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**Adopt
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Adopt A Spot Safety Guidelines

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1. Introduction

Adopt A Spot is a volunteer programme focused on minimising litter that gives local communities the opportunity to contribute to a healthier, greener and cleaner local environment. Adopt A Spot promotes civic pride by mobilising a network of community-focussed organisations and individuals who adopt and care for neglected areas.

The project's goal is to help get people excited about where they live and empower individuals to take greater responsibility for the environment. One Spot at a time, we aim to accomplish cleaner streets and neighbourhoods, with less dog fouling, more biodiversity and better use of unused spaces.

The safety of Adopt A Spot volunteers is paramount. These detailed and specific safety guidelines have been developed to maximise volunteer safety and must be reviewed prior to the start of any Adopt A Spot clean-up activity. The guidelines were compiled using the best available information and are based on past and present practices and experiences. Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful reserves the right to change, add or delete recommendations, as required.

All Adopt A Spot participants must recognise that they may be volunteering in a potentially hazardous environments and should adhere to the recommendations contained in these safety guidelines. Participants are required to read these safety guidelines thoroughly and enquire if aspects of these guidelines are not clearly understood. Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful reserve the right to terminate any Adopt A Spot agreement if activities are not performed safely, satisfactorily or for any other reason. The safety guidelines apply to all Adopt A Spot groups and projects in Northern Ireland.

2. Supervision

2.1 Group Leader

A registered Adopt A Spot group shall appoint a Group Leader to act as a contact on behalf of the group to assist in communicating information to Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful. The



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Group Leader must submit an application to the Adopt A Spot project on the Live Here Love Here website and will act as a point-of-contact for the adopted area.

2.2 First-Aid

The Group Leader shall ensure that each volunteering group on an Adopt A Spot clean-up activity has a first-aid kit available on site. It is recommended that at least one person in each volunteering group have a current first-aid certificate.

2.3 Check List

Each Adopt A Spot group should develop its own checklist for use before an activity commences. The Group Leader should be responsible for checking off against the list prior to any Adopt A Spot activity.

Some things to consider are when producing your checklist:

- Provision of safety refresher talk for participants (see 4.4)
- Highlighting any issues identified in the site-specific risk assessment (see 4.1)
- Clarifying who is the Group Leader
- Clarifying who has mobile phones
- Supervision of children (see 3)
- Direction/route of clean-up
- First aid kit
- Safety vests
- Gloves
- Litter bags
- Personal protective equipment (if required)
- Sharps containers

3. Children

Parents or supervisors of children are liable for the safety and actions of children at all times.



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Each Adopt A Spot group must provide adequate adult supervision in groups containing individuals less than 18 years old. As a guide, Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful recommends one adult to every four young participants (18 years old or younger). However, this can differ depending on the activity, the children's age range and if they have any disabilities. It is recommended these factors are taken into consideration when completing your risk assessment (see 4.1). Each Adopt A Spot group working anywhere near roadways, canals, rivers, ponds or beaches should pay particular consideration to ensure that there are responsible people appointed specifically to keep an eye on the safety of the children involved.

Before a clean-up activity, the Group Leader must ensure children understand which items are potentially dangerous and should not be picked up (see 9.3). Be aware that very young children may not heed warnings. Do not let children attempt to pick up heavy or bulky items. Ensure that children have adult help for any weightier tasks.

4. Safety Issues

4.1 Risk

Any work undertaken prior to or during an Adopt A Spot clean-up activity is performed at the participants' own risk. Participants are required to exercise care when performing any activity.

4.2 Safety Induction

Prior to participants undertaking their first Adopt A Spot clean up activity, they must complete a thorough review and discussion of these safety guidelines. The Group Leader must record the date that each participant undertakes the safety induction and the date of each refresher thereafter in the safety induction register. It is recommended that each participant should undertake a full safety induction every six months.



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4.3 Risk Assessments

The preparation of a site-specific risk assessment is a prerequisite to undertaking an Adopt A Spot activity. As each Adopt A Spot site could contain areas where added caution needs to be exercised, the Group Leader must address these areas and develop methods to minimise risk. To run a safe and fun clean-up activity, it is best practice to complete a risk assessment before each clean-up event.

The template risk assessment provided below will help the Group Leader identify potential hazards and plan the necessary precautions to avoid the risk of accidents or injury. By filling in the below form, this will help you give an informed safety talk at the beginning of each clean-up event.

