

Volunteers' Handbook

Contents

02	Introduction
03	Useful contacts
04	Data protection
04	Equality and diversity
05	Safeguarding
05	Keeping you safe: COVID-19
07	What we expect from you
07	Problems with your volunteering
08	Useful numbers
09	Practical tips for your role
12	What to do if...?

Introduction



We know what an incredible difference volunteering makes to the people that we support, so we really can't thank you enough for giving your time to support our work at this frightening and challenging time.

This guide will help you as you carry out your volunteering role for Independent Age, so please read the information thoroughly and if you have any questions please do not hesitate to get in touch with your Independent Age contact.

At the end of this guide you will find some specific information and tips we hope you will find useful in your role speaking to someone over the phone.

I would like to take this opportunity once again to thank you for joining Independent Age so that we can offer people comfort at this difficult time.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K. Butler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kelly Butler
Head of Volunteer Transformation

Useful contacts

Volunteering

For general enquiries about your volunteering role.

T **020 7605 4255** (Monday to Friday, 9am–5pm)

E **volunteering@independentage.org**

Useful documents for volunteers

www.independentage.org/documents-for-volunteers

Telephone services queries

For all telephone volunteering enquiries.

T **020 7605 4265** (Monday to Friday, 9am–5pm)

E **telephone.volunteers@independentage.org**

Helpline

For free confidential advice on older people's issues, or to order our free guides.

T **0800 319 6789** (Monday to Friday 8.30am–6.30pm)

E **advice@independentage.org**

Alternatively, you can order advice guides and access information and videos on our website: **www.independentage.org**

Safeguarding concerns

If you have a safeguarding concern about the older person you support. During working hours Monday to Friday, please get in touch with your Independent Age contact.

Safeguarding concerns out of hours

T **020 7605 4455**, from 5–9pm on the week days and 9am–9pm on the weekends.

Campaigns enquiries

For enquiries about how we campaign to improve the systems that people rely on as they get older

E **campaigns@independentage.org**

Fundraising enquiries

For enquiries about making a donation or supporting our fundraising.

T **020 7605 4223**

E **supporters@independentage.org**

Data protection

As an Independent Age volunteer, you may receive personal and sensitive information about the person you support to enable you to carry out your role properly. It is vital that this information is not shared with unauthorised persons and that it is handled correctly, in line with the GDPR Regulations 2018. We have clear guidelines to ensure you fully understand how best to protect the data you have access to on behalf of the charity which we ask you to read and sign when you start volunteering with us. It can also be found on: www.independentage.org/documents-for-volunteers

Any concerns about the person you're supporting should only be shared with your Independent Age contact, apart from some exceptions, for example when responding to a medical emergency or a situation where the person you support is at immediate risk of harm.

If you witness, are told of, or accidentally disclose any information to others who should not be privy to the information, immediately report this to your Independent Age contact and the Information Governance Team on dp@independentage.org.

Please remember to delete or securely destroy any notes you make or saved files containing personal information you no longer need.

Equality and diversity

Independent Age is committed to the principle of equality of opportunity, both as an employer and as a provider of services to older people. We are determined to make all efforts to prevent discrimination or unfair treatment against, and promote equality of opportunity for, all members of staff, volunteers, and users of its services on the grounds of age, sex, race, gender, religion, marital status, sexual orientation or disability. Independent Age will oppose discriminatory attitudes and is committed to translating this into all aspects of its everyday work.

If you experience any form of behaviour that you deem to be inappropriate, please tell your Independent Age contact.

Safeguarding

Your volunteering role may require you to work with people who are considered at risk of harm or abuse in the eyes of the law. We all have a duty to protect anyone who is at risk of harm or abuse: this is known as safeguarding. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. The training provided by Independent Age will ensure you are well equipped to handle any concerns you have, and you will be fully supported at all times.

It can be very difficult to recognise signs of harm or abuse on the phone, but please let your Independent Age contact know any concern you might have about the person you're supporting. If anyone tells you of any type of abuse, remain calm, listen and reassure them that it will be taken seriously. Don't promise confidentiality as you will need to speak to your Independent Age contact who will take this forward. We also have an Out of Hours number to assist you on 0207 605 4455, from 5–9pm on the week days and 9am–9pm on the weekends.

