

Guidance for carrying out volunteering activities in Parks Green Spaces, Rivers and Foreshores during Covid-19 restrictions



1. Introduction

With the recent increase in infection rates Government Guidance relating to social gatherings has been updated. From Monday 14th September people must not meet socially in groups of more than 6; either indoors or outdoors. However, there are exceptions that include voluntary or charitable services. This allow Thames21 to continue to encourage, support and deliver volunteering activity in outdoor open spaces.

This guidance adheres to the latest Government advice on accessing green spaces safely and meeting people from outside your household.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing>

Updated 9 September 2020

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-on-accessing-green-spaces-safely>

Updated 9 September 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing>

Updated 9 September 2020

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safer-public-places-urban-centres-and-green-spaces-covid-19/2-principles-for-safe-urban-centres-and-green-spaces>

Updated 9 September 2020

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation/guidance-for-providers-of-outdoor-facilities-on-the-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation>

Updated 9 September 2020

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do>

Updated 9 September 2020

<https://www.gov.uk/volunteering/coronavirus-volunteering>

Thames21 will continue to monitor and review Government guidance and will update this document to reflect any changes. The advice in the latest version of this document supersedes any previous guidance.

This guidance should be read by anyone organising and delivering volunteering events for or on behalf of Thames21 this includes Thames21 staff, River Action Group (RAG) leaders and Event Support Team (EST) members.

2. Guidelines

2.1 Groups Size

The latest government advice is that **social interactions** should be limited to a group of no more than two households or up to 6 people (outdoors) from different households, but you must still follow social distancing guidelines.

Events and activities taking place in public outdoor spaces that are organised by businesses, charitable organisations, and public bodies can host larger groups provided the organisers take reasonable steps to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

River Action Groups may organise events of in an outdoor space no larger than 15 people.

Thames21 staff may organise events for larger groups only where Thames21 is confident that social distancing can be easily maintained at the assembly point and work site. In line with government guidelines no group can be larger than 30.

Event organisers must consider the task they intend to complete and ensure the planned group size is appropriate to this task.

The following principles should be observed by people participating in an event or activity to ensure people minimise the risk of spreading infection:

- Take hygiene precautions when you are outside
- Wash your hands as soon as you are back indoors
- Limit the time you spend interacting with others outside your household or support bubble during the activity which you are partaking in
- Follow strict social distancing guidelines from people outside not in the same household or support bubble
- Group size should be limited to the minimum that allows the activity to take place
- A COVID-19 risk assessment should be carried out for all activities to identify actions which could minimise the risk of transmission.
- Keep at least 2 metres apart from anyone outside your household or support bubble where possible, or at least one metre with precautions such as wearing a face mask

2.2 Please read the guidance below carefully and ensure it is share with all event participants:

Leaders and volunteers should only take part in a volunteering activity if:

- You're well
- No one in your household has [coronavirus symptoms](#)
- No one in your household has tested positive for coronavirus

If you are [over 70](#) or [clinically vulnerable](#)*, you can now join volunteering activity if:

- You let the event organiser know in advance that you are planning to attend and fall into a clinically vulnerable group
- You agree to follow any additional measures put in place to maintain social distancing during the activity.

You should not volunteer at Thames21 activities if you are [extremely clinically vulnerable](#).

- If you live with someone who is over 70, clinically vulnerable, or extremely clinically vulnerable, consider their needs before volunteering outside your home.

*<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing-after-4-july#clinically-vulnerable-people> (See Section 7.)

Please contact Thames21 if you wish to run a volunteering activity to discuss the task you want to complete.

- Volunteering activities should be simple straight-forward tasks such as litter picking or vegetation management.
- Before any event you must complete a risk assessment that considers the risks of running the event and identifies measures to minimise these risks. This guidance is supplementary to your risk assessment.
- You must also complete a separate risk assessment that details specific measures to reduce the risk of transmission of Covid-19.
- It is important that any volunteering activity is focussed on completing a specific task and is not a social gathering.

