

How you can support people  
during lockdown in Bristol



# Helping Older Neighbours



# Introduction

During the second country-wide lockdown, it is more important than ever for us to look after not only close friends and family, but our neighbours as well. Finding time to give a helping hand to others can make a huge difference to their health and happiness during the crisis. Plus, a positive side effect is that it can help you to feel more connected and purposeful.

The amount of community-led effort happening in Bristol is phenomenal, so it can be a bit overwhelming to know the best way to get involved. This short guide offers an overview of the different volunteering opportunities available, as well as ideas for some creative activities you could start up yourself. It will help you decide how best to use your energy and skills to benefit people in your community in an effective and safe way.

If you are well, and able to leave your home in order to volunteer, there are several volunteering schemes you can sign up to without needing to travel far. It's highly likely that there will be a **food bank** (page 2) in your area that could do with an extra pair of hands. If you have access to a vehicle and would be happy to travel a little further, you could consider collecting donations for the food bank, delivering meals for the **National Food Service**, joining one of the warehouse teams distributing surplus food to those in need through **FareShare** or other incredible community-led efforts to alleviate hunger (page 3). If you are isolating yourself, or would rather volunteer from the comfort of your own home, there's lots you can do online through **neighbourhood support groups** (page 5). You can offer a different, but just as vital, lifeline to isolated people by befriending (page 6). If you fancy getting crafty, or just want to do something fun to lift spirits in your neighbourhood, take a look at our ideas for **spreading joy** (page 6).

Always remember that the most important thing you can do to protect yourself and others in your community is to follow government guidelines for social distancing and hygiene. When providing assistance to others, it is vital that you:

- Do not go into anyone else's house
- Do not take public transport
- Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before you leave and when you arrive home
- Keep a bottle of alcohol sanitiser to hand when out and about
- Wear gloves and a face mask if possible when delivering items
- Do not volunteer if you or any member of your household test positive or develop any symptoms of coronavirus
- Do not accept money or other gifts from people you help

**Remember** not to take on more volunteering than you can manage. It's just as important that you look after yourself, and recognise that your energy levels may change from day to day. Start small, and you can always increase your efforts as time goes on.



# Terminology

## ***What is the difference between social distancing, self-isolating and shielding?***

These practices involve different levels of restrictions that apply to different people depending on whether they have **symptoms**, have **health conditions that put them at increased risk, or are key workers**. Over 70s are not legally required to behave in a different way to the rest of the population, and are not in the 'shielded' category unless they have a particular health condition.

**Social distancing** - This means staying at home as much as possible and only leaving for a small number of reasons (essential shopping, outdoor exercise, medical needs, providing help to a vulnerable person, meeting on person from outside your household outdoors, seeing your support bubble if you have one, taking and work where it cannot be done from home). When leaving home, everyone must ensure they stay at least two metres from anyone outside their household and follow hygiene practices. Social distancing is mandatory for everyone in the UK, but as those aged over 70 are at increased risk of both contracting the virus and becoming seriously unwell if they do, the government has advised people in this age category to be especially stringent and limit time outside of the home as much as possible. Over 70s may therefore be especially cautious and arrange for family, friends and neighbours to do their essential shopping and other errands (such as medicine collection) for them, and limit exercise to their home and garden. This decision is their prerogative, but if you speak to an older person who is fearful of going outside or unsure whether they are 'allowed', you may reassure them that it is OK for them to go out if they need to, especially if they need medical assistance.

**Shielding/clinically extremely vulnerable** - Shielding is the most severe measure being deployed, and means not leaving home for any reason and avoiding face-to-face contact with anyone, including members of your own household. People who are shielding have been asked to do so for at least 12 weeks, though this may be extended depending on the government's decision towards the end of the period. This is advised for a small group of people whom have been identified as being extremely vulnerable (around 1.5 million in the UK), and is not legally enforceable. This group is not based on age, though many people within this group will be older. It includes people with severe respiratory disease, with certain cancers or undergoing cancer treatment, with organ transplants, and those undergoing immunosuppression therapies, among others. You can read the full list of health conditions [here](#). All of these people should have been contacted by the NHS on what to do and the support available to them, though it is of course possible that people will have missed this letter or not understood the communication they have received.

**Self-isolating** - This is for people who have symptoms of coronavirus or who have tested positive, or those who have had contact with those who have. People who live alone must stay at home with no exception for seven days from the day symptoms start. If a household contains more than one person, the entire household must isolate for 14 days to monitor for symptoms of coronavirus. You can read full details on what these households need to do if additional members become ill during the 14 days [here](#).

