

Litter Picking

Guidance for Volunteers



Individuals and groups acting as volunteer litter pickers can be exposed to a number of easily avoidable hazards. This guidance has been produced to help volunteers identify these hazards, making their involvement safe and enjoyable.

If working alone, you should inform a friend or family member of where you are going and what time you intend to return. Take a mobile phone with you.

Insurance

Community Groups who undertake litter picking or other such community activities are advised to have their own public liability insurance in place although this is not a statutory requirement. Public liability insurance covers injury to third parties or property. The Borough Council can assist Community Groups to obtain such insurance - usually by putting them in touch with the Council's insurer as they run a specific scheme to provide this cover. Parish Councils may also already have insurance cover in place.

Volunteers are covered by the Borough Council's public liability insurance if the activity is under the direction of the Council and recorded by the Council as taking place. In such cases the Volunteer Signing-In Sheet must be completed and the necessary safety briefing given as well the appropriate equipment provided.

Risk Assessment of Site

The level of risk will vary at each location, so prior to commencing a litter pick, a visual site inspection and risk assessment should be carried out. Volunteers have a duty to work safely. If there is any doubt about the safety of a site or material, then it should be avoided.

Protective Clothing and Equipment

The following items should be used:

- Reflective hi-visibility waistcoats to clearly highlight volunteers to traffic and pedestrians.
- Litter pickers to avoid direct contact with litter and repetitive bending.
- Gloves to minimise contact with any noxious or dangerous materials.
- Suitable footwear and clothing

The Council, subject to availability, can provide reflective hi-visibility waistcoats and litter pickers. A Disclaimer may need to be completed

Dangerous Materials

The following materials may be encountered during litter picks and should be treated with caution:

- Broken glass should not be removed. Note the location and report to the Council.
- Drug related litter/hypodermics should not be moved. Note the location and report to the Council.
- Suspect materials and fly tipping could contain dangerous items such as liquids in containers, building materials, asbestos. This should not be moved by volunteers. Note the location and report to the Council. If there is any doubt about an item, leave it, and let the Council know.

General Site Safety

Areas beside roads should be carried out with extreme caution. Litter picking should be restricted to wide verges or pavements, suitable for pedestrians and should be carried out facing oncoming traffic. Volunteers must be visible to road users so hi-visibility waistcoats must be worn and litter picks should only take place in daylight. Volunteers should not attempt to clear litter from the highway.

Avoid reaching into hedges or undergrowth in a way that exposes the face, eyes and skin to injury from thorns or branches. If an item cannot be safely reached with a litter picker, leave it.

Avoid working close to rivers or on steep slopes, as there is an increased risk of slips and falls. When working close to ditches, avoid reaching into the ditch to remove litter, unless it can be safely reached with a litter picker.

Be mindful of wildlife. In the spring time avoid disturbing animals and birds that may be nesting and in the summer wary of wasp and bee nests. Do not enter an area, or attempt to litter pick an area, where works are restricted, are already taking place (for example road works) or where the public do not have a right to entry.

Lifting and Handling Materials

To avoid injury when lifting and carrying heavy materials, follow the basic principles of manual handling:

- Use litter pickers to prevent constant bending and stretching.
- Make sure an item is safe to handle with no sharp edges.
- Decide if an item can be safely moved either by one or two people.
- Only try to move an item if this can be done so without straining.
- When lifting an item, bend the legs and keep the back straight.

Extremes of weather

Volunteers need to be appropriately dressed for the weather. If it is hot and sunny, apply sunscreen, wear a hat and long sleeved tops and take a drink. If the weather is cold, wet or windy suitable clothing should be worn.