



## GUIDANCE FOR VOLUNTEER LITTER PICKERS

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, and should be followed by all volunteers.

### Protective Clothing and Equipment

The following items should be used at all times by volunteers undertaking litter picks:

- **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 noxious or dangerous materials.
- **Face Masks** to minimise the risk of catching Covid 19.
- **Suitable footwear and clothing.**

### Noxious and Dangerous Materials

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

**Broken glass** – remove using a litter picker, avoiding contact by hand, and dispose of in a sturdy container.

**Drug related litter/hypodermics** – these should not be moved under any circumstance. Note the location and report to the local council who will arrange for specialist removal.

**Suspect materials and fly tipping** – items that are possibly dangerous such as unknown liquids in containers, building materials, asbestos, or fly tipping should not be moved by volunteers. Note the location and report to the local council who will arrange for specialist removal.

### General Site Safety and Inspection

Litter picking of areas beside roads should be carried out with extreme caution, due to the risk of being struck by vehicles. Litter picking should be restricted to only where there are wide verges or pavements, suitable for pedestrians, and should be carried out facing oncoming traffic. It is essential that volunteers are visible to road users, for that reason, hi-visibility waistcoats must be worn. Volunteers should not attempt to clear litter from the carriageway.

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

Avoid working on steep slopes as there is an increased risk of slips and falls.

Be mindful of wildlife. In spring time avoid disturbing animals and birds that may be nesting and in the summertime be wary of wasp and bees nests.

The level of risk will vary at each location, so prior to commencing a litter pick it is recommended that a visual site inspection and risk assessment is carried out to establish the above risks and to identify and note other possible hazards. Volunteers have a duty towards themselves, fellow volunteers and the public to work safely. If there is any doubt about the safety of a site or material, then it should be avoided.

### **Lifting and Handling Materials**

Volunteers should be aware of the risk of injury by carrying bags of collected litter and attempting to lift and carry heavy materials. To avoid injury, the following principles of manual handling should be applied:

- Use litter pickers to prevent constant bending and stretching.
- Make sure an item is safe to handle with no sharp edges or noxious contents.
- Decide if an item can be safely moved by either 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.