



Community Response and Community Buddy Volunteer Guidance

A Welcome from Lynita Harris, CEO

Hello and thank you for becoming a Community Response Volunteer or Community Buddy.

By volunteering your time, you are helping to make a real difference to someone in your local community. Whether you're collecting a prescription, helping with shopping, sharing a conversation, or simply being a friendly and reliable presence, your support can have a huge impact on someone's day and wellbeing.

Many of the people we support are facing challenges that can make everyday life more difficult. Some may be recovering from illness, living with long-term health conditions, managing disabilities, experiencing loneliness, or finding it harder to remain connected to their community. Your kindness and compassion help people feel valued, supported, and less alone.

This guidance has been put together to help you understand your role, work safely and confidently, and ensure that both you and the people you support have a positive experience. Please take some time to read through it and keep it for future reference.

On behalf of everyone at Volunteer Centre Dorset, thank you for choosing to volunteer. We couldn't do what we do without people like you.

Lynita Harris

Chief Executive Officer

Volunteer Centre Dorset





Why Are Community Response and Community Buddy Volunteers Needed?

The Community Volunteer Programme grew from the incredible community response seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, when neighbours came together to help one another in practical and meaningful ways.

What became clear during that time was that these acts of kindness were needed long before the pandemic and continue to be needed today.

Many people who use our services are recovering from a hospital stay, living with a long-term health condition, disability, learning disability, or additional support needs. Others may be experiencing loneliness, mental health difficulties, dementia, or reduced mobility.

Some people may be more vulnerable because of their age, health, isolation, financial circumstances, living situation, or personal challenges. This can sometimes make them more at risk of exploitation or harm.

As a volunteer, you play an important role in providing practical support, promoting independence, and helping people stay connected to their community. By following the guidance in this document, you can help ensure that everyone remains safe, respected, and supported.

Staying Safe

These guidelines explain the types of support Community Response and Community Buddy Volunteers can provide, along with important information about boundaries, safeguarding, confidentiality, and personal safety.

Please read the sections that relate to your volunteering role and contact us if you are unsure about anything.

Contact Us

We're here to help and support you throughout your volunteering journey.

Volunteer Centre Dorset

☎ 01305 269214

✉ volunteer@volunteeringdorset.org.uk



Thank you again for being part of our volunteer community. Every act of kindness, no matter how small, helps make Dorset a better place for everyone.

CONTENTS

Volunteering Guidance

STAYING SAFE

Your Safety	4
Safeguarding	5
Your Role in Safeguarding	6
If someone tells you about abuse	6
Who should I contact?	7
Exploitation	8
Grooming	12

VOLUNTEER CONDUCT

Getting the most from your volunteering	14
Money, expenses and gifts	16
Confidentiality & looking after information	18
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	21

GENERAL GUIDANCE

Using your own vehicle	23
Bringing someone with you	24
First Aid & Medical Emergencies	25
Waste and Hazardous Substances	26
Manual Handling and Lifting	27

Volunteering Tasks

Shopping support	29
Prescription collection & delivery	31
Pet Care	34
Food and drink Preparation	37
Welfare Checks	39
In-person Buddy	42
Phone Buddy	46

Volunteer Training	51
Feedback and Complaints	52
Thank You	53





Volunteering Guidance

Staying Safe

Your safety

We want your volunteering experience to be enjoyable, rewarding and, most importantly, safe. While you're supporting someone in the community, please remember that your wellbeing matters too.

A Few Simple Safety Tips

- Let someone know where you're going, who you're meeting and when you expect to be home.
- Keep a fully charged mobile phone with you.
- Only enter a person's home if you feel comfortable doing so.
- If you're supporting someone regularly, check in with your Volunteer Centre Dorset contact from time to time.
- Where possible, visit during daylight hours. If you're out after dark, take extra care and carry a torch if needed.
- If you're travelling by car, park in a well-lit area and keep valuables out of sight.
- If you're feeling unwell, please don't volunteer until you've recovered.
- If at any point you feel unsafe or uncomfortable, leave the situation and contact us when you are safe.

Stick to the Agreed Task

When we arrange a volunteer task, we agree in advance exactly what support is needed. This helps keep everyone safe and ensures that volunteers are not asked to do things outside their role.

Sometimes, when you arrive, a person may ask if you can do "just one more thing" while you're there. While these requests are usually well-intentioned, please do not take on additional tasks that have not been agreed with Volunteer Centre Dorset.

Instead, kindly explain that you can only carry out the task you have been asked to do and let us know about the additional request afterwards.



This is important because extra requests can sometimes indicate that a person's needs are greater than originally identified. By telling us, we can review their support needs and, where appropriate, share this information with the referring organisation to ensure they receive the right help and support.

It's Okay to Say No

Volunteering should be a positive experience. If a task, situation or relationship is not working for you, please let us know. We understand that circumstances change, and we will work with you to find a solution.

If Something Doesn't Feel Right

Please contact us if:

- Someone behaves aggressively, inappropriately or abusively towards you.
- You are worried about a person's safety or wellbeing.
- You are asked to do tasks outside of your volunteer role.
- You see or hear something that concerns you.
- You're simply unsure about how to handle a situation.

Trust your instincts. If something doesn't feel right, we'd much rather you get in touch and talk it through with us.

Remember: you're never on your own. The Volunteer Centre Dorset team is here to support you every step of the way.

Safeguarding

What is Safeguarding?

Safeguarding is about helping to keep children, young people and adults safe from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and harm.

Abuse can take many forms and isn't always obvious. It may be physical, emotional, financial, sexual, or psychological. Sometimes it's a single incident, but it can also happen over a period of time. Neglect can be just as harmful as abuse and may occur when someone isn't receiving the support or care they need.



As a volunteer, you may occasionally notice things that others don't because you are spending time with people in their homes and communities.

Your Role in Safeguarding

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, but it's important to remember that your role is simple:

Be observant, be curious, and tell us if you're concerned.

You are not expected to be an expert, and you do not need proof that something is wrong. If something doesn't seem right, trust your instincts and report your concerns.

You might notice things such as:

- Someone appearing frightened, withdrawn, or unusually anxious.
- A person seeming uncomfortable around another individual.
- Signs that someone is struggling to care for themselves.
- Concerns about living conditions.
- A child being left unsupervised.
- Comments that suggest a person is being pressured, controlled, or taken advantage of financially.

You Don't Need to Investigate

One of the most important things to remember is:

It is not your job to investigate.

Please do not question people in detail, confront anyone, or try to work out what has happened yourself.

Your role as volunteers is to notice concerns and pass them on. Trained safeguarding professionals will decide what happens next.

If Someone Tells You About Abuse

Occasionally, a person may choose to share something worrying with you.

If this happens:

- Stay calm and listen carefully.



- Take what they say seriously.
- Allow them to speak in their own words.
- Only ask questions if you need to clarify what they mean.
- Do not ask leading questions or try to investigate.
- Do not promise to keep it a secret.

A helpful response might be:

"Thank you for telling me. I'm glad you spoke to me. I may need to share what you've told me with people who can help keep you safe."

As soon as possible afterwards, make a note of what was said, using the person's own words where you can, and stick to the facts.

What About Low-Level Concerns?

Not every safeguarding concern is an emergency.

