



Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Volunteer Litter Picker Guidance

There are a few easily avoidable hazards that volunteer litter pickers may be exposed to. This guide has been produced to help volunteers identify these hazards to make their involvement safe and enjoyable.

Protective clothing and equipment

When litter picking volunteers should always use/wear the following items

- **Gloves (gardening type or disposable)**
- **Suitable footwear & clothing (well- fitting and flat)**
- **Hi-visibility reflective waistcoat or coat**
- **Litter picking stick**

A kit of reflective waistcoats and litter pickers can be obtained from the Council, subject to budgetary provision these will be free of charge (see frequently asked questions).

Things to take care with or avoid

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

- Broken glass; remove using a litter picker or a brush and shovel. Avoid any contact by hand and if possible, wrap before bagging.

The following should not be moved under any circumstances and contact should be made with the Council for these items to be removed by trained staff: -

- Drug related litter and hypodermic needles (information on how to identify these items can be found here <https://www.getsmartaboutdrugs.gov/content/how-identify-drug-paraphernalia> also see images at the end of this document.
- Unknown liquids in containers
- Asbestos (or something you think may be asbestos) The HSE have an image gallery for volunteers to look at if clarification is required <https://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/gallery.htm> also see images at the end of this document

If you have ANY doubt about an item leave it and give the details of the item and its location to your group leader for them to contact the Council who will arrange safe removal public.realm@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk

General safety and on-site inspection

Litter picking of areas beside roads should be carried out with care and caution due to the risk of being struck by vehicles. Volunteers should always work facing oncoming traffic and should be wearing reflective hi-visibility clothing of some sort. Volunteers should avoid litter picking in poor visibility caused by onset of dusk, or adverse weather conditions. Volunteers should never consider removing litter from the live carriageway. Wherever possible volunteers should not work alone instead working in groups of 2 or more together.

Volunteers should 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 can not be safely reached with a litter picker, leave it.

Avoid working on steep slopes including steep sided ditches or water courses as there is an increased risk of slips and falls. If litter cannot be removed from a steep sided ditch with a litter picker leave it.

Do not enter areas where access is restricted; for example road works or areas where public access is either banned or restricted. An example of this is railway land which is often viewed from a public space but must not be entered for litter picking purposes.

The level of risk and potential hazards will vary at each location so it is recommended that a visual inspection and assessment of any potential risks or problems is completed by volunteers on every occasion. Volunteers have a duty towards themselves, fellow volunteers and the public to work safely. If you have any doubts about the safety of a site or any material then you should avoid it.

Volunteers should not attempt to carry any individual bulky items; a location of these can be passed to the Council for separate collection. Volunteers should also think of the weight of collection bags and if necessary only part fill bags.

To avoid injury the following basic principles of manual handling should be applied:-

- Use litter picking sticks to prevent constant bending and stretching.
- Make sure an item is safe to handle with no sharp edges
- Only move an item if it can be done so without straining.
- When lifting an item bend the legs and keep the back straight
- Do no overfill bags or add heavy items to bags

Any injuries should be reported to the group leader.

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, volunteers under the age of 18 should be supervised by an adult and permission for their participation should be gained from a parent or guardian. Those allowing under 18's to take part in litter picking duties should check their obligations regarding Criminal Records Bureau checks.

Collection and disposal of litter

Volunteers are asked to re-use supermarket carrier bags, or similar, to collect litter as this does not involve an additional cost to supply bags and it is environmentally friendly to re-use. This also helps to ensure that the volumes of litter collected are manageable to handle.

For annual community litter picks where large volumes of litter are likely to be collected, the Council can supply bags and arrange for the litter to be collected and disposed of after the event. Please contact the Council's Public Realm Team to arrange this public.realm@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk

Note

Volunteers should not participate in litter picking duties unless they understand and accept that participation is entirely at their own risk. Volunteers are not working for, or on behalf of Babergh or Mid Suffolk District Council, therefore the Council can not be held responsible for any loss, damage or inconvenience caused because of the actions of volunteers or their failure to adhere to this guidance.

Frequently asked questions

Can we borrow litter pick equipment from the Council for a group event?

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils no longer offer the borrow scheme but instead gifts equipment to parishes for them to store for themselves. As we are unable to gift a kit to every parish, we ask that these kits are made available to other neighbouring parishes if required.

Am I insured by the Council when litter picking?

No, volunteer litter pickers are not working for, or on behalf of, Babergh or Mid Suffolk District Council, therefore you would not be covered by the Council's insurance.

What do I do if I find evidence of where litter may come from?

Please report this information to the Council's Environmental Protection team who will follow up your report and act depending on the strength of the evidence. Always keep any evidence found for collection.

Drug paraphernalia images



Bongs (filtration device to smoke marijuana)



Discarded needles

Asbestos images



Guidance sheet

