

# Community clean-up

## Toolkit and Safety Guidance Notes

### Introduction

A community clean-up is a great way to show that your group cares about your local environment, whilst actively encouraging people not to drop litter and to take pride in where they live.

This document gives you advice on how to organise a community clean-up event, what safe working practices you should be aware of, how to get people involved and how to maximise publicity for your event.

The way in which you plan and carry out your community cleanup can affect the health and safety of those participating in the event and others who can be affected by your work.

This safety guidance is aimed to help you to consider the safety aspects of your cleanup day and to ensure that the event runs smoothly without anyone being harmed.

### Choosing a Location

Litter picking in a public place, will always involve a level of risk, however, by carefully choosing the location of your cleanup, you can avoid unacceptable hazards and ensure that the chance of anyone having an accident is kept as low as possible.

We would always advise you to avoid high risk locations, so recommend that you keep away from areas in close proximity to high speed or busy roads, ponds and watercourses, or where a build up of hazardous materials have been identified, such as unknown chemicals, car batteries or sharps such as syringes. In such situations, we would advise that you inform the Council of the issues and choose another location for your cleanup.

Once you have found a suitable location for your clean up, we would recommend that you complete a risk assessment to confirm the intended site is appropriate and to help you determine any controls that need to be put in place.

## How we can help

- Our team at [hello@yourcityyourhome.co.uk](mailto:hello@yourcityyourhome.co.uk) will be able to advise what tools and equipment may be available from the council or other partners at sites located around the city. This may include strong black bags, litter pickers, gloves and hi-viz vests or reflective arm bands.
- To arrange for us to collect your bagged litter you can sign up to our list of groups and individuals that take part in litter picks and have rubbish removed free of charge. Visit [www.newcastle.gov.uk/envirocall](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/envirocall) 'Apply to be a Community Litter Picker'. You will need to provide a name and password for you/your group. You can then 'Request Removal of Community Litter'. A pin marks the street litter bin where you want your bagged waste to be collected from. This can only be arranged after the event. To book a bespoke collection in advance or to arrange for us to collect from a site that is not next to a street litter bin you will need to call 0191 2787878 and ask for 'bins'.
- Litter will only be collected on Monday – Thursday (9am – 3pm) and Friday (9am - 12pm). Please note we are unable to separate recycling from general litter as the bags will be collected along with general street litter bin waste. Any litter collected at weekends or on public holidays will have to be safely stored until we are able to arrange for collection.
- Our team at [hello@yourcityyourhome.co.uk](mailto:hello@yourcityyourhome.co.uk) will be able to advise what tools and equipment may be available from the council or other partners and sites around the city. This may include black bags, litter pickers, gloves and hi-viz vests or reflective arm bands.
- Please consider where there are toilet and hand washing facilities that you could approach to use on the day. You may wish to have somewhere where you could have refreshments during or after the clean up or provide water for participants.
- Please visit #yourcityyourhome or [www.yourcityyourhome.co.uk](http://www.yourcityyourhome.co.uk) to find out how you can **promote your event** and publicise your good work. Using social media is a great way to share your stories and encourage others to join in or arrange their own events.
- For any other advice contact [hello@yourcityyourhome.co.uk](mailto:hello@yourcityyourhome.co.uk)

## Public Liability Insurance

The council strongly advises groups and organisations to check their insurance before organising their own clean ups.

If the event organiser does not already have this we advise they take out appropriate 'Public Liability' insurance.

Any event organised directly by Newcastle City Council will be covered by its Public Liability Insurance.

## On the day

### Risk Assessment

A risk assessment is a careful examination of the possible dangers that your volunteers might encounter when carrying out the clean up, or that might be presented to others who may be affected by your work. Dependant on your findings, it then involves you deciding on suitable controls, rules or equipment etc. that can be used on the day to remove the possibility of harm occurring, or reduce it to an acceptable level. See example risk assessment.

If an area carries too many risks for you and your volunteers, or a serious issue is found that is felt to be too dangerous (such as busy traffic, fast moving water or falls from height) you should consider whether it is more appropriate to leave the clearing of that site and choose another location.