Sometimes it's simply a feeling that something isn't quite right, or you may notice a change in a person's behaviour, wellbeing, or circumstances.

We would always prefer you to tell us about a concern, even if you are unsure, rather than worry about whether it is serious enough.

If in doubt, speak to us.

Who Should I Contact?

If Someone is in Immediate Danger

☎ Call 999 immediately.

If you believe someone is at immediate risk of harm, contact the emergency services first.

Volunteer Centre Dorset Safeguarding Lead

☎ 01305 269214

Please report any safeguarding concerns to the Volunteer Centre Dorset Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible.



Out of Hours Adult Safeguarding Concerns

☎ 01305 221016

This is Dorset Council's Adult Access Team, who can discuss concerns and refer them to the safeguarding team where appropriate.

If You Are Worried About a Child

☎ 01305 228866

Contact Dorset Council's Children's Advice and Duty Service (ChAD).

Remember

You don't need to be certain that abuse or neglect is taking place.

You don't need evidence.

You don't need to investigate.

If you see something, hear something, or simply feel something isn't right, please tell us. Reporting a concern could make all the difference to someone's safety and wellbeing.

Exploitation

What is Exploitation?

Exploitation happens when someone takes advantage of another person for their own benefit. This may involve pressure, manipulation, threats, control, deception, or coercion.

It can happen slowly over time, making it difficult for people to recognise what is happening to them. In many cases, people being exploited may believe they are making their own choices or helping someone they trust, when in reality they are being manipulated.

Exploitation can affect anyone, regardless of their age, background, gender, or circumstances.



Why Is This Important for Volunteers?

Many of the people supported by Volunteer Centre Dorset may be more vulnerable to exploitation because of factors such as:

- Age
- Physical health conditions
- Disability or additional needs
- Mental health difficulties
- Dementia or other degenerative conditions
- Social isolation or loneliness
- Financial difficulties
- Reliance on others for support

Unfortunately, people who are vulnerable can sometimes become targets for individuals who wish to take advantage of them.

As a volunteer, you are not expected to identify every form of exploitation. However, because you may have regular contact with people in their homes and communities, you may notice signs that others do not.

Types of Exploitation You May Hear About

Exploitation can take many forms, including:

Financial Exploitation

When someone is pressured, tricked, or persuaded into giving away money, possessions, bank details, or property.

This could include:

- Scams and fraud
- Unwanted pressure to lend money
- Friends or family taking control of finances
- Unexpected changes in spending or financial circumstances

Criminal Exploitation

When a person is manipulated or pressured into committing crimes for someone else's benefit.



Examples include transporting illegal items, handling stolen goods, or being used by criminal groups.

Modern Slavery and Forced Labour

When people are made to work in unsafe or unfair conditions, often for little or no pay, and may be unable to leave their situation.

Human Trafficking

When people are moved from one location to another for the purpose of exploitation.

Sexual Exploitation

When someone is manipulated, groomed, pressured, or forced into sexual activity.

Debt Bondage

When a person is made to feel they owe a debt and is pressured into working, carrying out favours, or committing offences to repay it.

Radicalisation

When someone becomes increasingly influenced by extreme beliefs that may encourage harmful behaviour or violence.

What Might Exploitation Look Like?

Sometimes the signs can be quite subtle.

You might notice:

- A person seems frightened of someone.
- Someone else is always speaking on their behalf.
- A person suddenly has a new "friend" who appears overly controlling.
- Unexplained requests for money.
- A person appears anxious about finances.



- Unusual visitors coming and going.
- A person becoming withdrawn, nervous, or secretive.
- Concerns about living conditions or who is staying at a property.
- Signs that someone is being pressured into making decisions.

Remember, exploitation may still be taking place even if the individual appears to agree to what is happening. Vulnerability, fear, manipulation, dependency, or coercion can affect a person's ability to make free choices.

Exploitation in Dorset

Like anywhere else, exploitation can happen in Dorset and may look different depending on the setting.

For example:

- Rural isolation can leave people vulnerable to manipulation, grooming, or financial abuse.
- Areas close to major transport routes may be used for criminal activity and trafficking.
- Seasonal workers can be at greater risk of exploitation and unfair working practices.
- Busy tourist areas and temporary accommodation can sometimes be used by individuals carrying out criminal activity or exploiting others.

What Should You Do?

You do **not** need evidence, and you do **not** need to investigate.

Your role is simply to:

- ✓ Notice concerns
- ✓ Trust your instincts
- ✓ Record what you have observed
- ✓ Report it to Volunteer Centre Dorset

Even if you're unsure, we'd much rather hear about a concern than miss an opportunity to help keep someone safe.

Remember



If something doesn't seem right, tell us.

A small concern today could help prevent a much more serious situation tomorrow. As a volunteer, you may be the one person who notices that someone needs help.

Grooming

What is Grooming?

Grooming is often the first step in exploitation.

It happens when someone builds a relationship with another person to gain their trust and influence them for their own benefit. This can happen gradually over weeks, months, or even years, making it difficult to spot.

A groomer may present themselves as a friend, partner, helper, or someone who simply "understands" the person. They often offer things that make someone feel valued or accepted, such as:

- Friendship and attention
- Gifts or money
- Practical help
- Emotional support
- A sense of belonging
- Exciting opportunities or experiences

At first, the relationship may appear positive and supportive, which is why grooming can be so difficult to recognise.

Who Can Be Groomed?

Anyone can be groomed.

It doesn't matter how old someone is, where they come from, or what their circumstances are. Grooming can affect children, young people, and adults.

It can happen:



- Face-to-face
- Over the phone
- Through text messages
- On social media
- Through online gaming and apps
- Within families, friendships, communities, workplaces, or support services

How Does Grooming Work?

Once trust has been established, the groomer may gradually try to gain more influence and control over the person.

They may:

- Encourage them to spend less time with family or friends.
- Make them feel dependent on the relationship.
- Convince them that others cannot be trusted.
- Give gifts or money and then expect something in return.
- Use guilt, pressure, threats, or manipulation.
- Make harmful behaviour seem normal or acceptable.

Many people who have been groomed do not realise it is happening and may strongly defend the person exploiting them.

Signs Someone May Be Being Groomed

There is rarely one clear sign, but you may notice changes in behaviour or circumstances, such as:

- Becoming unusually secretive.
- Withdrawing from family, friends, or social activities.
- Spending increasing amounts of time with a new friend or group.
- Meeting people in unusual locations or at unusual times.
- Developing a strong attachment to someone who seems controlling or dominant.
- Suddenly receiving gifts, money, clothing, or a new phone without explanation.
- Having unexplained access to alcohol, drugs, or other items.
- Showing sudden changes in behaviour, beliefs, attitudes, or values.
- Seeming anxious, nervous, or reluctant to talk about certain people.



Staying Alert as a Volunteer

The vast majority of volunteers join us because they genuinely want to help others and make a positive difference in their communities.

However, it is important to recognise that, on rare occasions, people may seek positions of trust in order to take advantage of vulnerable individuals.

If you ever see, hear, or experience behaviour from another volunteer or anyone else that causes concern, please report it to Volunteer Centre Dorset.

Remember, reporting a concern is not the same as making an accusation. It simply allows us to investigate the situation and ensure everyone remains safe.

What Should I Do If I'm Concerned?

