you to do what you want to do - to help people whilst minimising the potential for harm.

- **Friends, Family and Neighbours First**

Look to your immediate connections first, people you know, who are in your vicinity. Remember, it is not only the elderly and vulnerable who may need help – health and care workers, those working in social care, supermarket workers, all are going to be under enormous strain and working long hours, so there may be ways to help them too.

- **Register as an individual with Richmond Volunteer Service**

Currently local charities are mobilising and working through how they are supporting their current beneficiaries and how to expand their services to help with the inevitable additional demand. [Register with Richmond Volunteer Service](#) for roles to support those affected by COVID-19 and, as these new roles come on stream, you will receive regular updates about what is needed and how to volunteer. If you have a current enhanced DBS check, please record this in your information section. Remember it's a marathon, not a sprint. Your help will be even more crucial **in a few weeks' time** so please be patient.

- **Small is beautiful**

Work with a section of your street, a restricted geographical area or a community you are already part of. Ideally it should be no more than 20-30 people who have a connection to each other. Don't invite people outside of your immediate circle to volunteer and don't share information about the people you are helping outside of your group. The only exception is if you have a concern, in which case it should be reported to a statutory agency.

- Don't take on more than you can handle**

We know this is going to be a long haul, so only commit to errands that you can manage. Allocate a primary and a back-up volunteer, so you have some contingency if someone becomes unavailable to help.
- Identify group leaders**

Identify one or two administrators, who can control the access to your WhatsApp or Facebook groups, and allocate individuals who need help amongst your group members.
- Limit the sharing of personal data**

Do not share information about the people you are helping online or by telephone messaging through the group options. Allocate the people you are helping in pairs (primary and back up) and, as much as possible, limit the information about them to the specifically allocated volunteers. Do not identify or share personal information about the people you are helping on social media.
- Limit the spread of COVID-19**

Offer to run errands but stay outside of the persons home. Observe the NHS guidance at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>. Think through the tasks and apply the guidance. Eg. wash your hands before and between every delivery, leave items on the doorstep, ring the bell, stand back for a distance of at least 2m distance, see that the person comes to the door, ask them if they are okay and tell them to wash their hands once they have unpacked the delivery.
- Do not ask for money or anything in return**

Make it clear to the person you are helping that no-one will be asking for money or asking to come into the house. As well as cases of financial fraud, there are unverified reports of fraudsters going door to door claiming to be NHS staff conducting Coronavirus tests or welfare visits. **NHS staff are not going door to door.** Advise the person you are helping that if anyone comes to the door in this way, they should not let them in and should call the police immediately.
- Prescription collection**

Friends, family and neighbours can collect medication – follow the NHS guidance at <https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/caring-carers-and-long-term-conditions/can-i-pick-up-a-prescription-for-someone-else/>. Boots are producing lots of really useful information to help explain how to help with this and to offer advice on planning ahead for repeat prescriptions, etc. Please try not to ring the pharmacy unless it's absolutely urgent - <https://www.boots.com/online/pharmacy/>.
- Do not provide non-prescribed medication for symptom relief** (eg. paracetamol)

All non-prescribed medication you collect must be specifically labelled by a pharmacist. For some, non-prescribed drugs can be contradictory to their prescribed medication and should not be taken unless authorised by a pharmacist.
- Talk is good**

One of the big issues for people self-isolating is loneliness. Calling or video calls are a really useful thing you can do and they don't involve direct contact. You can also suggest individuals can call Silver Line for a cheerful chat, day or night on 0800 470 80 90.

- **Look after yourself physically**

Your health and wellbeing is paramount. Follow the guidance and do not volunteer or provide help to neighbours if you are feeling unwell. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water regularly. If you are out and about, take a bottle of water to keep yourself hydrated and a bar of soap so you can wash your hands. Soap and water are the best protection against the virus and are better than hand sanitiser, which is in limited supply. Disposable gloves are also helpful. Be aware of your own safety and tell someone where you are and what you are doing.

- **Look after your own mental health**

There are lots of free resources online to help with breathwork, meditation and mindfulness – do an online search to find what works best for you.

- **If you have concerns, flag it with appropriate statutory services**

Do not be afraid of flagging up people who you are helping if you have concerns that are beyond the immediate help you can deal with. Richmond Council has set up a Call Centre to help with this - 020 8871 6555.

- **Donate if you can**

Age UK Richmond is currently welcoming donations of food, toiletries and other household items. They can be dropped off between 9am and 2pm on Monday to Friday at their [Twickenham Wellbeing Centre](#) (Aragon Road, TW1 3NH). All charities will be affected by a huge increase in demand for their services so, if you already donate to a cause that is important to you, please continue to do so.

Richmond's local Community Hub Helpline – 020 8871 6555

Now launched as a first response for information and advice for residents, particularly the elderly and/or vulnerable without support networks. Find out more at www.richmond.gov.uk.

Do what you can, with what you have, where you are (Theodore Roosevelt)