

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. Note that this is provided as an aid NOT an official contractual agreement or instruction.

Protective Clothing and Equipment

Volunteers undertaking litter picks should use or have access to the following items:

- Reflective hi-visibility waistcoats to clearly highlight volunteers to traffic. These will also identify who you are and give some authority to what you are doing to members of the public.
- Volunteers should try to avoid direct contact with litter and repetitive bending by using a litter picker at all times.
- Bin bags – never fill them more than half full. This ensures that they are easy to tie, carry and dispose of.
- Bag hoop to hold the bag open in windy conditions. This saves a lot of time and frustration.
- Gloves to minimise contact with any noxious or dangerous materials. Some people may wish to consider double skinned approach, wearing nitrile gloves under cloth based gloves (again, it is strongly recommended that volunteers use litter-pickers all the time)
- Suitable footwear/clothing (flip flops or other open toe footwear is not recommended)
- Clothing should be appropriate to the weather conditions, checking forecast in advance of scheduled works and rescheduling if unsuitable – e.g. slippery surface.
- Hand sanitiser gel – however careful you may be, nasty stuff can end up on your hands.
- First Aid kit – small one, in case of cuts etc.
- Wipes to clean shoes and clothing of contaminated.
- Mobile phone – make sure you have a mobile phone with you that is charged. This will enable you to summon help quickly or to report to appropriate authorities any dangerous or noxious materials.
- Details of nearest emergency centres / hospitals
- Sunscreen to protect you from excessive exposure to the sun.

Hygiene

To avoid illness from poor hygiene, all those taking part must

- Cover any cuts however minor with a waterproof plaster.
- Avoid rubbing eyes and mouth while working.
- Wash hands thoroughly before eating, drinking, smoking or going to the toilet.

Hazardous Materials

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

- Broken Glass – remove using a litter picker or a brush and shovel, avoiding contact by hand, and dispose separately. Do not put in your bin bag. If large pieces of glass that cannot be easily removed report it to Environment First at Lewes District Council.
- Drug Related Litter/Hypodermics – these should not be touched or moved. Note the location and report to Environment First at Lewes District Council for specialist removal.
- Suspect Materials– items that are possibly dangerous such as pesticides, cleaning materials, paint, chemicals, gas cylinders, building materials or asbestos should not be moved by volunteers. Note the location and report to Environment First at Lewes District Council for specialist removal.
- Disposable barbeques – These may be HOT. Check carefully and cool with water if necessary before putting into your bin bag.
- Vehicle batteries should be left alone and reported to Environment First at Lewes District Council. They contain sulphuric acid. Small sealed batteries AA, AAA, C and D size etc. can be collected but need to be kept separate from other litter and disposed of properly. They will explode if burnt in an incinerator. Shops that sell batteries generally have a recycling box.
- Dead animals – Do not touch and report to Environment First at Lewes District Council for removal.
- Dog faeces – If bagged, use a litter picker to place in bin bag.
- Fly Tipping – note the location, take photographs if possible and report it to Environment First at Lewes District Council.
- If there is any doubt about an item, leave it alone, and let Environment First at Lewes District Council know.

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 basic principles of manual handling should be applied:

- Use litter pickers to prevent constant bending and stretching. Extended litter pickers are available if needed.
- Make sure an item is safe to handle with no sharp edges or noxious contents.
- 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.

General Site Safety and Inspection

Litter picking of areas beside roads should **NOT** be carried out under any circumstances due to the extreme danger that volunteers may find themselves in, please avoid the risk of being struck by vehicle. Volunteers should **NOT** attempt to clear litter from the carriageway especially A-Roads.

- 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 and report its location to Environment First at Lewes District Council.
- 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.
- Do not climb over fences and walls, but use the safest access point
- Do not climb over any fences that are along the cliff tops – they are there for a reason!
- Be mindful of wildlife. In the spring time avoid disturbing animals and birds that may be nesting and in the summer time be wary of wasp and bee nests (ref to Natural England and RSPB Guidance).
- 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.
- 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 be 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. A dynamic ‘on the spot’ assessment can take place for any new or changing risks which occur.
- Dogs – If dogs become a problem, ask the owner to call the dog away. If the dog wants to grab your litter picker, simply place it in the bin bag. (It looks like a dog ball thrower.)
- Avoid any confrontation with other members of the public – just walk away and keep walking-report any confrontation that escalates unacceptably to the right authorities

Young Volunteers

While it is beneficial to get young people involved in litter picks, age plays a big part in the ability to recognise and avoid risk. Accordingly, a parent/guardian should supervise those taking part under the age of 18, if a parent/guardian is not taking part with them then they will need to nominate an adult to supervise their children and give their permission for them to take part.

Collection and Disposal of Litter

Where larger quantities of litter are being collected, Environment First at Lewes District Council can arrange for the litter collected to be disposed of after the event. Small quantities can be disposed of in or on a litter bins or put it in your own dustbin. Volunteer litter pickers are not expected to separate recyclable items but if they do so, please be assured these will be disposed of in the correct waste streams supporting our environmental objectives.

Recycling

Volunteers are not expected to separate recyclable items of litter, but if they are willing to do so this, it would be welcomed. The recyclable items should be placed in separate recycling bags (where clean and acceptable) or taken to their nearest recycling point. Environment First can supply bags for the recycling if requested.

Disclaimer

Volunteers should not participate in litter picks unless they understand and accept that **participation is entirely at their own risk**. Volunteers are not working for, or on behalf of, the Parish or Town or District or County Council, therefore the Councils and Environment First will **NOT** be held responsible for any loss, damage or inconvenience caused because of the actions and omissions of volunteers or this guidance.

COVID 19 and Guidance

- Individuals currently shielding, in 'at risk' groups or displaying symptoms (or in contact with those with symptoms) or have been directly advised to self-isolate should not litter pick.
- Tell someone where you are going and stay in mobile contact.
- Use your own gloves and a litter-picker. Clean both after use before storing.
- Wash hands before and after at home or nearby w/c facilities.
- Carry hand sanitiser if you have some.
- Stay at least one metre from fellow volunteer and members of the public.
- Unless you have made an arrangement with your local council to collect your full rubbish bags, don't pick any more than you can put in your own bin at home.
- Don't pick up sharps/syringes.
- Litter should be tied up in strong waste sacks. Clinical waste (nappies and the like) should be double bagged where a high volume is found

Frequently asked questions

Am I insured by the Council when litter picking? No. Volunteer litter pickers are not working for, or on behalf of, the Town or District Council, therefore you are not covered by either Council's insurance.

What is the difference between litter and fly tipping? There is no clear definition of the difference between litter and fly tipping.

Litter is generally considered to be waste associated with eating, drinking and smoking, which has been improperly discarded and left by members of the public, or waste that is spilt during business operations.

Fly-tipping is controlled waste (household, commercial, industrial or clinical waste) which has been dumped illegally rather than being disposed of correctly.



Lewes District Council