You do not need proof, and you do not need to investigate.

If something doesn't feel right:

- Trust your instincts.
- Make a note of what you have seen or heard.
- Report your concerns to your Volunteer Centre Dorset contact.
- Call 999 if someone is in immediate danger.

Remember

Grooming often starts with kindness, attention, or friendship, which is why it can be difficult to spot.

If you notice changes in a person's behaviour, a relationship that seems controlling, or anything else that concerns you, please let us know.

If in doubt, speak to us. It's always better to share a concern than to keep it to yourself.

Volunteer Conduct



We are incredibly grateful for the time, skills and kindness that our volunteers bring to Volunteer Centre Dorset. By working together and treating one another with respect, we can ensure that everyone has a positive and rewarding experience.

Getting the Most from Your Volunteering

We ask all volunteers to:

- Take part in their volunteering role to the best of their ability.
- Be honest, reliable and responsible in everything they do.
- Treat everyone with kindness, fairness, dignity and respect.
- Embrace and celebrate difference, ensuring everyone feels welcome and included.
- Let us know if they have any concerns about a volunteer, service user, family member, carer, or anyone else connected to their volunteering.

Being a Positive Representative of Volunteering Dorset

When you're volunteering, you're representing both yourself and Volunteer Centre Dorset.

Please:

- Treat staff, volunteers, service users and supporters with courtesy and respect at all times.
- Behave professionally and respectfully when carrying out volunteer tasks.
- Follow the guidance, policies and procedures provided to help keep everyone safe.
- Ask for support if you are ever unsure about your role or responsibilities. We're always happy to help.

Communication Matters

Good communication helps us provide the best possible support.

Please:

- Let us know as soon as possible if you can no longer undertake a task or keep an arrangement.
- Tell us if your circumstances change or if you decide volunteering is no longer right for you.
- Share feedback about your volunteering experiences so we can continue improving our services.



- Raise any ideas, suggestions, questions or concerns. We welcome your feedback and value your input.

Looking After Yourself and Others

To help ensure a safe environment for everyone, please do not:

- Smoke or vape while carrying out volunteer activities.
- Attend volunteer tasks under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Carry out tasks that fall outside your agreed volunteer role.

If you're ever unsure about something, please ask. We'd always rather answer a question than have you worry about getting something wrong.

Money, Expenses and Gifts

From time to time, you may be asked to help with shopping, collecting items, or carrying out tasks that involve handling money. We know this can sometimes feel a little daunting, so we've put some simple guidelines in place to protect both you and the person you're helping.

Shopping and Paying for Items

Before carrying out any task involving money, please make sure you understand how payment will be handled.

Some useful tips:

- If the person you are helping is paying for their shopping or items, agree how this will work before you set off.
- If you are collecting cash and a shopping list, check that there appears to be enough money to cover the items requested.
- Occasionally, Volunteer Centre Dorset may ask you to pay for an item and claim the cost back from us. If this happens, please keep the receipt and submit it with an expenses claim form for reimbursement.
- The receipt should always be passed on to whoever has ultimately paid for the items, whether that is the person receiving support or Volunteer Centre Dorset.



Keeping Everyone Safe

To protect both you and the people we support, please remember:

- Never share your personal bank account details with a service user.
- Never ask someone to transfer money directly into your account.
- Never use a service user's bank card, PIN number, online banking details, or payment methods on their behalf.
- Never withdraw cash for someone, even if they ask.

If a situation arises where you're unsure how payment should be handled, please contact us before proceeding.

Volunteer Expenses

We don't want volunteers to be out of pocket for helping others.

Volunteer Centre Dorset can reimburse pre-agreed and reasonable expenses, including:

- Mileage
- Parking costs
- Public transport fares
- Other agreed expenses directly related to your volunteering

Please keep any relevant receipts and submit an expenses claim form after completing the task.

Gifts and Thank Yous

The people you support are often incredibly grateful and may want to thank you with money, gifts, vouchers, flowers, chocolates, or other tokens of appreciation.

While these offers are usually made with genuine kindness, we ask volunteers to politely decline any gifts or payments.

A simple response could be:

"That's very kind of you, but Volunteer Centre Dorset asks volunteers not to accept gifts or money."



This helps maintain clear boundaries and protects both you and the person receiving support.

If someone insists that they would like to give something in return, you could suggest donating to Volunteer Centre Dorset or another charity of their choice instead.

A Cup of Tea is Fine!

Please don't worry about declining simple hospitality. Sharing a cup of tea, coffee, or the occasional slice of cake while chatting with someone is fine and can be an important part of building a friendly and supportive relationship.

Unsure? Just Ask

If you're ever uncertain about handling money, claiming expenses, accepting hospitality, or whether something is appropriate, please get in touch with the Volunteer Centre Dorset team. We'd much rather answer a quick question than have you worry about getting it wrong.

These guidelines help ensure that volunteers and service users are protected, and that everyone can feel confident and comfortable throughout their volunteering experience.

Confidentiality and Looking After Information

As a volunteer, you may be given some personal information about the people you are supporting. We will only share information that is necessary for you to carry out your volunteer role safely and effectively.

We know that handling personal information can feel like a big responsibility, but the key principle is simple:

Treat other people's information as you would want your own information to be treated, with care, respect and discretion.

What Do We Mean by Personal Information?

Personal information is any information that could identify someone.

This might include:

- Their name



- Address
- Telephone number
- Email address
- Date of birth
- Details about their health or circumstances

You may only need a small amount of this information to complete a volunteer task, and it is important that it is used only for that purpose.

Looking After Information

Please remember to:

- Keep any information you receive safe and secure while you need it.
- Dispose of information securely once your task has been completed.
- Avoid leaving personal information where others might see it.
- Only use information for the purpose of supporting the individual.
- Never share personal information with friends, family members, neighbours, or anyone else who does not need to know.

Many of the people we support place a great deal of trust in us, and respecting their privacy is an important part of maintaining that trust.

Conversations and Confidentiality

As a volunteer, you may see or hear personal information while carrying out your role.

We ask that you:

- Keep information private.
- Avoid discussing service users with others.
- Be mindful of conversations in public places.
- Remember that even well-meaning conversations can accidentally reveal someone's personal circumstances.

If information has been shared with you because of your volunteering role, it should stay within that role.

Using Your Own Phone



If you need to contact someone using your personal phone, you may prefer to withhold your number.

To do this, simply dial:

141 before the telephone number you are calling.

For example:

141 01234 567890

When Can Confidentiality Be Broken?

There are times when keeping information confidential may not be the safest option.

If you are concerned that:

- Someone is at risk of harm
- A safeguarding issue has arisen
- A child or vulnerable adult may be unsafe
- Someone's health or wellbeing is in immediate danger

You should share your concerns with Volunteer Centre Dorset or the appropriate emergency service.

Protecting someone's safety will always take priority over confidentiality.

If you are unsure whether information should be shared, please contact us for advice.

Keeping Your Volunteer Information Up to Date

Please remember to keep your details on Team Kinetic up to date, including:

- Your contact details
- Emergency contact information
- Any relevant changes to your circumstances

This helps us contact you when needed and ensures we can support you effectively during your volunteering journey.

