

Handling difficult situations at vaccination sites

A number of people arriving for their vaccine appointments, perhaps after a period of shielding, may feel anxious being back in public spaces or people may arrive for a vaccine without appointments. In such circumstances, people may behave differently and in small cases may challenge if asked to do something by a member of staff or volunteer. We want to ensure that volunteers have some awareness on how to deal with challenging behaviour and feel supported by having some techniques you can use.

Remember!

These top tips will give you an awareness of Conflict Resolution. It is important to remember that, as a volunteer, **it is not your role** to deal directly with conflict resolution issues. It is, however, your duty to know when and how to report any potential concerns. 

Avoiding Conflict

You can use verbal communication and body language to reduce the possibility of conflict. Picking up on body language can give you a clearer sign of someone's state of anxiety or mood.

Recognising Non-Verbal Signs

As an observant volunteer you will be able to notice when an individual is becoming confused, angry, upset, stressed or anxious without them telling you. You can then take action to help stop this from happening or help them express their feelings in the best way for them.

Assessing Risk

When in a conflict situation, use the SAFER approach to assess the risk:

- S**tep back
- A**ssess the threat
- F**ind help
- E**valuate your options
- R**espond in an appropriate manner

Dealing with a Conflict Situation

You should always have an awareness of your environment and surroundings. Keeping a physical distance allows time to think, react and get out of the way.

Top tips for de-escalation

- ✓ Calm yourself first - remember to breathe
 - ✓ Look calm - neutral facial expression, relaxed body, limit movements (including arms)
 - ✓ Reassure yourself - positive self-talk
 - ✓ Ask for help if possible
- Then:
- ✓ Assess the individual's emotional state
 - ✓ Identify trigger factors, is it too hot, too cold or noisy?
 - ✓ Try to reassure them
 - ✓ Talk/listen
 - ✓ Be aware of your environment or those who might present a threat
 - ✓ Keep a relaxed posture but remain alert

Key points

- You can use verbal communication and body language to minimise the likelihood of conflict
- Picking up on body language can give you a better indication of someone's state of anxiety or level of agitation
- Use the SAFER approach the risk
- It is not your role to directly respond to conflict. If you see a conflict situation arising, inform an appropriate person on site.

Further resources

Conflict Resolution for Volunteers e-learning module

The e-learning for Healthcare (e-LfH) platform* has a free short online course lasting approx. 25 minutes called [Conflict Resolution for Volunteers](#) that we suggest completing as part of your preparation for the Steward Volunteer role. You will need to register an account to access the course.

**Joining instructions to self-register for an e-LfH profile, please use this link: <https://portal.e-lfh.org.uk/Register>*