

# Volunteer Lone Working Guidance

Our Lone Working policy is to ensure that there are adequate systems in place for the health, safety and welfare of all staff and volunteers.

This document is based on the Lone Working Policy and is to provide guidance for volunteers who visit older people in their own homes or out in the community.

On a day to day basis, there are a very low number of incidents, but unexpected events do occasionally happen. Usually these are minor, such as trains running late, traffic delays or the older person becoming unwell. We want to make sure that on those rare occasions when something does go wrong, volunteers are clear on what to do to ensure their own safety.

A lone worker is defined as a member of staff or volunteer who regularly or occasionally works on their own without direct supervision or support.

## Key points

### Independent Age's role

- Independent Age has a legal responsibility to try to ensure the safety of volunteers. The Lone Working Policy and this guidance have been put in place to protect volunteers and to outline how they should look after their own safety
- Risk Assessment Plans are completed and agreed with the volunteer before any activity takes place.
- Independent Age provides training and guidance to volunteers before they start their volunteering

### The volunteer's role

- Volunteers are expected to do everything reasonably possible to protect their wellbeing and that of others who could be affected by their actions.
- All volunteers must be aware of and follow the Lone Working Policy and guidelines to reduce the levels of risk associated with working alone.
- All volunteers should ensure that they have sufficient information to make an informed decision as to whether or not the volunteering should go ahead
- To stop any activity if they consider they are at risk
- A volunteer should report all incidents and concerns to their Independent Age contact, who will ensure that the incident is recorded on the Incident Log.

### How do volunteers protect themselves?

- Ensure they read and understand the Lone Working Policy and this guidance
- Complete Role Specific Training which covers lone working procedures.
- During the application process provide details of a trusted contact; a person who has agreed to be the first point of contact and will act

responsibly in an emergency situation, usually a partner, family member or friend.

- By taking personal responsibility for following and adhering to these lone working procedures.
- By reporting any incidents concerning lone working to enable Independent Age to review our policy and procedures.

### **Risk assessments**

Before starting any lone working activity a Risk Assessment of the property, environment and older person will have been carried out by an Independent Age staff member/Independent Age volunteer to ensure that the risks of lone working are minimised. The volunteer's Independent Age contact will discuss and agree that assessment with the volunteer before any lone working starts. The risk assessment is reviewed every six months.

### **Data Protection**

All information given by both the older person and volunteer is subject to data protection legislation and those details should be safely kept and only shared on a need-to-know basis if an incident occurs.

### **Trusted Contact**

**Prior** to visits taking place the volunteer should let their trusted contact know:

- The details of the person they are visiting
  - Name
  - Address including post code
  - Phone number
- The volunteer's own mobile phone number
- The contact details of the volunteer's Independent Age contact
- The expected duration of the home visit including planned start and finish times.

### **In case of no contact**

In the unlikely event that a volunteer does not get in touch with their trusted contact to let them know the meeting is over, the trusted contact should use the same proportionate response that they would do in other circumstances, and try to get in touch with the volunteer.

- If they are unable to contact the volunteer then the next step would be to contact the older person to make further enquiries.
- If the trusted contact has been unable to contact the volunteer and/or older person, they should use their judgement, and consider any external factors such as weather or traffic when assessing next steps. Having considered all the factors, the trusted contact may decide to call the Police on 101 or in extreme circumstances 999.

- When calling 101, the trusted contact should give the name and contact number of the volunteer, and the name, address and contact number for the older person, informing the Police that the volunteer has not got in touch at the agreed time and they haven't been able to contact them.

### **After any incident**

Even if it appears insignificant, the volunteer should inform their Independent Age contact of any incident so that the organisation can learn from the experience and improve procedures.

### **Key personal safety guidelines**

#### **The volunteer should:**

- Quickly leave a situation where they are uncomfortable. If in doubt, get out!
- Discuss the risk assessment with their Independent Age contact and highlight any concerns and agree modifications.
- Before the initial visit, ensure their trusted contact has the necessary contact information.
- Ensure their mobile phone is fully charged and easily accessible.
- Carry their Independent Age ID badge with them at all times.
- Ask for any animals to be removed from the vicinity during the visit.
- Assess the venue in terms of hazards. If visual evidence suggests that there are hazards, the meeting should not take place.
- Wherever possible, position themselves so that they are within easy reach of an exit route.
- If experiencing threatening, abusive or violent behaviour or if they feel uncomfortable in any way, they must leave the premises immediately and contact their trusted contact to inform them that they have left the premises. Afterwards, the volunteer should report the incident to their Independent Age Contact as soon as possible.
- If the older person is able to get there unaided, the meeting can take happen in a public place and a suitable venue such as a café or library should be chosen.
- Use the ID badge with discretion, as the older person may not want to let others know they are in receipt of support from a charity.
- Immediately record and report any incidents that cause concern and inform their Independent Age contact. Do not wait for catch up or supervision sessions.
- Take any mitigating actions detailed on the Risk Assessment and agreed with their Independent Age contact.

***Remember - keeping your trusted contact informed of your whereabouts avoids unnecessary concerns.***