

Safe Systems of Work

Guidance for Volunteer Litter Picking

Thank you for volunteering to do a litter pick in your community. Your efforts are greatly appreciated by both your community and South Lakeland District Council. Below are some notes to help make your litter pick as safe as possible.

Please note SLDC do not manage volunteer litter picks and this Safe Systems of Work sheet is intended only as a guide to help you prepare for a safe event. Litter pick events and groups should have in place their own public liability insurance, or be operating under a national body/scheme which has insurance in place as SLDC will not be providing cover for the activity.

Covid-19

Please ensure that you check the [current government Covid-19 guidelines](#) and ensure that your event is compliant. SLDC may need to cancel arranged group events or the loaning of equipment if circumstances require.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Volunteers should wear boots or stout shoes to prevent injury from items hidden in vegetation. Volunteers should not wear sandals or other open shoes when collecting litter
- Protective gloves should be worn at all times
- High visibility vests/tabards should be worn at all times during the litter pick, this will allow road users to easily see volunteers
- Litter picking devices are available and should be used

Manual Handling

- Litter which is not easily accessible should not be collected. Volunteers should avoid putting themselves at risk of falling on uneven or slippery surfaces or of injury by overreaching. If it cannot be reached safely, leave it!

- Volunteers should not try to access litter in dense vegetation. Bramble, hawthorn, branches and twigs can cause serious injury. If it cannot be reached with litter picking devices, leave it!
- Collected litter should be placed in the plastic bags provided. Particular care should be exercised when picking up broken glass, metal etc with sharp edges which may pierce the plastic bag
- Where volunteers find large items of fly tipping they should not attempt to remove them but note the location and report it to the group coordinator. SLDC will investigate the incident and arrange removal of the rubbish
- If volunteers find large items (such as rolls of barbed wire or stock fencing) they should not attempt to remove it but inform the group coordinator. Volunteers should be aware that they must not attempt to lift heavy items of rubbish. If it cannot be easily picked up with one hand, leave it!
- Plastic rubbish bags should not be filled beyond the capacity to be easily lifted with one hand
- Full bags should be tied and left for later collection in the pre-arranged location, where the bags do not cause a hazard or obstruction

Dangerous and Noxious Materials

- If volunteers find discarded syringes or needles the group coordinator should be immediately informed and they should be placed in a special container (supplied) for disposal by SLDC
- Dead wildlife is best left for natural scavengers. If a dead pet with a name tag is found inform the group coordinator so that SLDC can inform the pet owner
- Volunteers should be aware that there is a risk of infection when handling litter and when working in or near water. Volunteers should take suitable precautions and wash their hands as soon as possible after litter picking and before eating or drinking
- If volunteers sustain a cut whilst collecting litter they should act to prevent infection. It is recommended that the group coordinator carries a small first aid kit for such eventualities

Young Volunteers

It is a great idea to get children and young people involved in community litter picks. However, age plays a large part in the ability to recognise and avoid danger. Volunteers under the age of 18 should be supervised by a responsible adult and permission for their participation should be gained from a parent or guardian.

Responsibilities of Group Coordinator

- To ensure safe working practices are carried out.

- To ensure that warning signs and lookouts are used where appropriate.
- To carry a first aid kit.
- To arrange the collection/drop off of equipment borrowed from SLDC and coordinate with SLDC for collection and disposal of filled rubbish bags.
- To ensure all borrowed equipment is returned to SLDC via collection/drop off.

Disclaimer

Volunteers should not participate in a litter pick unless they fully understand and accept that participation is entirely at their own risk. Volunteers are not working for or on behalf of, South Lakeland District Council, therefore the Council will not be held responsible for any loss, damage or inconvenience caused as a result of the actions or omissions of the volunteers or this guidance.

Thank you again for giving up your time to get involved. The most important thing left to say is, enjoy your day and stay safe!