In Summary



A good rule of thumb is:

- ✓ Only access information you need to know.
- ✓ Keep it safe.
- ✓ Don't share it unnecessarily.
- ✓ Ask if you're unsure.
- ✓ Report concerns where someone's safety may be at risk.

By respecting confidentiality and handling information carefully, you help build trust with the people we support and contribute to a safe, professional and caring volunteering service.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Valuing Everyone

At Volunteer Centre Dorset, we believe that everyone deserves to be treated with kindness, dignity and respect.

Our communities are made up of people from many different backgrounds, cultures, beliefs, identities and life experiences. These differences make our communities stronger, and we are committed to creating an environment where everyone feels welcomed, valued and included.

We want volunteering to be accessible to all and for every person, whether they are a volunteer, member of staff, supporter or service user, to feel respected and able to be themselves.

What This Means for Volunteers

As a volunteer, we ask that you:

- Treat everyone with courtesy, kindness and respect.
- Value people as individuals and avoid making assumptions about them.
- Respect people's backgrounds, beliefs, cultures, identities and life experiences, even when they differ from your own.



- Be mindful that something one person is comfortable with may be upsetting or offensive to someone else.
- Use inclusive and respectful language.
- Be open-minded and willing to learn from others.

Supporting People to Take Part

Some of the people you support may have disabilities, health conditions, communication needs, or other circumstances that affect how they access services and activities.

A little patience, flexibility and understanding can make a big difference.

Where possible, we encourage volunteers to:

- Adapt their approach to meet individual needs.
- Give people time to communicate and express themselves.
- Ask what support might help someone take part fully.
- Focus on what people can do, rather than what they cannot.

You don't need to have all the answers. Sometimes simply being understanding and willing to help is enough.

If You Experience or Witness Unacceptable Behaviour

We want everyone involved with Volunteer Centre Dorset to feel safe, welcome and respected.

If you experience, witness, or become aware of behaviour that feels discriminatory, offensive, intimidating or exclusionary, please let us know.

This could include behaviour related to a person's:

- Age
- Disability
- Race or ethnicity
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity
- Marriage or civil partnership status
- Pregnancy or maternity



We take concerns seriously and will always do our best to provide support and address issues appropriately.

Help Us Improve

Creating an inclusive organisation is something we are always working on.

If you have ideas about how we can make volunteering more accessible, welcoming or inclusive, we'd love to hear them. Your experience and feedback can help us continue to improve for everyone.

In Summary

It's simple:

- ✓ Treat people how you would like to be treated.
- ✓ Respect and value our differences.
- ✓ Be kind, patient and inclusive.
- ✓ Keep an open mind and avoid making assumptions.
- ✓ Help everyone feel welcome, respected and valued.
- ✓ Speak up if something doesn't feel right.

By embracing equality, diversity and inclusion, we can create a volunteer community where everyone feels valued, respected, supported and able to participate. Together, we can help ensure that everyone feels they belong.

GENERAL GUIDANCE

Using Your Own Vehicle



Some volunteer roles may involve using your own vehicle, whether that's helping with shopping, collecting prescriptions, running errands, or providing volunteer transport.

If you're using your car as part of your volunteering, we want to make sure both you and the people you're helping stay safe.

Before You Drive

Please make sure that:

- Your vehicle is insured, taxed, roadworthy and has a valid MOT where required.
- You've checked with your insurance provider that you are covered for volunteer use of your vehicle.
- You feel fit and safe to drive.

Please do not drive if you are affected by:

- Alcohol or drugs
- Medication that may affect your driving
- Illness
- Tiredness or fatigue

Keeping Everyone Safe

When travelling:

- Always wear your seatbelt.
- Ensure any passengers wear their seatbelts too (unless they have a valid exemption).
- Drive safely and allow plenty of time for your journey.
- Never feel pressured to drive in conditions that make you feel unsafe.

Remember, volunteering should fit around your circumstances. If weather, illness, or any other factor makes a journey unsafe, let us know and we'll help make alternative arrangements.

If Something Happens

If you're involved in a road traffic collision or any other incident while volunteering:

1. Make sure you and anyone else involved are safe.



2. Call 999 if emergency assistance is needed.
3. Follow your insurer's guidance and exchange details where appropriate.
4. Let Volunteer Centre Dorset know as soon as you can.

Please report all accidents or incidents to us, even if they seem minor. This helps us support you and ensure appropriate records are kept.

Bringing Someone with You

Volunteers sometimes ask if they can bring a friend, partner, family member, or support person with them while carrying out a task.

We completely understand that this may help you feel more comfortable, especially if you're new to volunteering or combining a task with other plans.

However, to protect the privacy and safety of the people we support, only registered Volunteer Centre Dorset volunteers should carry out volunteer tasks.

If someone accompanies you:

- They should remain in the vehicle or outside the property.
- They should not take part in the volunteer task.
- They should not enter the service user's home.
- They should not be given access to personal information about the person being supported.

If you have any questions about this, please speak to us beforehand and we'll be happy to advise.

First Aid and Medical Emergencies

We don't expect volunteers to be medical experts.

Your role is simply to act within your level of confidence, knowledge and training.

If There Is an Emergency

If someone is seriously unwell, injured, unconscious, or needs urgent medical help:



☎ Call 999 immediately

The emergency operator will provide guidance on what to do while help is on its way.

Know Your Limits

While many volunteers have first aid skills, it is important to only provide assistance that you feel competent and confident in giving.

If you're unsure, always seek professional help.

Interested in First Aid Training?

Volunteer Centre Dorset can provide access to first aid learning and training opportunities for volunteers.

If this is something that interests you, please get in touch and we'll be happy to provide more information.

A Final Reminder

Your safety and wellbeing are just as important as those of the people you support.

- ✓ Drive safely.
- ✓ Don't take risks.
- ✓ Work within your role.
- ✓ Ask for help if you're unsure.
- ✓ Contact us whenever you need advice or support.

We're always here to help, and we'd much rather answer a question than have you worry about getting something wrong.

Handling Waste, Hazardous Substances and Lifting Safely



Your safety is important to us, and we don't expect volunteers to take unnecessary risks. The guidance below will help keep you safe while carrying out volunteer tasks.

Waste and Hazardous Substances

As a volunteer, you should not handle hazardous substances or potentially dangerous waste.

Examples might include:

- Chemicals or cleaning products
- Medical waste
- Needles or sharps
- Unknown substances
- Bodily fluids

If you come across something that concerns you, please do not attempt to deal with it yourself.

If you accidentally come into contact with a hazardous substance:

- Wash the affected area as soon as possible, if it is safe to do so.
- Seek medical advice if needed.
- Contact Volunteer Centre Dorset for guidance and support.

Remember, if you're unsure whether something is safe, it's always best to stop and ask.

Lifting and Carrying

Many volunteer tasks involve carrying shopping bags, moving small items, or transporting supplies. It's important to look after yourself and avoid injuries.

A good rule of thumb is:

If it feels too heavy, don't lift it.

When Lifting Items

Please remember to:

- Only lift or carry items that you feel comfortable managing.
- Break loads down into smaller, lighter amounts whenever possible.
- Take your time and don't rush.



- Bend your knees and keep your back straight when lifting.
- Hold items close to your body where possible.
- Ask for advice if you're unsure.