# Bristol City Council's

## Coordinated Volunteer Response

This opportunity may be for you if:

- You are not self-isolating
- You have an up to date criminal record check (DBS). This is helpful but not essential.
- You have a driving licence and access to a car. This is helpful but not essential.
- You are able to volunteer regularly but are flexible with days and times

The Council has set up a way for volunteers to be matched to people and causes that need their help. They make sure that people don't travel further than necessary and are asked to do things that are within their capacity. If you sign up on the Can-Do Bristol website using [this link](#), you will be added to a list of volunteers who are being called upon for requests that come from the Council's We Are Bristol helpline, as well as community organisations or one of the larger public services working in adult social care or with the NHS. There are many tasks that volunteers are asked to help with, including:

- Practical support such as shopping and collecting prescriptions (DBS required)
- Dog walking
- Calling people who are self-isolating or feeling lonely

When you sign up, you can state which mornings and afternoons you are regularly available, how far you are able or willing to travel, and which of the above tasks you are able to assist with.



# Food Banks

## and Surplus Food Provision



### Food Banks

This opportunity may be for you if:

- You are self-isolating, shielded, or unable to leave the house due to caring responsibilities
- You are creative and a strong communicator
- You are passionate about fighting social injustice

Food banks provide emergency food to people who are unable to afford food. They have seen a huge surge in demand for their support during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the food banks in Bristol are run by a charity called **The Trussell Trust**, who have had an incredible number of people sign up to help sort and pack donations in their warehouse, collect donations from supermarkets, and deliver food to people in greatest need, so are not currently recruiting for these roles. However, they are looking for people to sign up to their 'Time for Trussell' and 'Social Media Advocate' schemes, which offer the opportunity to spread awareness about their work to tackle food poverty and to help with the coordination of food collections from home. You can read more about these roles [here](#).

### Surplus Food Provision

This opportunity may be for you if:

- You are not self-isolating
- You are in a low-risk group
- You are able to commit to regular shifts
- You would like a volunteering role where you can meet new people (from a distance!)
- You are passionate about reducing food waste and food poverty
- You have driving licence or are a confident cyclist (van or bike provided)

Another way you can help to get free food to people who need it the most is through volunteering with **FareShare South West**, who collect good quality, in-date food that would otherwise go to waste and give it to charities and community groups. They are currently looking for volunteers to work in their warehouse in BS2, as well as for drivers and cyclists to deliver orders to charities. They provide vans and electric bikes for these roles. They are currently prioritising volunteers aged between 20 and 40. You can apply on their website [here](#) or call 0117 954 2220.



# National Food Service

NFS Bristol are offering several opportunities for joining their volunteer team.

You can join on their phoneline if:

- You have a high level of computer literacy
- You have experience in caring or counselling
- You have your own computer, phone and access to the internet

You can join as a volunteer driver if:

- You have your own car on which you are insured
- You have a full UK driving licence

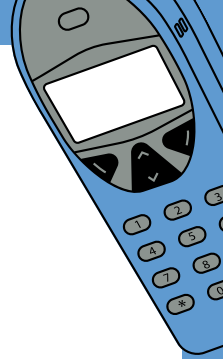
You can join as a cook if:

- You have a food hygiene qualification of level 2 or higher
- You have no symptoms of COVID-19
- You haven't been near to anyone with symptoms of COVID-19
- You are not regularly going out to meet others or to work
- You can commit to the same day every week

The National Food Service is a UK-wide network which creates opportunities for neighbours to cook and eat together, tackling both food insecurity and social isolation. During the pandemic, NFS Bristol are offering cooked meals which they freeze and deliver to anywhere in the city. Unlike food banks the NFS is not means tested and anyone can refer themselves or be referred for free meals using this link, though they also receive referrals from the council and other services. The meals are prepared at one of their three kitchens, or donated from local restaurants. You can offer to volunteer for one of the roles above by emailing [bristol@nationalfoodservice.uk](mailto:bristol@nationalfoodservice.uk)



# Neighbourhood Support Groups



This approach may be for you if:

- You are self-isolating
- You would like to share information that could be helpful to neighbours
- You would like to connect virtually with people in your area
- You are unable to commit to regular shifts, but can go outside occasionally to run errands for neighbours
- You have a Facebook account, and/or the WhatsApp app on your phone or tablet

Neighbourhood support is a more informal way for neighbours to connect with each other to support the most vulnerable people in their communities. There have been self-organised support networks in Bristol for some time, some of which are founded on the principles of [mutual aid](#), which saw a huge increase in members at the start of the lockdown. There are now Facebook groups for each postcode area of the city, each with thousands of members, as well as WhatsApp groups (messaging groups available on your smartphone) for smaller areas such as streets or road groups. You can find the Facebook group for your postcode [here](#), and once you've joined the group you will also be able to find your local WhatsApp group from a list on the 'announcements' section of the page.

The groups are useful for all kinds of information and support, including opening times of local businesses and public services, local fundraising activities, and messages from local charities such as food banks requesting donations. The WhatsApp groups can be a really nice way for people to check in with people very local to them, and to offer neighbours items they do not need such as household goods, gardening supplies and plants. These groups occasionally need moderators or administrators to join their organising teams to check new posts meet their community guidelines and approve new members.

