



South Swindon Parish Council

Guidance for Litter Pickers

Introduction

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.

To contact the Parish Council about any of the items raised in this guidance, please call 01793 312006 or via email at admin@southswindon-pc.gov.uk

Protective Clothing and Equipment

Volunteers undertaking litter picks should use the following items at all times:

- Reflective hi-visibility waistcoats to clearly highlight volunteers to traffic and pedestrians. (Those provided are only appropriate for areas where the speed limit is 30mph or less)
- Litter pickers to avoid direct contact with litter and repetitive bending.
- Gloves to minimise contact with any noxious or dangerous materials.
- Suitable footwear/clothing (flip flops or other open toe footwear is not recommended)

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 or a brush and shovel, avoiding contact by hand, and dispose of in a sturdy container.
- Drug Related Litter/Hypodermics – these should not be moved. Note the location and report to the council for specialist removal.
- Suspect Materials and Fly Tipping – items that are possibly dangerous such as unknown liquids in containers, building materials or asbestos should not be moved by volunteers. Note the location and report to the council for specialist removal.

If there is any doubt about an item, leave it, and let the council know. (Only items on publicly accessible land)

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, and litter picks should only take place in clear daylight.

- 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 and report its location to the 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.
- Be mindful of wildlife. In the spring time avoid disturbing animals and birds that may be nesting, during the summer-time be wary of wasp and bee nests.
- Do not enter an area, or attempt to litter pick an area, where works are already taking place (for example road works) or where the public do not have a right to enter.

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' self-risk assessment can take place for any new or changing risks which occur.

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.
- 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.

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, the Council can arrange for the litter collected to be disposed of after the event, please contact the Parish Office on 01793 312006 or email admin@southswindon-pc.gov.uk

Recycling

Volunteers are not expected to separate recyclable items of litter.

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 Council, therefore the Parish Council will not be held responsible for any loss, damage or inconvenience caused because of the actions and omissions of volunteers or this guidance.

Public Liability Insurance

Obtaining public liability insurance is very important and strongly recommended. This will provide cover for your legal liability arising from accidental damage or injury that may occur during the event, including damage or injury to a member of the public or their property.

If you are an individual organising a tidy up your current household insurance may cover you for public liability. You will need to check your policy to ensure you are covered. If not, you will need to take out a separate public liability insurance.

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 Parish or the Borough Council, therefore you are not covered by either Council's insurance. If you are representing an organisation, check that you are covered by the organisation'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