To help you to complete a site risk assessment we suggest you consider the following issues and ensure you make a thorough check on the day. This only illustrates some of the hazards that could be encountered. You must make a careful examination of your intended work area to identify the hazards present to determine appropriate controls.

### Protective Clothing and Equipment

- Reflective **hi-visibility vests** or light coloured clothing will highlight volunteers to each other, traffic and other pedestrians and cyclists.
- **Litter pickers** - to avoid direct contact with litter and repetitive bending.
- **Strong boots** or shoes – to reduce likelihood of slips/falls
- **Mobile phones** – to keep in contact with each other and the organisers.

- **Gloves** – to minimise physical contact with dangerous materials.
- **Appropriate clothing for weather** – including sunscreen for sunny days.

## Dangerous Materials

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

- **Broken glass.** Avoid direct hand contact; remove using a litter picker and dispose of in a solid container.
- **Drug related litter or hypodermic needles.** These should not be touched. Contact the council for removal [www.newcastle.gov.uk/envirocall](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/envirocall)
- **Dog fouling.** Dog mess can cause infections. It is advisable to leave this and report it to the organisers for them to report this.
- **Suspect materials** and fly tipping. Items that are possibly dangerous such as unknown liquids in containers, asbestos, or fly tipping should not be touched. Contact the organisers who will speak to the council about specialist removal.

If there is any doubt about an item, leave it, and let the organisers know. Please give them a full description of where these are to be found.

## Lifting and Handling Materials

Injuries can result from lifting heavy objects, or as a result of dropping them. People need to work within their own capabilities. Working together will help to share the load, but it may be more sensible to leave larger, heavy items and report them to the organisers so that they can make appropriate arrangements for their safe removal. Some tips have been given below, to help avoid injuries resulting from the lifting and carrying of objects.

- Using litter pickers will prevent the need for constant bending and stretching whilst also making sure your hands are not injured by contact with sharp objects.
- It is a good idea to suggest that participants warm up and stretch before the clean up begins, as it will help to minimise any muscle strains, especially when it is cold outside.
- Make sure an item is safe to handle with no sharp edges or hazardous contents.
- Avoid cuts to legs by ensuring that glass and other sharps are placed in sturdy containers, and not directly into plastic bags.

- 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.

## **Weather and the Environment**

Litter picking is an outdoor event and volunteers need to be appropriately dressed.

If it is hot and sunny applying sunscreen, wearing a cap and long sleeved shirts are advised to protect against sunburn. Bottled water is also advisable to guard against dehydration.

If the weather is cold, wet or windy volunteers should wear clothing that will keep them warm and dry.

Wet or icy conditions can increase the risk of slips, trips and falls. Be cautious around pavements that gather water or grassed areas that may be slippery.

Poor visibility conditions resulting from time of day or weather conditions may significantly increase the risks associated with litter picking, so you should give some consideration to the best time of day for your event to take place.

Always respect the local environment and potential wildlife that may be occupying areas you are working in. Be careful not to disturb nesting birds.

## **Hygiene**

To avoid illness from poor hygiene, all those taking part in the litter pick should:

- Be aware of where the nearest toilet and hand washing facilities are.
- Wear strong gloves at all times.
- Cover any cuts or grazes with surgical tape or waterproof plasters.
- Avoid touching the mouth and eyes whilst working.
- Wash hands and forearms before eating, drinking, smoking or going to the toilet.

## Young Volunteers

If you are involving children or young people, make sure there are a sufficient number of adults to supervise as age plays a big part in people's ability to recognise and avoid risk. Make sure you agree a meeting point for anyone who is lost.

We usually advise young people need to be accompanied by a responsible adult or carer. Groups may wish to ensure they have the appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service checks in place.

Before the clean up make sure the children understand which items are potentially dangerous and should not be picked up. Be aware that some children may not heed your warnings and therefore must be closely supervised to ensure they do not put themselves in danger or try to work beyond their abilities.

## Photos & videos and taking details of personal information

It can be really useful to take photos or videos at your events. You can use them afterwards to publicise your activities and share with #yourcityyourhome. However, you should make sure the people you are photographing know they are being photographed and understand how the images will be used. Remember that people might have their own reasons for not wanting themselves or their children to be photographed, and it is important to respect this.