Before completing a risk assessment, remember that:

- A hazard is anything that may cause harm, such as chemicals, electricity, working from ladders, etc.
- The risk is the chance, high or low, that somebody could be harmed by these and other hazards, together with an indication of how serious the harm could be

Follow these five guidelines to successfully complete a risk assessment:

1. Identify the hazards
2. Decide who might be harmed and how
3. Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions
4. Record your findings and implement them
5. Review your assessment and update when necessary (e.g., wet weather may change the hazards or a new risk has arisen)



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<u>Template Risk Assessment</u>				Reviewed by:
Date:	Name of activity leader:			
Activity:		Location:		
Persons potentially at risk:				Nearest Hospital:
Site Access:		Car Parking:		
Identify the main Risks/Hazards that volunteers could potentially face	Worst case outcome	Estimation of risk (Low/ Medium/ High)	Current Precautions taken to avoid such risk	Comments
<i>Example: Sharp or pointed objects</i>	<i>Cuts and scrapes</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Protective gloves and litter pickers to be used.</i>	<i>Ensure adult supervision. Sharp objects to be placed in sharps box or bucket</i>



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Further Precautions to Consider				
Have all members received a health and safety briefing (on the day)?	Y/N	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All volunteers should be made aware of the associated risks. Provided all volunteers are relatively fit, the above should not prove to be overly hazardous. However, as there is much bending and lifting of objects from the shore all volunteers should be reminded of their physical limitations.• All volunteers are recommended to have up to date tetanus vaccinations.• All participants should be wearing suitable clothing.		
Is there a working telephone (on the day)?	Y/N			
Is there a first-aider and kit available (on the day)?	Y/N			
Is there a sharps box/bucket available (on the day)?	Y/N			
Do you know where the nearest vehicular access is?	Y/N			
Are there toilets available on site?	Y/N			



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4.4 Pre-Work Safety Refresher

Because the period between Adopt A Spot clean-up activities could range from a few weeks to a few months, and because of the possibility of first-time participants, the Group Leader is required to complete a pre-work safety refresher immediately before each clean-up activity.

The refresher should cover the safety requirements contained in these guidelines, what to do in the event of an accident and other details contained in the site-specific risk assessment.

4.5 Roadside Working

For Adopt A Spot groups volunteering near or on roadsides, work should progress in a direction opposite to the flow of traffic. Working towards the oncoming traffic will allow the maximum time possible to take corrective action in the event of a vehicle leaving the road or losing control.

Consideration must be given to avoid Adopt A Spot activities near busy roads during peak hour traffic or public holidays, due to increased traffic flows during these times. Do not work in low light or fog to ensure you can be seen when completing clean-up activities.

The crossing of roads should be addressed in the site-specific risk assessment for the particular work site, if applicable. Use caution when crossing roads and use pedestrian crossings and signals where provided. Exercise caution near merging lanes, exit and entry ramps and road intersections. Work should be carried out on one side of the road at a time. Groups should not be split. This will assist the Group Leader in monitoring the safety of the group.

All participants must be aware that roadside litter pickers are sometimes targeted by passing motorists. A distinction between council workers and Adopt A Spot participants wearing similar vests may not be obvious to some motorists. Therefore, participants should be mindful of the possibility of road user aggression. If faced with aggression avoid escalation, withdraw and contact the Police if necessary.



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4.6 Lone Working

If completing clean-up activities alone, make sure you let someone know where you are going and when to expect you back. Before heading out, decide what route you are going to take and calculate how long it will take. Ensure you have a mobile phone with you to call for assistance, if needed.

4.7 General Hygiene

Due to the nature of Adopt A Spot work, it is recommended that participants strictly observe hygiene standards and wash their face and hands at the completion of activities and before consuming food, drinking or smoking.

4.8 Other Dangers

Giant hogweed and native hogweed:

This is an 'injurious weed' and can cause harm to people and animals. Great care should be taken when working near this weed and it should not be touched at any time. Seek immediate medical advice if skin comes into contact with the weed and irritation, rashes or blistering could occur. Further Information available here:

www.invasivespeciesireland.com

www.nonnativespecies.org

www.dardni.gov.uk/ruralni/giant_hogweed.pdf

Weil's Disease:

Weil's Disease (Leptospirosis) is a very rare infection carried in rats' urine and can be fatal. The symptoms include high temperature, severe headaches, flu-like illness or muscle pains. They will appear three to nineteen days after exposure to contaminated water. It must be treated early.

