



Volunteer Policy

April 2018

Introduction

Independent Age values the contribution made by each volunteer who willingly gives their time, skills and experience to support the charity to help older people to stay independent and live well. We intend volunteering to be an enjoyable experience in which volunteers can gain further skills, experience and fulfilment in their role.

This Policy which has been co-produced with volunteers provides a framework for the involvement of volunteers across Independent Age. It outlines the standards we are committed to and ensures that all volunteers, understand what they can expect while volunteering with us.

All other policies referred to in this policy are included in the Volunteer Welcome Pack, and are also available to all volunteers online. Paper versions can be requested via the Volunteering Team on volunteering@independentage.org or 020 7605 4255.

This policy applies to all volunteering roles except Trustees who are covered by a separate Code of Conduct.

Why we involve volunteers

Volunteers enable us to increase our capacity to support more older people to stay independent and live well. They also bring a wealth of experience and ideas that feed into our current work and future plans.

Our volunteers are committed to the work we do. The ethos and aims of the charity are important to over 80% of our volunteers, 83% feel they are making a useful contribution and 20% of people volunteer to make them feel less lonely.

About Independent Age

Whatever happens as we get older, we all want to remain independent and live life on our own terms. That's why, as well as offering regular friendly contact and a strong campaigning voice, Independent Age provides older people and their families with clear, free and impartial advice on issues that matter: care and support, money and benefits, health and mobility.

A charity founded over 150 years ago, we're independent so that older people can be.

Our vision is to create a society where older people lead the lives to which they aspire. Our mission is to enable older people to stay independent and live well with dignity, choice and control.

Our values have been reflected in this policy:

- **Older people and Independence** – *We put older people and independence at the heart of everything we do.*
- **Work together** – *We work together internally and with outside partners to achieve the best results.*

- **Think big** – *We are bold, willing to take responsibility and to adapt when we need to.*
- **Trust and respect** – *We act with honesty, openness and integrity and recognise the contribution each of us makes.*
- **Be effective** – *We deliver a high quality service, using our resources well to deliver value.*

Volunteering

Definition of a Volunteer

A volunteer is someone who donates their time, skills and expertise to support the work of Independent Age. There is no contractual obligation for volunteers to attend their volunteering.

Our volunteers are unpaid. Volunteering is not a substitute for paid employment and our volunteering roles complement the work of paid staff.

Recruitment and Selection

Independent Age welcomes anyone wanting to volunteer, provided they have the skills for the role. We have comprehensive role descriptions for each volunteering opportunity with an explanation of the skills and experience needed and tasks which make up the role.

To apply for any of our volunteering roles, potential volunteers will have to complete an online or paper application form, and the recruitment process specific to that role, which may involve a telephone assessment and training.

A criminal offence will not automatically prevent anyone from volunteering and we will consider each case individually. Roles which include direct face to face contact with an older person are subject to a Disclosure and Barring Service/ Protection of Vulnerable Groups (DBS/ PVG) check.

We have no upper age limit for volunteers, but some roles will have a minimum age restriction which will be stated on the role description.

Detailed information can be found in the Recruitment and Selection policy.

Equal Opportunities and Diversity

Independent Age is committed to equality of opportunity. We welcome new ideas and an approach generated by people from different cultures, backgrounds and outlooks.

We are determined to make all efforts to prevent discrimination or unfair treatment. We will also promote equality of opportunity for all on the grounds of age, sex, race, gender, gender reassignment, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership, sex, sexual orientation, disability and pregnancy and maternity. We will oppose discriminatory attitudes, and we are committed to translating this into all aspects of our everyday work.

Detailed information can be found in the Equal Opportunities policy.

When you join us

Our Commitment to our volunteers

Independent Age is committed to ensuring that volunteers have a positive experience whilst volunteering with us and that they feel fulfilled and valued.

Independent Age will:

- treat volunteers with respect, consideration and appreciation
- provide volunteers with a clear written description of their role and responsibilities
- provide volunteers with a named Independent Age contact
- ensure roles are meaningful and appropriate
- provide training and regular support
- keep in touch with volunteers via our volunteer newsletter, e-mails and postal mailings with resources and updates that they need to be aware of to undertake their role confidently and safely.
- provide opportunities to keep in touch with the charity and meet fellow volunteers
- involve volunteers in the development of our strategy and service delivery
- reimburse any agreed expenses incurred whilst volunteering
- provide references after six months of volunteering
- listen to your feedback and views.