Know Your Limits

Everyone's physical abilities are different, and there is absolutely no expectation for you to lift anything that feels uncomfortable or unsafe.

It's always okay to say:

"I'm sorry, but I'm not able to lift that safely."

Protecting yourself from injury is far more important than completing a task.

Lifting People

Volunteers should **never** help to lift, move, support, or transfer a person.

Even when someone appears to need assistance, moving a person incorrectly can result in injury to both you and them.

If someone needs physical assistance with moving, this should be carried out by appropriately trained professionals or carers.

Training and Support

Volunteer Centre Dorset can provide access to manual handling training through online learning modules.

If you would like to learn more about safe lifting techniques or feel this training would be useful for your role, please get in touch and we'll be happy to help.

Remember

- ✓ Don't handle hazardous substances.
- ✓ Don't take risks.
- ✓ Lift only what you can comfortably manage.



- ✓ Never lift a person.
- ✓ Ask for help if you're unsure.

Your wellbeing matters, and we'd much rather you stop and ask a question than risk an injury.

Volunteering Tasks

As a Community Response or Community Buddy Volunteer, we'll always provide as much information as we can before you take on a task. We want you to feel confident about what's involved and know who to contact if you need support.

Sticking to the Agreed Task

The support we arrange is based on the information we receive from the person, their family, healthcare professionals, or other referring organisations.

Sometimes, when you arrive, the person may ask if you can do a few extra things while you're there. These requests are often completely understandable, but it's important that you only carry out the task that has been agreed through Volunteer Centre Dorset.

If someone asks for additional help, please don't agree to it on the spot. Instead, let them know that you'll pass the request back to us.

This is important because extra requests can sometimes indicate that a person's needs are greater than originally identified. By letting us know, we can review the situation and, if necessary, feed this back to the referrer or discuss what additional support may be available.

A simple response might be:

"I'm happy to let Volunteer Centre Dorset know that you've asked about that. They'll be able to discuss the best way to support you."

If you're ever unsure, just give us a call on **01305 269214** or email volunteer@volunteeringdorset.org.uk.



Shopping Support

One of the most common requests we receive is for help with shopping.

People may need support with shopping for a variety of reasons, including:

- Recovering from illness or surgery
- Returning home from hospital
- Temporary mobility difficulties
- Bereavement
- Problems accessing transport
- Temporary banking or financial difficulties

Your support can make a huge difference during what may be quite a stressful time for someone.

Information You'll Receive

Before carrying out a shopping task, we'll provide the information you need, which may include:

- The person's name and contact details
- Their address
- A shopping list or details of what is needed
- Information about who will be paying and how payment will be handled

Before You Go Shopping

It's helpful to contact the person beforehand to introduce yourself and confirm the arrangements.

You may want to discuss:

- Whether you're collecting a pre-prepared order or carrying out the shopping yourself
- The items they require
- Brand preferences
- Preferred pack sizes
- Suitable alternatives if items are unavailable



- Any dietary requirements or allergies
- An approximate time for delivery

Taking a few minutes to clarify these details can help avoid disappointment and unnecessary return trips.

Payment Arrangements

Please make sure payment arrangements are clear before you begin.

Remember:

- Never take or use a person's bank card.
- Never ask for their PIN number.
- Never share your own bank account details with the person.

If Volunteer Centre Dorset has agreed to cover the cost of shopping, please keep and photograph the receipt so that you can claim reimbursement through our expenses process. If you have paid for the shopping and the person is re-imbursing you when their shopping is delivered, take a photo of the receipt for the records.

The original receipt should be given to whichever party ultimately paid for the shopping.

Delivering the Shopping

When you arrive:

- Check that the person is happy with the items purchased.
- Give them the receipt where appropriate.
- Answer any questions they may have before leaving.
- Resolve any issues if possible or contact Volunteer Centre Dorset if further support is needed.

Some people may need a little help bringing shopping indoors or putting items away.

Where appropriate and if you're comfortable doing so, you may help place groceries in a kitchen, fridge, or freezer.

Please remember:

- Only do what you feel able and comfortable to do.



- Do not lift anything that feels too heavy.
- Refrigerated and frozen items should be stored appropriately as soon as possible.

A Final Thought

For many people, shopping support is about much more than groceries. It can provide reassurance, reduce stress, and remind someone that they are not facing things alone.

A friendly smile, a few minutes of conversation, and a reliable helping hand can make a real difference to someone's day.

Prescription Collection and Delivery

Sometimes people need help collecting a prescription because they're unwell, recovering from a hospital stay, have mobility difficulties, or are unable to get to the pharmacy themselves. This may be a new prescription, a change to existing medication, or simply a routine repeat prescription.

By helping with prescription collection and delivery, you're providing an important service that helps people stay safe and maintain their health.

Information You'll Need

Before collecting a prescription, we'll make sure you have the information you need, including:

- ✓ The person's name and address (some pharmacies may also ask for their date of birth)
- ✓ The name and location of the GP surgery or pharmacy
- ✓ Whether there is a prescription charge to be paid, and how payment will be handled
- ✓ Confirmation that the prescription is ready for collection
- ✓ The pharmacy's opening hours

Before You Collect

It's always helpful to contact the person beforehand to:



- Introduce yourself
- Explain that you'll be collecting their prescription
- Confirm any collection details
- Agree an approximate delivery time

This helps the person know when to expect you and provides reassurance that their medication is on its way.

Delivering the Prescription

When delivering medication:

- Check that it is being handed to the correct person.
- If someone else answers the door, politely confirm the name and address before handing over the prescription.
- Pass on any information provided by the pharmacy, such as storage requirements.
- Remind the person if medication needs to be refrigerated.

Important Safety and Confidentiality Reminders

To protect both you and the person you're supporting, please remember:

- ✓ Never leave medication unattended.
- ✓ Never post medication through a letterbox.
- ✓ Never leave medication on a doorstep or with a neighbour unless specifically instructed by the pharmacy.
- ✓ Never open prescription bags or medication packaging.
- ✓ Never accept waste medicines or sharps boxes for disposal.
- ✓ Never provide medical advice or discuss how medication should be taken.
- ✓ Never prompt, remind or guide someone about taking their medication.
- ✓ Keep any personal or medical information confidential.

As part of the task, you may become aware of private health information. Please respect the person's privacy and do not discuss it with anyone who does not need to know.



If You Cannot Deliver the Prescription

Occasionally, you may be unable to complete the delivery.

If this happens:

- Do not leave the medication unattended.
- Return it to the pharmacy in line with their agreed returns procedure.
- Let Volunteer Centre Dorset know what has happened.

It can be helpful to ask the pharmacy about their returns policy when collecting the prescription.

If You Have Concerns

Your role is to collect and deliver medication safely, not to provide medical support.

However, if during your visit you become concerned about someone's wellbeing, safety, or ability to manage independently, please let Volunteer Centre Dorset know.

Sometimes concerns raised during a prescription delivery can help identify when a person may need additional support.

Remember

- ✓ Make sure delivery arrangements are clear.
- ✓ Deliver prescriptions directly to the correct person.
- ✓ Keep medication safe and secure.
- ✓ Respect confidentiality.
- ✓ Never give advice about medication.
- ✓ Contact Volunteer Centre Dorset if you're unsure or have concerns.