Ticks and Lyme's Disease:

Ticks are most active anytime of the year if the temperature is above 12 degrees. When visiting or working in the countryside, it is important to take precautions against ticks and be vigilant for the symptoms of Lyme disease.



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Please follow our risk assessments standard advice when working outdoors – this includes:

- Wash hands whenever hygiene facilities become available.
- Cover cuts with a waterproof dressing.
- If eating outdoors ensure hands can be washed or sanitized (sanitizing gel is fine if other hygiene facilities are unavailable).
- Avoid getting river, canal, pond or stream water in mouth or cuts – if accidental contact occurs clean and rinse as soon as possible.
- If, after contact with water, flu like conditions occur seek medical advice immediately.
- Keep to footpaths where possible n Wear appropriate clothing in areas likely to contain ticks (grassland or other undergrowth inhabited by mammals) a long-sleeved shirt and trousers tucked into your socks is advised.
- Inspect skin for ticks at the end of the day, including your head, neck and skin folds (armpits, groin, and waistband) – remove any ticks promptly.

There are a number of recommend ways of removing ticks if you find them – these include:

Method 1: Using an adjustable Tick Lasso

Tick lassoes are easy to use and extremely reliable – they work by encircling the tick, constricting around its mouthparts and pulling it free. Tick lassos are available from chemists.

Method 2: Tick Hook

Tick hooks come in assorted sizes and are very durable. They come in different sizes so chose one suitable for the tick you are removing.

- Engage the hook by approaching the tick from the side until it is held securely.
- Lift the hook very lightly and turn it. The tick detaches by itself after two or three rotations.

Method 3: Sharp Point Tweezers



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Grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible and pull upwards with steady, even pressure.

Do not twist or jerk the tick as this may leave its mouth parts embedded, or cause it to regurgitate infected fluids. If any mouthparts do break off, they can be removed with a sterilised needle or tweezer points.

Do not squeeze or crush the body of the tick, because its fluids (saliva and gut contents) may contain infections and leak into the host's bloodstream or into the skin.

Do not handle the tick with bare hands, because certain disease-causing organisms may enter through breaks in the skin or through mucous membranes (if you touch eyes, nostrils or mouth).

After removing the tick, disinfect the bite site with an antiseptic wipe or wound wash and wash your hands with soap and water.

With lyme disease and other zoonoses, early diagnosis is crucial to minimise health problems. If you have been bitten by a tick, please look out for the following a high temperature, feeling hot and shivery, headaches, muscle and joint pain, tiredness and loss of energy, rashes with or without bull's eye markings. The rash can appear up to 3 months after being bitten by a tick and usually lasts for several weeks. Most rashes appear within the first 4 weeks. If you experience any of these following a tick bite please visit your GP immediately.

Further information on Lyme's:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/lyme-disease/

Further information on Zoonoses:

[Zoonotic diseases \(zoonoses\): guidance, data and analysis - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/zoonotic-diseases-zoonoses)



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5. Accidents

Participants must agree to hold Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful non-accountable for any injuries that they may sustain, or damages they may cause or suffer as result of participation in the programme.

In the event of an accident, medical assistance should be rendered at the earliest opportunity. The Group Leader shall keep a permanent, written record of all incidents and hazards (minor or major). The Adopt A Spot Group Leader shall provide a written incident/hazard report to Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, as soon as practicable.

6. Activity Times

6.1 Daylight Hours

Activities shall occur only during normal daylight hours and when weather conditions are suitable. Activities shall cease when visibility or safety is affected (e.g., during fog or rain).

6.2 Weather

It is recommended that participants should check the weather forecast to avoid surprises and come prepared for sudden weather changes. Participants should exercise caution during or after wet weather, as surfaces and slopes may become slippery. Participants should not work in low light or fog.

7. Safety Equipment

All participants in an Adopt A Spot activity are collectively and individually responsible for ensuring the safety of themselves and others.

The Group Leader has the final say in approving or rejecting an activity participant, including if that person's personal protective equipment is considered unsuitable.

Personal protective equipment includes:

- Appropriate clothing.



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- Suitable footwear (footwear with substantial soles and uppers shall be worn at all times).
- Protective gloves must be worn when collecting litter. Please remember that gloves may not ensure full protection from sharp objects.
- High-visibility safety vests must be worn before arriving at the work site and must be worn at all times (when on the site). Safety vests must be worn as the outer-most garment.