What we expect from our volunteers

We ask volunteers to:

- represent Independent Age positively and in a professional way
- treat others with respect and consideration
- undertake the volunteering role to the best of their ability including being aware of the boundaries of their role
- be reliable and engaged in their role and provide as much notice as possible if they are unable to fulfil their volunteering commitment
- maintain confidentiality, protecting any personal data they hold about other people
- adhere to our organisational aims, policies and procedures
- use Independent Age systems to enable us to measure the impact of their volunteering
- keep in regular contact with their Independent Age contact
- provide us with feedback and suggestions about our work and working practice.

Boundaries

Boundaries are discussed as part of the role specific training and all our volunteers should be aware of the boundaries of their volunteering role and what they should and shouldn't do within that role. Boundaries are important for all roles and especially for volunteers who make unaccompanied visits to an older person's home and/or regular phone calls. Boundaries are in place for the protection of both the volunteer and the person they support. If a volunteer is uncertain about the boundaries of their role they should discuss them with their Independent Age contact.

Expenses

Independent Age is committed to ensuring that volunteers are not left out of pocket whilst volunteering. We reimburse all reasonable travel and out of pocket expenses agreed in advance and evidenced by itemised receipts. Detailed information on expenses can be found in the Volunteer Expenses policy.

Gifts

The giving and accepting of personal gifts is discouraged as it could be seen to be made with the intention of influencing or raising expectations from the volunteer towards the person they support and/or a staff member. Misunderstandings can occur, this policy is in place to protect volunteers from such situations.

If a volunteer is offered a gift by the person they support and they are concerned about the impact of turning this down, the volunteer should speak to their Independent Age contact for advice.

If, in exceptional circumstances, a gift is accepted, it should be disclosed to the volunteer's Independent Age contact.

Detailed information on gifts can be found in the Anti-bribery policy.

Training and Development

We want to ensure all volunteers are happy and feel confident to carry out their role safely. When volunteers join us, they will receive an induction delivered by their Independent Age contact. This will include:

- An introduction to Independent Age and the work we do
- Online safeguarding training
- Specific training on the volunteer role to help them to understand their tasks, responsibilities and expectations
- A Volunteer Handbook containing practical information on policies and procedures, including lone working and data protection.

Independent Age is committed to the continuing development of our volunteers and ongoing training is available whilst volunteering with us.

Support

Independent Age values the contribution made by all of its volunteers. In order to enable volunteers to carry out their role to the best of their ability, every volunteer will have a named Independent Age contact who will provide them with regular opportunities to discuss their progress, future developments and air any problems.

Detailed information can be found in the Supporting Volunteers procedure.

Recognition

People volunteer for different reasons and we seek to recognise volunteers' contributions and achievements in a variety of ways. We thank volunteers individually, in person, by email, letter, thank you cards and in publications and social media. We will publicise their contributions wherever possible. We also

provide opportunities for volunteers to meet and communicate with each other at events.

We welcome feedback from volunteers on other ways we can recognise and celebrate the contribution Independent Age volunteers make.

Involvement and Feedback

Independent Age encourages volunteer participation in the development of our volunteering programme. All volunteers are invited to join the Volunteer Engagement Panel which works with us, helping us shape our strategy, policies and procedures. The Volunteer Engagement Panel is project based and the time commitment is dependent on the complexity of the project.

We also seek feedback from volunteers about matters concerning the organisation and their role. This happens through the annual Volunteer Satisfaction Survey sent to all active volunteers and through individual feedback via catch up sessions, telephone, email and volunteer meetings.

Resolving Problems

Whilst we hope that volunteering with Independent Age will be a positive experience, there might be circumstances in which volunteers may find they have cause to make a complaint against a member of staff, another volunteer or the older person they support.

If a volunteer experiences a difficulty with any aspect of their role, we ask that they speak to their Independent Age contact as soon as possible for advice and support.

If a volunteer experiences a problem with their Independent Age contact, they should contact the Independent Age's contact line manager. If unsure of who to contact, please email volunteering@independentage.org or call the volunteering line on 020 7605 4255 for advice on who to contact.