[Nextdoor](#) is another social media platform which enables neighbours to connect and exchange favours or help those in need. It now has a 'help map' feature where you can add your location and receive requests from neighbours. Nextdoor is lesser-known than Facebook, but has more of a practical focus.

Another way in which you can help people on your street with occasional errands is to join community union Acorn's community response, which coordinates requests for basic assistance and arranges leafleting to reach people who aren't online. You don't need to be a member of the union to volunteer – if you fill in [this simple form](#), you will be directed to a local WhatsApp group which is set up as 'announcements only', from which you can see that day's assistance requests, get in touch with the person in need of help, and mark the errand as completed. Some of the administration of this is done through Google Sheets, so some experience of using spreadsheets is helpful.



# Spreading Joy



This approach may be for you if:

- You are self-isolating or shielding
- You have caring responsibilities or other factors which make formal volunteering impractical
- You would like to do something creative or artistic
- You are not confident using the internet, or would like to help your community while reducing your screen time

Even if you are not able to commit to a volunteering role, you can make a huge difference to your community by taking time to connect with others creatively. Most Bristol residents will have seen the beautiful rainbows in people's windows, or decorations celebrating key workers and offering well wishes to their neighbours. If you are able to get hold of some art materials, why not decorate yours too? If it is safe to do so, you may also want to try writing some messages in chalk on the pavement for people to enjoy while walking around the neighbourhood.

You could also arrange some socially-distanced activities with your neighbours, if you are able to safely sit outside the front of your houses and see each other from two metres apart (this works particularly well in terraced streets and cul-de-sacs). Activities could include:

- Going outside with a cup of coffee or tea for a catch up at a regular time each day
- Games such as bingo or quizzes. Find out who in the street has a printer and print out bingo cards or quiz sheets to leave outside neighbours' houses. You can create bingo cards [here](#).
- Musical performances or singalongs - as long as noise levels are acceptable to all
- Group exercise such as aerobics or dancing
- A book group

If you have a WhatsApp group for your road (see page 5) you can advertise social activities there, but remember that it's unlikely all of your neighbours will be members and some may not have smartphones, so it could be worth putting notes through their doors or giving them a ring if you have their phone number. Make sure you follow the guidelines for safe delivery on page 1.

Older people living in care homes may be feeling particularly isolated or lonely as they currently cannot leave the home or receive visitors. Some care homes in Bristol have asked local residents to send postcards to their residents to cheer them up and increase their sense of connection with the community. Why not contact your local care home and see if they would like you to do this?

Some neighbourhoods have also set up swap shops for books, DVDs, and art supplies in disused telephone boxes - if there's an empty one in your area, all you need to do is put a sign on the door and add some donations to get it started.



# Useful Contacts

For older people in Bristol who are in need of specialist help and support, including benefits advice and professional emotional support, or who would like to connect with people through virtual activities or telephone groups, there is the **Bristol Support Hub** which can be reached Monday-Friday from 9:00–5:00 on 0117 929 7537.

[LinkAge](#) have a section of resources for older people on their website, including advice on looking after mental and physical health, 'How To' guides for Zoom/Facebook and information about virtual and telephone activities.

**Bristol Older People's Forum** offers free membership, and a printed newsletter for members, which is still being delivered during the lockdown and includes useful advice on services and activities for older people. You can become a member [here](#).

[The Bristol Lockdown Economy](#) is a website that lists independent businesses that are delivering or providing online services. Many suppliers will take orders and payment over the phone so can be helpful for people who are not online and cannot order from a supermarket.

**Voscur** provides support and training to charities and community organisations in Bristol. They have some useful guides for volunteers on their website, including specific guidance for those volunteering to drive, walk dogs, help with food parcels, and a guide to help volunteers to maintain good mental health and wellbeing. You can view them all [here](#).

**British Red Cross** has a simple online training course for anyone volunteering to help people during the crisis, including detailed health and safety advice and guidance on infection control and lone working. The training takes around 15 minutes and can be accessed [here](#).

People aged 70 and over with underlying health conditions can self-refer into the **NHS Volunteer Scheme** to get support for shopping, medication delivery and check in and chat calls by calling 0808 196 3646.

If you are concerned that an older person may be the victim of domestic abuse (which can include physical, emotional, and financial abuse as well as neglect), you can call the **National Domestic Abuse** helpline on 0808 2000 247 (open 24 hours). If you wish to report suspected abuse to the Council, you can do so [here](#).

**Age-Friendly Bristol** is a partnership between Bristol Ageing Better, Age UK Bristol and Bristol City Council working to deliver a strategy to improve the lives of older people across the city. Together, they have joined the World Health Organisation's Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and are working with older residents and experts to identify the challenges faced by older people in Bristol and implement policies and initiatives to support independence and wellbeing. You can read more about the work of Age-Friendly Bristol [here](#).