A simple prescription delivery can provide reassurance, help someone remain independent, and ensure they have access to the medication they need. Thank you for helping to make that possible.



Pet Care

Pets are often much-loved members of the family, and temporary support can make a huge difference when their owner is unwell, in hospital, or recovering from an accident or illness.

Over the years we've been asked to help care for all sorts of animals, from dogs and cats to birds and even the occasional goat!

Before You Start

We'll provide as much information as possible about:

- The pet and its owner
- What support is needed
- How long the support is likely to be required
- Access arrangements if the owner is unable to be at home

We'll also try to gather information such as:

- The animal's age, breed and temperament
- Feeding routines
- Exercise requirements
- Sleeping arrangements
- Medication or health needs
- Any allergies
- Things the pet enjoys or dislikes
- Whether the pet is nervous or reactive around people or other animals
- Whether anyone else is helping care for the pet

Caring for a Pet

Animals thrive on routine, so wherever possible try to maintain their normal daily pattern.

This includes:

- Feeding them the correct food
- Following agreed feeding times and quantities
- Providing fresh water



- Maintaining normal exercise routines
- Keeping familiar sleeping arrangements

If you're unsure about any aspect of caring for the animal, please contact Volunteer Centre Dorset before proceeding.

Your Safety Comes First

While many pets are friendly and easy to care for, animals can behave differently when their owner is absent or when routines change.

If you ever feel uncomfortable or unsafe:

- Do not put yourself at risk.
- Leave the situation if necessary.
- Contact Volunteer Centre Dorset for advice.

There is no expectation for volunteers to handle situations they do not feel confident managing.

Dog Walking Guidance

Walking a dog can be a great way to support both the animal and its owner, but it's important to do so safely.

Before You Go

Take a moment to assess the dog's behaviour before leaving the property.

If the dog appears:

- Aggressive
- Fearful
- Highly anxious
- Difficult to control

Please do not take it for a walk and contact Volunteer Centre Dorset for advice.



Signs a dog may be uncomfortable include:

- Growling
- Snarling
- Showing teeth
- Ears pinned back
- Stiff body posture

Trust your instincts. If something doesn't feel right, don't proceed.

While Walking

Please:

- Always keep dogs on a lead.
- Only walk a dog that you feel physically able to control.
- Carry poo bags and clean up after the dog.
- Dispose of used bags responsibly.

As a general guide:

- Walk one dog at a time whenever possible.
- Dogs from the same household that are used to being walked together may be walked together.
- Never walk more than three dogs at once.

If a Dog Gets Lost

Although this is very uncommon, if a dog becomes lost while in your care:

- Contact Volunteer Centre Dorset immediately.
- Contact Dorset Council's Dog Warden Service on **01305 251010**.

Food and Drink Preparation

Some volunteer tasks may involve preparing simple food or drinks for someone who is unable to do so themselves. This might be heating a ready meal, making a sandwich, preparing a hot drink, or leaving food and drinks ready for later in the day.



The aim is to help people stay safe, comfortable and independent while ensuring that food is prepared and served safely.

Information You'll Receive

Before carrying out a food preparation task, we'll provide as much information as possible, including:

- The person's name, address and contact details
- How you will gain access to the property (for example, whether they can answer the door or use a key safe)
- Any relevant safeguarding information
- Any dietary requirements, allergies, food intolerances or preferences
- Any feedback that the referrer may require, such as whether the person ate their meal

Before You Start

When you arrive, it's helpful to take a quick look at what food and drink is available and discuss any concerns with the person you're supporting.

You may wish to:

- Check that the food needed for the task is available.
- Look for any obvious signs that food has spoiled or gone out of date.
- Discuss any concerns with the person before disposing of food.
- Make sure you have the equipment needed to safely complete the task.

Most importantly, only undertake tasks that you feel comfortable and confident carrying out.

Preparing Food Safely

When preparing food or drinks:

- Follow any instructions you have been given.
- Make sure hot food and drinks are not served at a temperature that could cause burns.
- Check that the person can safely reach their food and drink.
- Think about where you will place food and drinks before carrying them.
- Remove any obvious trip hazards from walkways or surfaces.
- If you're preparing food for later, make sure it is stored appropriately and the person knows where it is.



If a meal or drink isn't consumed, agree with the person what they would like done with it.

Good Food Hygiene

You don't need to be a chef to prepare food safely. A few simple precautions can make a big difference.

The four key food safety principles are often known as the **4 Cs**:

✓ Cleaning

- Wash your hands before and after handling food.
- Keep work surfaces clean.
- Wash any utensils, chopping boards and equipment after use.
- Rinse fruit and vegetables before preparation.

✓ Cooking

- Follow cooking instructions carefully.
- Ensure food is heated thoroughly before serving.
- Check that ready meals are fully heated throughout.

✓ Chilling

- Keep chilled foods refrigerated until needed.
- Return food to the fridge as soon as possible.
- Defrost frozen food safely in the refrigerator before use.

✓ Avoiding Cross-Contamination

- Keep raw foods separate from ready-to-eat foods.
- Use clean utensils and preparation surfaces.
- Store cooked and uncooked foods separately.

A Few Important Reminders

Please:

- Wash your hands regularly.



- Never use food that appears spoiled or unsafe.
- Respect any dietary, cultural or religious food preferences.
- Work within your confidence and ability.
- Contact Volunteer Centre Dorset if you're unsure about anything.

Supporting Independence

Whenever possible, encourage people to do any part of the task that they are able and wish to do themselves. Sometimes a little support can help someone maintain their independence, confidence and routine.

For many people, having a hot meal, a cup of tea, or a sandwich prepared can make a real difference to their day. Your support helps people remain comfortable, independent and connected to their community.

Welfare Checks

Sometimes we receive requests to carry out a welfare check on someone's behalf. These requests may come from Adult Social Care, the NHS, a family member who lives far away, or another organisation supporting the person.

A welfare check is simply a friendly visit to make sure someone is safe and well.

The person may be elderly, recovering from illness, living alone, experiencing mobility issues, or may not have responded to phone calls, causing concern. In other situations, someone may simply benefit from a reassuring face-to-face visit.

Your role is to check in, see how they are, and let us know if there are any concerns.

Information You'll Receive

Before carrying out a welfare check, we'll provide as much information as possible, including:

- The person's name, address and contact details
- Any specific information the referrer would like us to find out
- Relevant information about what is normal for that individual
- Any known safeguarding concerns
- Details of how to access the property if they cannot answer the door



Knowing what is "normal" for a person is important. For example, someone may spend much of their day in bed, eat only small amounts, use very little heating, or live with dementia. Having this information helps avoid unnecessary concern while still keeping people safe.

Carrying Out the Visit

When you arrive:

- Knock on the door or ring the bell and allow plenty of time for a response.
- If there is no answer, try again before following any agreed access arrangements.
- If appropriate, knock on a downstairs window to attract attention.
- If you are unable to make contact, follow the instructions provided and contact Volunteer Centre Dorset for advice.

When entering the property:

- Introduce yourself clearly.
- Explain who you are and why you're visiting.
- Take time to chat and help the person feel comfortable.

Often, a friendly conversation can reveal a lot about how someone is coping.