We hope that most problems can be solved informally and encourage volunteers wherever possible to raise these directly with their Independent Age contact so that any issues can be addressed promptly. However if a volunteer is unable to resolve an issue informally, they should follow the formal complaints process.

Detailed information can be found in the Complaints and Problem Solving policy.

Moving on and taking a break

We understand that there will be a time when an individual's volunteering will come to an end, either when a volunteer decides to leave or occasionally, if the charity asks a volunteer to leave.

Volunteers do not need to give a reason for leaving. We do ask that where possible, volunteers let their Independent Age contact know in advance, so we can prepare for it.

If a volunteer wants to take a break and intends to resume their volunteering at a later date they should inform their Independent Age contact as soon as possible so that alternative arrangements can be put in place.

When Independent Age reviews a volunteering placement, each case will be considered on an individual basis and will be assessed against the volunteer's conduct and attitudes in the context of Independent Age's policies and procedures.

Each volunteer is also encouraged to complete an exit questionnaire and an exit interview so we can continue to improve our volunteering programme.

Detailed information can be found in the When it's Time to Leave policy.

Policies

Health and Safety

Independent Age makes sure there are adequate systems in place to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all.

Insurance

All volunteers are covered by Independent Age's Employer's Liability and Public Liability Insurance whilst undertaking agreed volunteering activities for the organisation. All other activities that are not included in a volunteer role description are not covered by insurance.

Most volunteering roles do not require driving. Where the role does require the volunteer to take an older person out, volunteers should inform their insurance company before using their car for this purpose. Using a car for volunteering does not normally incur any additional insurance cost.

Safeguarding

Volunteers may be supporting people who are considered at risk of harm and abuse in the eyes of the law. The duty to protect anyone who is considered at risk of harm and abuse is known as safeguarding. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and volunteers will receive training before they start their role with Independent Age.

Detailed information can be found in the Safeguarding policy.

Lone working

Some volunteers are considered lone workers as they regularly or occasionally work on their own without direct supervision or support. We seek to protect volunteers from possible harm as well as mitigate against risks incurred when lone working through risk assessments and safe working procedures.

Everyone is responsible for avoiding and managing any risks that arise from lone working. This is essential as the Lone Working Policy clearly cannot envisage every situation, and hence volunteers are expected to demonstrate common sense and to also take responsibility for their own actions and safety.

Detailed information can be found in the Lone Working policy.

No smoking policy

Smoking is not permitted on Independent Age property or when staff and volunteers are involved with Independent Age activities. This also applies to electronic cigarettes and other vaporisers. Whilst we recognise that some of the people we support are smokers, it will be at the volunteer's discretion whether or not they agree to visit a smoker.

Confidentiality, copyright and data protection

Independent Age has robust Data Protection policies for all staff and volunteers in accordance with recent changes in legislation. We make sure all our data is secure and protected at all times and staff and volunteers are aware of how to safely handle, store and dispose of sensitive personal information.

As Independent Age volunteers are likely to come into contact with personal and sensitive information about the people they support, all volunteers are required to read the Data Protection guidelines and sign and return a confidentiality and data protection agreement form.

Volunteers are asked to transfer copyright of any materials produced in the course of their volunteering to Independent Age. People volunteering in applicable roles are asked to complete a copyright transfer form.

Detailed information can be found in the Data Protection guidelines.

Social Media and Media relations

Social media is defined as any type of interaction online that allows individuals to communicate or share data in a public forum with each other. This includes, social media applications and sites which provide access to forums for online discussions.

We hope all our volunteers have a positive experience at Independent Age and want to talk about it on social media. Volunteers posting on social media should be aware of the way they use it, remembering to represent Independent Age positively and in a professional way. Volunteers must protect the privacy of older people at all times, and never mention the name, address or any details which could identify the older person they are supporting, in a post. It should be made clear that any posts are their own views and not those of Independent Age. Inappropriate or abusive posts could lead to termination of a volunteering role.

Volunteers should not comment or give interviews about their volunteering role or Independent Age to any media contact. All media requests should be referred to our media team on media@independentage.org or 0207 605 4291.

Associated Documents

Anti-bribery policy
Complaints and Problem Solving policy
Data Protection guidelines
Equal Opportunities policy
Lone Working policy

Recruitment & Selection policy
Safeguarding policy
Supporting Volunteers procedure
When It's Time to Leave policy
Volunteer Expenses policy