Other things to consider in the warmer months are hats, sun block, insect repellent, eye protection (e.g., sunglasses or spectacles) and a supply of drinking water.

Care should be taken when utilising litter pickers. Participants should avoid holding litter pickers near potentially dangerous places such as steep or slippery banks, fast flowing water or derelict buildings. Line pins and tape can be used to section off any potentially dangerous areas. For a large operation, a loudhailer could be useful to warn participants to stay within the designated area.

8. Suitable Areas

8.1 Off-Limit Areas

When deciding on your adopted area, you must select somewhere that is safe and accessible for conducting clean-up activities. Adopt A Spot groups must be located or reside within a reasonable commuting distance of their adopted area.

Participants shall not collect litter on the road surface, gravel shoulders, in tunnels or in any area that could pose a danger. Litter may be collected from pedestrian footpaths, but not on the vehicle carriageway areas.

8.2 Private Property

If an Adopt A Spot group wishes to enter privately owned land, the group is independently responsible for seeking permission (in writing) from the landowner.



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9. Litter Collection

9.1 Litter Bags

It is recommended that Adopt A Spot participants use smaller bags to collect litter, as they are easier for group members to carry around. As the smaller bags are filled, they can be deposited in larger or heavy-duty bags. Once full, litter bags should be tied and placed at the agreed location for collection, or loaded for transport to the agreed disposal point.

If possible, please use biodegradable plastic bags to collect litter.

9.2 Collected Litter and Full Bags

Due to the possibility of injury, do not attempt to compress litter. Full bags may be collected by the Adopt A Spot group and disposed of at a general waste disposal point. Alternatively, full bags may be tied and left at a predetermined location with the prior approval of the relevant local council. Where a prearranged collection point has not been nominated by the council, bags should be placed in a visible area that is not susceptible to damage from traffic or footfall.

9.3 Hazardous Objects/Waste

Avoiding danger is important - do not touch potentially hazardous materials such as powders, chemicals, weapons, ammunition, dangerous objects or dead animals. If an object cannot be accurately identified as being safe - do not touch it!

DO immediately move away from the object, evacuate the area and call Police using 999.

Try to prevent anyone from going near the object but do not put yourself or others in danger. Ensure the person who found the object remains available to talk to the Police.

The Group Leader must make all activity participants aware of potentially dangerous items which should not be picked up.

If nasty or dangerous pieces of litter such as unidentified drums, cans or canisters of chemicals, poisons or insecticides or syringes are spotted at any stage during a litter pick, do not attempt to move them yourself. Make a note of their location and inform your local council.



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Asbestos is another harmful waste material and can come in the form of three colours; white, brown and blue and can be found in many building products. It is a naturally occurring fibrous mineral and can come in all shapes and sizes. It is best left untouched until it is removed by a reputable licenced contractor. Please make a note of the location of any hazardous waste that you find and inform your local council.

Caution should be exercised if a hypodermic syringe is found. For this reason, do not pick up a pile of rubbish by hand where the contents are not known. If a syringe is found, the decision to leave or remove it is the decision of the registered Adopt A Spot group. This decision should be made prior to the litter collection day so that adequate preparations may be made and that you can have sharp boxes on hand.

If a registered Adopt A Spot group decides that syringes will be collected, a sharps container, long tweezers and heavy duty gloves must be used.

The recommended procedure is:

1. Place the opened sharps container on the ground (for extra stability you can place the container on its side).
2. Do not hold the container with your hands when transferring the sharp to the container - this will help to prevent accidental needle stick injury.
3. With gloved hands and tweezers, carefully pick up the syringe at the plunger end.
4. Place the syringe into the container with the sharp end first.
5. When collection of sharps is complete, securely fasten the lid onto the container.
6. Safely store the sharps container, ready for delivery to the disposal facility

Used sharps containers can be disposed any your nearest pharmacy.

9.4 Recyclables

Adopt A Spot groups are encouraged to collect and store recyclable items separately and deposit them at their nearest recycling centre. Any decision to separate recyclables should be taken prior to commencing clean-up activities.



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10. Reporting Requirements

The Group Leader should report the results of each clean-up activity on the Live Here Love Here website. Find out more on:

[Record Your Results \(livehereandlovehere.org\)](https://www.livehereandlovehere.org/record-your-results)

Please direct enquiries to:

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