Images in which people can be identified are a form of personal data. Personal data is protected by data protection legislation, which sets out how organisations should treat people's personal data in order to respect their privacy.

The most important thing to remember about all forms of personal data, including images, is that you should only collect, store and use data that your group needs for a specific purpose. You shouldn't collect, store and use data just because you might want it at some point in future. This means that you should only take photos if you know why you need them and how you will use them. You should delete photos once their purpose is done. You shouldn't store them indefinitely "just-in-case".

Before taking any photos or films, you should ensure the people they are aware that they are being photographed, who is taking the pictures, what they will be used for, and who they will be shared with. You should also tell people who they should contact if they do not want to be photographed, or if they want their images deleted later. Display clear signs at your event which specifically explain all this. You can ask people to give their consent by ticking the attendance sheet.

## Briefing participants before you start

Agree where you are to meet and share mobile numbers. Agree a meeting point for anyone who becomes lost. Always work in groups of 2 or more. If you have trained first aider make sure everyone knows who they are.

Agree where you will meet at the end of the clean up to ensure everyone is back safely before you finish. Make sure everyone has been accounted for before you leave the site. Remember to collect all the equipment you have loaned out.

Briefing everyone before the activity starts is a good way of making sure that everyone is aware of the potential dangers and the main aim of the clean up. People should work in teams or within sight of each other. Remind participants to wash hands before eating or smoking.

Good luck with your event, remember to let us know how you get on and if you have any suggestions or recommendation for others thinking of having their own clean up. You can email information and suggestions to [hello@yourcityyourhome.co.uk](mailto:hello@yourcityyourhome.co.uk)

## Keep it safe

To help you, we have provided safety guidance to assist during the organising and planning of your day. You should read the guidance note prior to choosing a location for your clean-up and consider carry out a site assessment for the activity. The guidance note explains how to do a simple site assessment and a blank assessment template is available, along with a completed example, should you need some assistance on what to do.

Unless you have suitable containers for **broken glass** please report it and do not try to remove it. Broken glass or sharp materials which could rip plastic bags.

It would be advisable to have access to basic **first aid** supplies, such as plasters, in case of minor injuries during the clean-up. You should also let your volunteers know where any first aid materials can be found during the event.

Make sure that someone has a **mobile telephone**, this can then be used to summon assistance, such as from the emergency services, in the event of a more serious injury.

Your site assessment will help you decide what **clothing and equipment** is appropriate, such as heavy duty gloves and high visibility clothing.



## Example Risk Assessment for Community Clean Up

<b>Activity to be carried out:</b>
Litter Picking / Community clean up
<b>Date of assessment:</b>
<b>Assessment completed by:</b>
<b>Concerns arising from the activity:</b>
<p>Issues potentially affecting all community members taking part in clean up operation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cuts and abrasions due to handling sharp objects (e.g. glass, drug paraphernalia)</li><li>• Infection due to contact with discarded syringes nappies, dog excrement, rotting food, clinical waste, soil and contaminated water etc.</li><li>• Burns, irritation and other injuries / illness due to the handling of discarded chemicals, or hazardous materials such as oil, damaged car batteries (acid) etc.</li><li>• Strains /sprains, crushed hands or feet / slipped disc etc. due to the lifting and carrying of heavy items and /or dropping objects being carried.</li><li>• Cuts and lacerations due to snagging on shrubs, hidden obstacles, fence wires etc.</li><li>• Physical injury due to dog bites or violent members of the public</li><li>• Assault, robbery or worsening of injuries following an accident, due to members of the team working alone, or in isolation.</li><li>• Extreme weather conditions – heat, cold, ice, snow, rain.</li><li>• Lost group members sepaprated from party.</li></ul> <p>Issues affecting all community members taking part in clean up operation and to members of the public such as cyclists, dog walkers and pedestrians who may travel through the cleanup area during the operation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Slips, trips and falls resulting in twisted or sprained ankles, cuts and bruising as a result of walking on uneven / rough or excessively sloping ground, or from tripping on equipment or rubbish left on the ground and obstructing walkways.</li><li>• Working adjacent to roads and on streets and pavements.</li></ul>



