



Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport

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Nigel Parker
director@catholicunion.org.uk

Dear Mr Parker,

Thank you for your correspondence of 23 April to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, regarding the Catholic Union and support for its volunteers. Your letter has been passed to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport as this issue falls within the Department's remit. I am replying as a member of the Ministerial Support Team.

On behalf of the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Civil Society) Baroness Barran MBE, I would first like to express how much the government appreciates the numerous volunteers of The Catholic Union working hard across the UK to ensure the continued support of some of the most vulnerable in society, especially during the current emergency. Volunteers around the country are playing a vital role in the response to COVID-19, including supporting others in their local communities and complementing the delivery of public services. The government welcomes this support and is working closely with the Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership to respond to this unprecedented crisis. We are also working hard to ensure that volunteer mobilisation schemes are consistently rewarding, effective and safe for all those involved. This includes providing [relevant guidance](#) on how people can volunteer safely in the context of Covid-19, particularly as lockdown is eased; it also means working together to identify and, where possible, resolve any issues which make it more difficult for people to volunteer or receive help.

DCMS has worked with the sector and our colleagues in DHSC to identify better ways of matching the country's strong base of willing volunteers with priority needs. This involves improving coordination between sector organisations, identifying unmet needs and coordinating volunteer demand and supply.

Furthermore, thank you very much for your proposals regarding support for volunteers. Regarding listing volunteers as key workers, the government recognises that some volunteers will qualify for keyworker status. DCMS promotes the role of volunteers when revisions to key worker lists are made, recognising time spent volunteering may be as important as the type of role undertaken.

To address your DBS-related recommendations, the safety of volunteers and those they are helping is a priority. Our guidance is there to support organisations to identify what level of check is required for different activities. DBS-checking policy and operational responsibility for DBS checks sits with the Home Office. DCMS will continue to engage with the Home Office on how the process to apply for a DBS check impacts on the mobilisation of volunteers, promoting innovation where possible.



Concerning PPE guidance, the government is working to update guidance and support the voluntary sector as restrictions are eased. Government guidance applicable to the voluntary sector signposts to guidance from Public Health England and BEIS covering personal protective equipment. We hope organisations will make use of this resource as restrictions ease.

Finally, volunteers can qualify for keyworker tests if they volunteer for charities that are delivering critical frontline services, are volunteering in residential care for rough sleepers and in substance misuse treatment. The latest information on which volunteers qualify for testing is outlined in [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): getting tested guidance](#). DCMS works with DHSC to ensure that the policy meets the needs of the voluntary and charity sector.

Further information will be released on gov.uk and the Office for Civil Society webpage as and when it is available. Please continue to monitor these pages for further guidance and information. You can also [subscribe to the Office for Civil Society newsletter](#) if you would like to receive regular updates on funding and other issues from the Department.

May I close by thanking you again for your letter and wishing you and members of The Catholic Union the very best as you continue your vital work in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. These are unprecedented times and I appreciate the uncertainty this brings.

Yours sincerely,

Francesca Martin
Ministerial Support Team

