

## Advice for Protecting Personal Data during Covid-19 for small, neighbourhood groups

It is really important that requests for support are kept safe and confidential, both for legal reasons around data management and also to safeguard the most vulnerable in our communities.

Data protection won't stop you from helping people, but there are certain things you need to take into account when handling people's information.

We are facing unprecedented challenges during this Covid-19 pandemic and we know that you might need to share information quickly or adapt the way you work; Data Protection will not stop you doing that – it is about being proportionate; if something feels excessive then it probably is.

### What is personal data?

Personal data is information about a person which is identifiable as being about them. This includes basic things like names and addresses, and also more complex or sensitive information such as ethnicity, criminal record, employment history, sexual orientation, and health information.

### What steps can you take to protect personal data?

- Ensure that the person whose data you hold knows that you are holding it, why you are holding it and has given you permission to hold it and share it; note that consent has been given (verbal consent is acceptable) on your records – how it was given, what for and when
- Only keep information that is vital to providing your service and delete it once you no longer need it
- Recognise that most community groups are using email addresses that are not secure; pass on only that information which is needed when referring on; this is likely to be:
  - First name
  - Address and Telephone or Email contact
  - Service needed
  - Any identified risks to the volunteer
- Is it important that a volunteer who is not entering the home or providing face-to-face support to know of particular individual health conditions? In most cases it will not be.
- If you receive an email referral read to the bottom of the email; does it contain personal information (eg health conditions, NHS number) that you do not need to keep? If you forward any email delete any information that is not needed before you hit 'send'
- Ensure you update your computer operating system regularly, use antivirus software and password protect all the files relating to your Covid-19 work
- If you are unsure, please contact the CVS on 01626 326120 or email [office@teigncvs.org.uk](mailto:office@teigncvs.org.uk)