## **Control Measures:**

### **Prior to clean up starting:**

- Decide if weather suitable for the planned activity.
- A site check will be undertaken by team leaders before activity begins to determine and remove any identified hazards (where possible), and to confirm that area is appropriate for activities to be carried out.
- A briefing will take place at the beginning of each session to cover the potential issues identified (as detailed) and working practices to be adopted and followed. Team leaders should update any participant who misses the briefing.
- Any areas near to the location that are unsuitable i.e. due to excessive slopes, hazardous ground conditions, watercourses, busy roads or aggressive dogs etc. will be avoided and this communicated during the initial briefing session. Participants will be advised to maintain a safe distance from such areas.

### **During the clean up operation:**

- All participants should wear appropriate clothing, stout footwear and gloves or sun screen if necessary.
- A first aid kit will be available in the event of minor injuries being sustained. Team leader will have a mobile telephone which can be used to summon the emergency services, should it be required.
- Litter pickers should be used to collect rubbish whenever possible, to avoid handpicking.
- Any heavy objects discovered that are beyond the lifting capabilities of the team should be left and referred back to team leaders, in order that further arrangements can be made for their safe removal via the Local Authority.
- Should any syringes or other hazardous objects be found (such as car batteries or chemicals) be found, they should not be picked up by participants and should be referred back to the team leader so that suitable arrangements can be made for their safe removal via the Local Authority.
- Good hygiene practices should be adopted and participants will be advised to wash hands after handling rubbish and before eating / drinking etc.
- Participants should be considerate to others whilst working on site and remain aware of people around them.
- Participants should work as a group and not break off alone from the main group.
- Should any challenging behaviour be encountered participants should withdraw and inform the team leader, so that appropriate action can be considered, such as contacting the police.
- Participants should not challenge members of the public.
- No lone working will be allowed during the clean up, with all participants working as part of a team. All children must be accompanied by a responsible adult and Team Leaders should remain aware of the whereabouts of their teams throughout the clean up.
- A location will identified prior to the cleanup where rubbish bags will be located, ready for collection. This will be in a sensible position and away from footpaths so as not to create an obstruction or trip hazard.

## Risk Assessment for Community Clean Up

**Activity to be carried out:**

Litter Picking / Community clean up

**Date of assessment:**

**Assessment completed by:**

**Concerns arising from the activity:**

Issues potentially affecting all community members taking part in clean up operation:

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Issues affecting all community members taking part in clean up operation and to members of the public such as cyclists, dog walkers and pedestrians who may travel through the cleanup area during the operation:

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**Control Measures:**

**Prior to clean up starting:**

**During the clean up operation:**





# Litter Picking – How to stay safe



Use litter pickers



Wear sensible shoes, gloves & a hi viz vest or something bright or reflective



Don't lift heavy things on your own



Be careful on wet surfaces or slopes



Don't pick up needles, dog poo or broken glass



Return bags to the collection point & let people know when you leave





Wash your hands, use wipes or hand gel

# Your city, your home

## Community Clean-up

### Do's and Don't's

The following list has been created to ensure you have a safe clean-up day and gives some simple do's and don'ts that should help to avoid any injuries or illness.

DO	DON'T
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Always let a member of your family know where you are going and when you are expected home.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Handle any needles or sharp objects. <b>X</b></li><li>• Work on or near any high speed or busy roads. <b>X</b></li></ul>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Carry a mobile phone in case of emergencies (if you have one).</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work in or near any watercourses. <b>X</b></li></ul>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Always use gloves and litter pickers when collecting litter.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lift anything that is too heavy. <b>X</b></li></ul>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Try to wear reflective or light coloured clothing.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work when in it is dark or unsafe. <b>X</b></li><li>• Approach any unknown people. <b>X</b></li></ul>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wear strong boots or shoes.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work when you are tired. <b>X</b></li></ul>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Always wash your hands after litter picking.</li></ul>	
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inform the Council of any problems or issues that you may have noticed.</li></ul>	<div><p><b>Key Contacts:</b></p><p><b>Envirocall – 0191 2787878</b></p><p><b>Northumbria Police non emergency number - 101</b></p></div>