Things You May Want to Check

Without being intrusive, try to establish whether the person:

- Appears well and safe
- Has eaten recently
- Has access to drinks and is keeping hydrated
- Has sufficient food available
- Has any immediate concerns or problems
- Is warm enough during colder weather
- Has heating, electricity and water available

You may also notice things around the home that could indicate someone is struggling, such as:

- Empty cupboards or fridge
- Spoiled or out-of-date food
- Signs of self-neglect



- Unusual confusion or distress
- Changes in behaviour or presentation

Remember, you are there to observe and report, not to solve every problem yourself.

Trust Your Instincts

Many welfare checks are straightforward and simply provide reassurance that someone is coping well.

However, if something doesn't seem right, trust your instincts and let us know.

It may be that the person needs additional support, or that circumstances have changed since the referral was made.

After the Visit

Following the welfare check, please report back to your Volunteer Centre Dorset contact with any relevant information, including:

- Whether you were able to make contact
- How the person appeared
- Any concerns raised during the visit
- Any support needs that may have changed

Even if everything is fine, your feedback is important as it helps us keep referrers informed and ensures people continue to receive the right support.

If There Is an Emergency

If at any point you believe the person is seriously unwell, injured, confused and at risk, or in immediate danger:

 Call 999 immediately

Once emergency services have been contacted, please let Volunteer Centre Dorset know as soon as possible.



Remember

- ✓ A welfare check is often much more than a visit.
- ✓ It provides reassurance to families, professionals and carers.
- ✓ It helps identify when someone's needs may have changed.
- ✓ Sometimes a friendly conversation can make all the difference to someone's day.

Your visit may be the only face-to-face contact someone receives that week, so your time, kindness and observations are incredibly valuable.

In-Person Buddy

For many people, having someone to spend time with can make a real difference. Some people may feel lonely or isolated, while others may have lost confidence due to illness, bereavement, reduced mobility, or changes in their circumstances.

An In-Person Buddy offers companionship, encouragement, and a friendly, reliable presence.

This might involve:

- Having a chat over a cup of tea.
- Going for a walk together.
- Supporting someone to attend a local group or activity for the first time.
- Spending time in a garden or outdoor space.
- Helping someone rebuild their confidence and reconnect with their community.

Often, the biggest difference you can make is simply being there and listening.

Information You'll Receive

Before being matched with someone, we'll provide any information that may help you get started, including:

- Their name and contact details.
- Information about their interests, hobbies, or goals.
- Details from the referral about the type of support they are looking for.



- Any relevant information that will help you plan your visits together.

The purpose of buddying is to support people towards their personal goals, whether that's getting out of the house more often, becoming involved in local activities, or simply enjoying regular social contact.

Getting Started

The first contact is often the hardest part, so don't worry if you're feeling a little nervous. Chances are the person you're supporting feels the same way.

When making contact:

- Introduce yourself and explain that you're their Community Buddy.
- Ask how they would like to be addressed.
- Arrange a convenient time for your first visit.
- Chat about what they would like to get out of the support.
- Discuss activities you might do together.
- Agree how often you are likely to meet, where possible.

If someone would like more frequent visits than you can reasonably offer, please let us know. We can discuss other options with them and help manage expectations.

If you're calling from your own phone and would prefer to keep your number private, you can dial **141** before the number you are calling.

It's also helpful to explain that conversations are confidential, unless you become concerned that someone may be at risk of harm or needs additional support.

Building a Positive Buddy Relationship

The most important thing you can bring to buddying is yourself.

You don't need to be an expert, counsellor, or problem solver.

- ✓ Be friendly.
- ✓ Be patient.
- ✓ Listen without judgement.
- ✓ Show interest in the person's experiences and interests.



- ✓ Allow the relationship to develop naturally.

Some people may be keen to chat from the outset, while others may take time to build trust and confidence. Both are completely normal.

A Few Helpful Tips

- Be patient if someone repeats themselves or struggles to find the right words.
- Be prepared to adapt conversations and activities to suit the individual's needs.
- Focus on what the person enjoys and what matters to them.
- Encourage independence and confidence where appropriate.
- Remember that small conversations can have a big impact.

Don't worry about saying exactly the right thing. Being kind, genuine and present is usually more important than finding the perfect words.

Boundaries Matter

While buddying often develops into a warm and trusting relationship, it's important to maintain clear volunteer boundaries.

Please remember:

- Keep personal information private and confidential.
- Store any contact details securely and dispose of them safely when no longer needed.
- Avoid keeping unnecessary notes about visits.
- Only provide support that has been agreed through Volunteer Centre Dorset.

If someone asks you to do something different from the agreed buddy role, such as shopping, transport, practical tasks, or providing additional support, please contact Volunteer Centre Dorset before agreeing.

Sometimes these requests indicate that a person's support needs have changed. By feeding this information back to us, we can review whether additional services or support might be helpful.

If Someone Becomes Upset

It's not unusual for conversations to touch on difficult memories, illnesses, bereavement, or other emotional subjects.

If someone becomes upset:



- Stay calm.
- Listen and show empathy.
- Allow them time to express their feelings.
- Don't feel responsible for "fixing" the situation.
- Gently steer the conversation towards a different topic if needed.

Simply being there and listening can be incredibly valuable.

Activities in Nature

If you're supporting someone to access local walks, green spaces or nature-based activities, we can provide information and resources from Dorset National Landscape.

Please contact us at volunteer@volunteeringdorset.org.uk if you would like more information.

Remember

- ✓ Take time to build trust and rapport.
- ✓ Listen more than you talk.
- ✓ Respect privacy and confidentiality.
- ✓ Work within agreed boundaries.
- ✓ Let us know if a person's needs appear to be changing.
- ✓ Contact us if you're unsure about anything.

A friendly chat, a shared walk, or simply spending time together can have a huge impact on someone's confidence, wellbeing and sense of connection. Thank you for helping people feel less alone and more connected to their community.

Phone Buddy

A simple phone call can make a huge difference to someone's day.



For many people, a regular chat with a friendly volunteer helps them feel connected, valued and less alone. Some of the people we support may have very little social contact, and your call could be the highlight of their week.

As a Phone Buddy, you're not expected to be a counsellor or solve people's problems. Your role is simply to offer a listening ear, friendly conversation and companionship.

Sometimes, through conversation, you may also identify other support that could help improve someone's wellbeing, such as support with shopping, transport, digital skills, or accessing community activities.

Information You'll Receive

Before your first call, we'll provide any information that may help you get started, including:

- The person's name and telephone number
- Any information we hold about their interests, hobbies or circumstances
- Any relevant information that may help build a positive relationship

Getting Started

Making the first call can feel a little daunting, but remember, the person has agreed to receive a call and will be expecting to hear from you.

When you first make contact:

- Introduce yourself and explain that you're calling as a Phone Buddy with Volunteer Centre Dorset.
- Ask how they would like to be addressed.
- Find out which days and times suit them best for future calls.
- Agree how often you might speak, whether that's weekly, fortnightly or another arrangement.
- Explain that conversations are confidential unless there are concerns about someone's safety or wellbeing.

If someone would like calls more frequently than you're able to offer, please let us know so we can discuss other options with them.

If you'd prefer not to share your personal phone number, simply dial **141** before the telephone number you are calling.



Building a Good Conversation

You don't need special training to have a meaningful conversation.

Often, the best conversations start with simple questions and genuine curiosity.

