

When it's Time to Leave

Independent Age values and appreciates the time and commitment volunteers give to the charity. We also understand that there will be a time when an individual's volunteering will come to an end. These procedures aim to ensure that staff and volunteers understand how to prepare and deal with the ending of the relationship. This usually happens when a volunteer decides to leave although sometimes the charity will ask a volunteer to leave.

Volunteers can freely end the relationship at any time and do not need to give a reason. However, we do ask that where possible, volunteers let their Independent Age contact know of their plan to leave, so we can put in place alternative arrangements, particularly where volunteers visit or call an older person.

All volunteers will be provided with references after six months of volunteering and/ or when they leave the charity.

How we can encourage volunteers to stay

We know that some people leave due to issues within Independent Age's control. Concerns might include:

- Not being given anyone to visit or call
- Not being given a fulfilling role
- Having a problem with the relationship with the older person or a team member
- Feeling unsupported
- Not meeting your expectations
- Too much paperwork/change.

To address these issues we are involving volunteers in developing processes and communicating those new processes to volunteers each time a new policy is developed. We have also improved our procedures to ensure that volunteers are matched quickly and have regular catch ups with their Independent Age contact.

Support for Volunteers

Our structured programme of support catch ups will help to enable volunteers to discuss any potential concerns with their Independent Age contact before they become an issue. Volunteers are encouraged to get in touch with their Independent Age contact about concerns at any time, not just at pre-arranged catch ups.

If a volunteer is thinking about leaving, they should get in touch with their Independent Age contact. At this stage the options are:

- To put in place more support and/or training for the volunteer
- The Independent Age contact looks for another person to match the volunteer with
- The Independent Age looks for another suitable volunteering opportunity

If these options are not available or the volunteer does not want to pursue any of them, the volunteer may decide to leave.

Volunteering Placement Review

The Volunteering Placement Review is a structured process to enable both the charity and the volunteer to resolve issues around a volunteer's suitability to continue volunteering with Independent Age that have not been resolved through the support process.

The Independent Age contact will get in touch with the volunteer for an informal chat to address the concern. The outcome of this conversation could be:

- The volunteer carries on with their role/an alternative role
- Adjustments are made, including extra support, additional training or review of the tasks involved in the role
- The volunteer decides to leave.

If the informal conversation does not reach a satisfactory conclusion, a formal process will be initiated where the Independent Age contact and their line manager organises a face to face meeting with the volunteer to explore the concern raised.

Telephone volunteers will be offered two options, either a call conference or a local face to face meeting with an Independent Age staff member in the region.

For investigations in which the Independent Age contact is involved, another staff member will attend the meeting alongside the Independent Age contact's line manager.

If after this meeting an agreement hasn't been reached, the volunteer may be asked to stop carrying out their duties while the process is resolved. The Independent Age staff member will write to the volunteer explaining the next steps and the date by when they should receive a final response.

The Independent Age staff member will then raise the concern with the Head of Department and Head of Volunteering explaining the case, the actions taken and the volunteer's response. The Heads of Department will make a decision on the suitability of the volunteer to carry on with their role and inform the volunteer within 10 working days of being notified of the concern.

Taking a break from volunteering

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

When a volunteer takes a break, we will get in touch with them halfway through the planned time off and again at the end of the break, to plan a return to volunteering. If the volunteer doesn't respond within the agreed timeframe, we will conclude that they no longer want to volunteer with Independent Age.

Deciding to leave

Once a volunteer has decided to leave, they should notify their Independent Age contact of their decision. This will prompt an exit conversation where both parties can plan the ending of the volunteering.

Unless there is a need for the volunteer to leave immediately, Independent Age will plan a strategy to minimise any impact on the older person and/or the team.

When Independent Age initiates the end of volunteering relationship – managed exits

Gross misconduct: there are some occasions when a volunteer can be suspended immediately whilst an investigation is carried out.

These include, but are not limited to, acts that constitute gross misconduct. Eg:

- theft,
- assault,
- safeguarding concerns,
- allegations of putting someone at risk,
- act of violence,
- malicious damage,
- deliberate falsification of documents,
- harassment,
- being under the influence of drugs or alcohol,
- bringing the charity into disrepute,
- behaviour which undermines managerial decisions/authority.

The decision to suspend a volunteer will be confirmed in writing.

All gross-misconduct cases are assessed by the Independent Age contact's line manager, Head of Department and Head of Volunteering. The volunteer will be asked to stop their volunteering immediately while the investigation is in process and a formal meeting with the volunteer will be requested within 10 days. The decision reached at this formal meeting will be final.

Other Situations: there are other situations in which Independent Age would need to review a volunteering placement. Below is a list of some of the criteria that might trigger a review. This list is not exhaustive. **All situations will be considered on an individual basis:**

- The volunteer declines to complete training
- The volunteer cannot safely complete the required tasks of the role
- The volunteer does not adhere to policies and procedures, including participating in support meetings and/or calls
- The volunteer does not observe the boundaries of the volunteering role
- The volunteer is disruptive
- The volunteer's stated values are not aligned with those of the charity
- The volunteer does not want to receive communication about their volunteering role and so is unable to keep up to date with policies, procedures and training
- The volunteer no longer enjoys their volunteer role

- The volunteer has failed to report/act upon a serious safeguarding concern.
- The older person asks for the volunteering relationship to end

Detailed information can be found in the Problem Solving policy.

Each case will be assessed against the volunteer's conduct and attitudes in the context of Independent Age's policies and procedures including:

- Volunteering policy
- Volunteer role description
- Volunteer role boundaries
- Any training the volunteer has received/has been asked to complete
- The risk assessment for the volunteering role
- The volunteer's participation in support catch ups.

Unless there is a need for the volunteer to leave immediately, Independent Age will plan an exit to minimise the impact to the older person and Independent Age staff/volunteer team.

For some of the situations above we have some specific guidelines in place:

- **The volunteer doesn't complete training:** role specific training is key to each Independent Age role and volunteers will complete that training before they are appointed. Completion of safeguarding training prior to appointment has been a requirement of the role since January 2016. Anyone who joined the charity prior to that date is expected to complete safeguarding training either online, face to face or via a paper copy and discussion of the issues with their Independent Age contact. Declining to do this training will trigger a review of the volunteering placement.
- **The volunteer is no longer able to carry out the duties of their role:** the volunteer's Independent Age contact will look at the person's capability and make the necessary adjustment to the role. This could include a change of the tasks of the role, further support or training, a review of the risk assessment and vulnerability management plan or the offer of an alternative role. If an agreement about alternative ways of working cannot be reached, the volunteer will be asked to leave.
- **The volunteer is not responding to our requests for contact:** after attempting to contact the volunteer three times with no response, the volunteer's Independent Age contact will send the volunteer a final communication with a set date to reply back to us. If the volunteer does not reply back, their volunteer relationship will be ended and the service user notified of those changes.

In all other cases a volunteering placement review will be carried out.

When a volunteer relationship is ended by Independent Age, we will notify the older person the volunteer supports to let them know of the change in circumstances.