

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



1. Introduction

Keeping everyone who is involved in our outdoor activity healthy and safe is of the utmost importance to Thames21.

At this extremely challenging time Thames21 believes it is essential that we continue supporting local people to safely access nature, exercise and work with others to care for their rivers and green spaces.

Thames21 will continue to deliver a programme of activity with control measures in place to maintain a COVID secure environment for all who attend.

This guidance follows the latest Government advice and restrictions aimed at controlling the spread of COVID-19. The following information is current as of the date at the top of each page and supersedes any previous guidance.

This guidance must 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. The information in this document must be used by event leaders to plan events and complete method statements and risk assessment for the activities. Local risks and hazards must be assessed and actions to reduce these risks must be adapted to meet local conditions.

1.2 COVID alert levels National Restrictions

In October 2020 the government introduced a new system called 'local COVID alert levels'. Local COVID alert levels set out information for local authorities, residents and workers about what to do and how to manage the outbreak in their area.

There are 3 local COVID alert levels - medium, high, and very high. The alert level of your local area can be checked here.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/full-list-of-local-covid-alert-levels-by-area>

On Thursday 5 November new national restrictions replace the local restrictions in your area.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november?priority-taxon=774cee22-d896-44c1-a611-e3109cce8eae>

Updated 3 November 2020

Under these new restrictions people are still allowed to leave their home and meet others from outside their household or support bubble in larger groups to carry out voluntary or charitable services, and formal education or training.

2. Event and activity delivery Guidelines

Do not leave home if you or anyone in your household has coronavirus symptoms.

Self-isolation is the most effective way to prevent the virus spreading. If you, or a member of your household is symptomatic or has been tested positive, do not come to the event or activity.

2.2 Group Size

Thames21 staff and River Action Groups may organise activities in an outdoor space. There is a blanket 'ceiling' of 15 participants for all events.

However the number of participants per activity/event should potentially be reduced still further to take local considerations into account. When planning the maximum size, Event organisers must consider:

- The task - Group size should be limited to the minimum that allows the activity to take place.
- The location - Social distancing must be easily maintained at the assembly point and work site.
- The group - How experienced is your group at working under COVID secure conditions?
- Welfare facilities – Where are the closest toilet? What hand washing facilities can you bring to site?
- Supervision – How will you ensure the volunteers are properly supervised and supported throughout?

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

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

- You are well
- No one in your household has had [coronavirus symptoms](#) or tested positive for coronavirus in the last 2 weeks

If you are over 60 or clinically vulnerable* you could be at higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus. You can join volunteering activity but you should be especially careful to follow the rules.

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/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november?priority-tax=774cee22-d896-44c1-a611-e3109cce8eae#protecting-people-more-at-risk-from-coronavirus>
(See Section 9.)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

Updated 4 November 2020

2.3 Basic principles for events

If you wish to run a volunteering activity please contact Thames21 or talk to your manager to discuss the task you want to complete.

- Consider the whole start to finish volunteer experience when planning safe operating practices; this means all activities from the time of arrival on site to leaving, not just the volunteering activity.
- Volunteering activities should be simple straight-forward tasks such as litter picking or vegetation management.
- 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 all volunteering activities are focussed on completing a specific task and are not social gatherings.
- Ensure start and finish times of the event to avoid busy commuter times. Use of public transport should be discouraged. Ask participants to use other forms of transport if possible.

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 should 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. Ask volunteers to bring and wear their own study footwear if this is appropriate for the planned task.
- 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 vehicles. 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.
- Maintain distance of 2m from other members of staff and ESTs. Use a 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

- Event leaders and event support staff must be in possession of a mask or face covering during the event. It must be worn if they move closer than 2m to a volunteer to offer assistance.
- 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.
- 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 collected 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. Assess the task and site. Is it safe for volunteers to use their own 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
- First Aid Kit that includes gloves and a mask s (EN 14683 for surgical masks suitable for first aid kits)

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 in 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>

Updated 4 November 2020

Guidance for the public on the phased return of outdoor sport and recreation in England

Updated 2 November 2020

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