



## **Coronavirus (COVID-19): Information and Advice for Independent Age Volunteers**

### ***Background***

We wanted to be able to offer some guidance and reassurance as life for everyone is bringing new challenges to our daily lives. We will continue to review and update this guidance as the situation develops.

### ***What we want you to know***

We want all of you to be safe and follow national and organisational advice. We believe if you have the right volunteering environment you will feel more secure and supported.

- We should all be following government and health advice to the letter, it is our collective responsibility to be reading the most up to date guidance and following. Hopefully you will have a strong support network of family and friends
- If you have child care needs and this becomes a challenge in your volunteering please inform us and we will flexibly support you so that you can continue to deliver your role for as long as is possible
- When you are speaking to older people over the phone there may be some emotionally difficult conversations, please speak to your key Independent Age contact (Wellbeing Project Officer) for support.

### ***Coronavirus (COVID-19): what you need to do***

The single most important action we can all take, in fighting coronavirus, is to stay at home in order to protect the NHS and save lives. Staying at home and minimising contact with other people, we will reduce the spread of the infection. That is why the government has introduced three new measures.

1. Requiring people to stay at home, except for very limited purposes
2. Closing non-essential shops and community spaces
3. Stopping all gatherings of more than two people in public

Every one of us must comply with these new measures. These measures are effective immediately. We want you to follow the Government's advice that is available on numerous government and health websites across the four nations of the United Kingdom. All volunteers should **Stay at home** for their own personal safety and the health and wellbeing of everyone else, please do remind people you speak with to:

- Only go outside for food shopping, health reasons or essential work
- Stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people
- Wash your hands regularly and as soon as you get home if you must go out

### ***Government Definitions of Vulnerable Older People***

The government has been operating under two definitions – one for the vulnerable and one for the extremely vulnerable. The difference at this stage appears to be based on age – 70 and over regardless of medical condition or those of all ages with prescribed medical conditions. We are reminding everyone that we support people because they are lonely or socially isolated and not necessarily because they have those conditions which make them extremely vulnerable.

The NHS in England is directly contacting extremely vulnerable people with key health conditions to provide further advice via letter or through their GP. Plans are being readied by national agencies to make sure they can rely on a wide range of help and support on a local level. NHS Scotland will be directly contacting people with these conditions to provide further advice

### ***The role of Volunteers***

We understand you will want to support older people you have contact with. We think you could do this by:

- Keeping you and your family safe from the risk of infection and staying at home
- Calling service users by phone every week to check how they are and keep the contact going and not visit the homes of older people
- If you have concerns please contact your Wellbeing Project Officer and they can support and advise you and seek support for the older person
- If you cannot contact your Wellbeing Project Officer please leave a message on the volunteer line on 0207 605 4255 and this will be passed on to the relevant Wellbeing Project Officer
- If you are contacting an older person outside of normal working hours (9am to 5pm from Monday – Friday) and are sufficiently concerned that you need to report a safeguarding issue please call 0207 605 4455. This number is operational from 9am to 9pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 9pm on weekends
- We are setting up small Virtual Coffee Morning Groups so that older people can come onto a call with other older people and you could volunteer to run a group if you have the time
- If you could help to call other older people to offer reassurance please make that known by leaving a message on the Volunteer Line or contacting your Wellbeing Project Officer.

If any of you choose to help other people outside of those we support at Independent Age then there is the opportunity with the NHS Voluntary Responder website here <https://www.goodsamapp.org/NHS>. There will also be an opportunity through Local Hubs. If you do offer help through that process, then please follow the guidelines they issue to keep you and older people safe.

### ***The role of staff***

Staff will continue doing what they are already very good at doing. No staff members at Independent Age, have been designated as a key worker. We have asked the Wellbeing Project Officers and National Wellbeing Managers to focus on:

- Ensuring all the current Independent Age Service Users have received a Welfare Check set up to run from 24 March
- Making telephone calls and **not** visits to the homes of older people to undertake Welfare Checks
- As issues arise and develop for older people over the coming weeks (if not from the start) then the Wellbeing Project Officers will be requested to adopt a case worker type role of coordinating support to older people from external agencies or services, making safeguarding referrals or coordinating volunteer telephone support
- Accessing information and support locally to the older person if necessary
- Escalating issues to their National Wellbeing Manager to address where it cannot be resolved through local support and if older people need support
- Contacting the Local Hubs to refer older people to ensure they can get they need

**Kelly Butler – Head of Volunteer Transformation- 24 March 2020**