2.3 Before the event

- Establish who is attending the event to ensure that the group size does not exceed your planned maximum including the event leader(s).
- Event leaders to assess whether they will need support from an EST or additional event leader during the activity to help supervise and ensure volunteers maintain a safe social distance throughout.
- Ask those planning to attend for their contact details and inform them that their contact details may be shared with NHS Test and Trace. They can choose to opt out, and if they do so their information should not be shared.
- Explain the planned task to all participants so they know what to expect and if they need to bring any personal items of equipment with them.
- Remind volunteers to bring their own refreshments to the event as these cannot be provided.
- Ensure everyone in the groups has read and understood the guidance above in section 2.2.
- Do not publicly promote the precise meeting point of the event to avoid the risk of social gatherings.
- Volunteers must be reminded that it is the law to wear a face covering when travelling on public transport.
- Events may be shortened as volunteers will not be able use public toilets during the event.

2.4 Bringing Equipment to the site

- Use only a private or Thames21 vehicle. If using a shared vehicle such as a Thames21 vans wipe door handles, steering wheel and gear stick before and after use with antibacterial/disinfectant wipe.
- Maintain distance of 2m from other members of staff and ESTs. Use facemask while loading and PPE (gloves). Don't share PPE with others. Use lifting aids where required rather than the help of a 2nd person.
- Wash hands for a least 20 seconds once loading is complete.
- Facemasks to be worn by staff.

2.5 During the event

- Record who is present at the event and remind all the volunteers of the need to maintain a social distance from people outside their household or support bubble of 2m throughout. Refer to government guidance on staying alert and safe social distancing above.
- If working in close proximity (aiming to maintain 2m distance), work side by side to reduce the risk of infection. Anyone repeatedly struggling to comply with social distancing will be asked to leave the event.

- It is advisable to plan events at quieter times to allow volunteers to travel on public transport when less congested and to enable everyone to maintain a safe distance from other people using public open spaces.
- Numbers volunteering on a site should be restricted to no more than 15 for events organised by River Action Groups. Thames21 staff may organise events for more than 15 only where appropriate event support is available and social distancing can be easily maintained.
- The size of the group must be appropriate for the planned task and the site where it is taking place to ensure social distance can be maintained.
- Each volunteers should use the same piece(s) of equipment throughout and event and not swap equipment with other volunteers.
- Always use a litter picker if you have one
- Wash your hands before and after undertaking any activity with soap and warm water or hand sanitiser.
- You should have hand sanitiser with you, wash your hands frequently; ideally take a flask of hot water, soap and paper towels with you.
- Consider first aid needs - Check and replenished kits prior to the event ensuring several sets of surgical gloves and a face shield are present. Assess if volunteers are able to self-administer basic first aid. First aiders should use a face mask for use if they need to move within 2m of a casualty.
- Catch coughs and sneezes with disposable tissues or your sleeve
- Avoid touching your face while working, even if you are wearing gloves.
- Bring and wear gloves (we can provide a new/washed pair if you haven't got your own) Volunteers can keep the gloves they have worn and wash them at home afterwards for reuse. Returned gloves will be collected separately from clean gloves for later washing.
- Remember that gates, locks, benches etc. are used by everyone, use hand sanitiser after touching surfaces.

2.6 After the event

- Ensure you have extra time at the end of the event to clean and store event equipment
- Volunteers should gather tools at agreed collection points ready for washing.
- Disinfect tools (with a suitable solution) after you finish using them, especially main contact areas, such as handles. Virkon, used in Thames21's biosecurity measures, is suitable to disinfect tools after use.
- If using a shared vehicle such as a Thames21 van; wipe door handles, steering wheel and gear stick before and after use with antibacterial/disinfectant wipe.
- Gloves and socks collect after the event will be machine washed as usual. Gloves and facemask must be worn by staff handling the washing. The bag used to transport washing should then be disposed of. The person dealing with the washing will wash their hands once their gloves have been put into the machine.

2.7 Recommended PPE and equipment List

- Fully charged mobile phone in case of emergencies.
- One set of gloves per person (wash after use)
- Suitable sturdy footwear
- Hand sanitiser or a flask of hot water, soap and paper towels
- Anti-viral wipes Look for wipes that say Kills 99.9% bacteria and virus on the packaging
- High viz jacket for event leaders

Thames21 does not insist on wearing face masks at events. There are some places where you must wear a face covering by law. In England, you must wear a face covering a number of indoor settings including:

- community centres, youth centres and social clubs
- public transport (aeroplanes, trains, trams and buses)
- transport hubs (airports, rail and tram stations and terminals, maritime ports and terminals, bus and coach stations and terminals)
- shops and supermarkets (places which offer goods or services for retail sale or hire)
- shopping centres (malls and indoor markets)

A full list of indoor settings can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>