Some great conversation starters include:

- How are you today?
- What have you been up to this week?
- Have you been enjoying the weather?
- What have you been watching or listening to recently?
- Do you enjoy reading, puzzles, gardening or crafts?
- Have you always lived locally?
- Do you have any pets?
- What's your favourite holiday destination or place you've visited?
- Have you got any plans for the week ahead?
- Do you follow any sports or local teams?

People often enjoy talking about:

- Family
- Work and life experiences
- Hobbies and interests
- Favourite memories
- Travel
- Music, television and books
- Local events and community life

A Few Helpful Tips

- ✓ Don't be afraid of silence. Sometimes people simply need a moment to think.
- ✓ Ask open questions that encourage conversation.
- ✓ Listen more than you talk.
- ✓ Be patient if someone repeats themselves or loses track of their thoughts.
- ✓ Speak clearly and at a relaxed pace.



- ✓ Allow conversations to develop naturally.
- ✓ Be yourself. Genuine conversations are often the best ones.

You don't need to have all the answers. Your time and attention are often what matter most.

Boundaries and Confidentiality

While buddying relationships can become warm and meaningful, it's important to maintain appropriate boundaries.

Please remember:

- Keep personal information safe and secure.
- Do not discuss the person's circumstances with friends, family or anyone who doesn't need to know.
- Avoid keeping unnecessary notes.
- Dispose of personal information securely when it is no longer needed.
- Always respect the person's privacy.

If someone asks for help with activities outside your Phone Buddy role, please let Volunteer Centre Dorset know before agreeing.

For example, they may ask about:

- Shopping
- Prescription collection
- Transport
- Home visits
- Practical support

Sometimes these requests can indicate that their needs have changed. By sharing this information with us, we can look at whether additional support might be available.

Things to Listen Out For

Your role is mainly to listen and offer companionship, but conversations can sometimes highlight other ways we may be able to help.

Please let us know if the person mentions that they:



- Would like help using the internet or technology.
- Are struggling with shopping or prescriptions.
- Find it difficult to get out and about.
- Would like to attend groups or activities but lack transport.
- Would like access to library services.
- Are interested in volunteering themselves.
- Seem particularly lonely, isolated or anxious.

You don't need to solve these issues yourself. Simply let us know and we'll explore what support may be available.

What If...?

They Don't Answer

Don't worry.

They may be out, busy, resting, or simply unable to reach the phone in time.

Try again a little later or on another day.

If you're concerned, please contact Volunteer Centre Dorset for advice.

We Don't Seem to Have Much in Common

This is completely normal, particularly during the first few calls.

Building trust and finding shared interests can take time. If, after several conversations, you feel the match isn't working, please let us know and we'll discuss it with you.

I'm Not Sure How Often I Should Call

This is something you can agree together.

The most important thing is to be realistic about what you can commit to. It's better to have regular calls you can maintain than to overcommit and feel under pressure.

The Conversation Makes Me Uncomfortable

Occasionally someone may wish to discuss a topic that you don't feel comfortable talking about, or something may leave you feeling concerned.



If this happens:

- Gently steer the conversation to a different topic if appropriate.
- Don't feel pressured to continue discussing something you're uncomfortable with.
- Contact Volunteer Centre Dorset if you would like advice or support.

They Become Upset During a Call

Sometimes people may become emotional when talking about bereavement, loneliness, illness or difficult experiences.

If this happens:

- Stay calm.
- Listen with empathy.
- Give them time to talk.
- Don't feel responsible for fixing the situation.
- Gently move the conversation on when appropriate.

Simply listening can be incredibly helpful.

Remember

- ✓ A friendly phone call can brighten someone's day.
- ✓ Listen more than you talk.
- ✓ Respect privacy and confidentiality.
- ✓ Work within agreed boundaries.
- ✓ Let us know if someone's needs appear to be changing.
- ✓ Contact us if you're ever unsure.

A regular phone call may seem like a small act, but for someone experiencing loneliness or isolation, it can provide friendship, reassurance and a valuable connection to the outside world. Thank you for helping people feel heard, supported and connected.



Volunteer Training

We want all our volunteers to feel confident, supported and well-prepared for their role. This guidance booklet covers everything you need to get started, and we are on hand to answer any questions you have along the way (call us on 01305 269214 or email volunteer@volunteeringdorset.org.uk).

We also offer a range of additional online training modules if you'd like to build your knowledge or confidence in specific areas.

Optional Training Modules

You can choose to complete any of the following modules:

1. **Level 1: Safeguarding Everyone**
2. **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion**
3. **Data Protection**
4. **Mental Health, Dementia and Learning Disabilities**
5. **First Aid: Primary Survey**
6. **Food Hygiene, Nutrition and Hydration in Social Care**
7. **Manual Handling in the Workplace**
8. **Personal Safety for Lone Workers**
9. **Dementia Awareness**

These courses are a great way to increase your skills, learn more about the people you may be supporting, and feel even more confident in your volunteering role.

If you would like to access any of these training modules, please email:

 [**volunteer@volunteeringdorset.org.uk**](mailto:volunteer@volunteeringdorset.org.uk)

We're always happy to help you find learning opportunities that support your volunteering journey.

Feedback and Complaints

At Volunteer Centre Dorset, we're committed to providing the best possible service to our volunteers, service users and partner organisations.



Most of the time we get things right, but we know that sometimes things don't go as planned. That's why we welcome feedback, whether it's a compliment, a suggestion, or a concern.

Your feedback helps us:

- ✓ Celebrate what's working well
- ✓ Learn from experience
- ✓ Improve our services
- ✓ Make volunteering even better for everyone

If You Have Feedback

If there's something you'd like to tell us, please start by speaking to your usual Volunteer Centre Dorset contact.

Most issues can be resolved quickly through a conversation, and we're always happy to listen.

You can contact us by phone or email or ask to speak with a manager if you'd prefer.

If You Wish to Make a Formal Complaint

If you feel a concern hasn't been resolved, the matter is particularly serious, or if you'd prefer to make a formal complaint, you can write to our Chief Executive Officer.

If your complaint relates to the CEO, you can write to the Chair of Trustees.

Whatever the issue, we will always aim to deal with concerns fairly, respectfully and as quickly as possible.

Thank You

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with Volunteer Centre Dorset.



Whether you're making a phone call, collecting a prescription, walking alongside someone as they rebuild their confidence, or simply offering a friendly face and listening ear, your support makes a genuine difference to people's lives.

Every act of kindness helps somebody feel more connected, more confident and less alone.

We know that volunteering is something you choose to do, and we are incredibly grateful for the time, compassion and commitment you bring to your role.

If you ever have any questions, concerns or simply need some advice, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Contact Us

Volunteer Centre Dorset

 **01305 269214**

 **volunteer@volunteeringdorset.org.uk**

If your circumstances change and you're unable to volunteer, whether temporarily or permanently, please just let us know. We completely understand that life changes, and we'll always appreciate the support you've given.

Finally...

- ☒ Thank you for your time.
- ☒ Thank you for your kindness.
- ☒ Thank you for supporting your local community.
- ☒ Thank you for being part of Volunteer Centre Dorset.

From all of us at Volunteer Centre Dorset, welcome to the team, and thank you for helping make Dorset a more connected and caring place.