You can access more detailed information on safeguarding on our dedicated pages for volunteers on: www.independentage.org/documents-for-volunteers

Keeping you safe: COVID-19

We want all of you to be safe. 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 Independent Age contact for support.

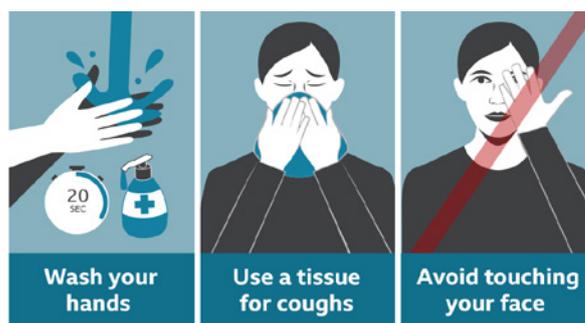
Coronavirus (COVID-19): what you need to do

The single most important action we can all take, in fighting coronavirus, is to stay at home 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



We keep the most updated information for volunteers on Covid-19 on our website on: www.independentage.org/documents-for-volunteers

Specialist Coronavirus support

NHS

www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19

Samaritans

www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/support-and-information/if-youre-having-difficult-time/if-youre-worried-about-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak

Anxiety UK

www.anxietyuk.org.uk/coronavirus-support-resources

What we expect from you

As part of your volunteering with us we expect you to:

- treat people with respect, consideration and appreciation
- have a clear idea of your responsibilities and commit to your role as agreed, providing records and other reports if needed
- approach your volunteering thoughtfully with consideration for the people you support, staff and other supporters
- be reliable and stick to any arrangements made. If a change in circumstances makes this difficult, please let your Independent Age contact know
- maintain confidentiality, keeping information about people we support, volunteers, employees and our work private, unless sharing this information is required by law or for service delivery
- understand Data Protection and your duty to safely protect any data you hold
- maintain regular communication with and attend catch up meetings with your key contact
- give as much notice as possible if you decide to end your volunteering role
- represent Independent Age positively to anyone outside the charity

Problems with your volunteering

If you encounter difficulties in your volunteering role or just feel it isn't working out as hoped, please talk to your Independent Age contact as soon as possible for advice and support. They will help you try to work out any difficulties and finding a more suitable match or volunteering role with us. Alternatively, you can contact the volunteer team on **020 7605 4255**.

Useful numbers

Samaritans

Emotional support day or night for anyone who needs someone to listen without judgement or pressure.

T 116 123

E jo@samaritans.org

W www.samaritans.org

Mind

Mental health specialists. Mind provides advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem.

T 0300 123 3393

E info@mind.org.uk

W www.mind.org.uk

Anxiety UK

A user-led organisation, run by people with experience of living with anxiety, stress or anxiety-based depression, supported by a high-profile medical advisory panel

T 03444 775 774

Text service: 07537 416 905

Practical tips for your role

Preparing for your call

- plan your call – check you're somewhere you won't be interrupted
- preferably use a landline, when using a mobile, check your phone is charged
- if you don't feel comfortable sharing your number, please use 141 when you dial their number
- introduce yourself and that you're a volunteer at Independent Age
- check that it's still a good time to call
- if you notice any delays in them responding, check that the line is clear, and they can hear you well
- be aware of how you speak, you may need to speak slower than you usually do
- don't be afraid to say that the radio or TV is on too loud if you can't hear
- recap on what you're there to do (and what other support can be provided by others if not within your role). Explain that what you talk about is between you but if you felt they were at risk for any reason you'd have to talk to your Independent Age contact
- show empathy, ask questions, actively listen, get to know them
- arrange your next call

If you feel comfortable sharing your number with the person you support, you can do so to stay in touch.

Listening on the phone

This can be more challenging as you can't see the person. There is a greater reliance on your voice and being aware of: tone, pitch, emphasis, speech and volume.

We have more useful tips on listening and conversation skills on the training folder of our useful documents for volunteers:

www.independentage.org/volunteer-training

Reassuring people during calls

During these difficult times, some areas to cover as part of your phone chats could include:

- checking that they are eating well, have enough food in, have a plan to get more delivered if necessary and are staying hydrated
- that they are taking and have access to any medication which they might need
- encourage them to keep in touch with people over the phone or digitally if they can
- recommend that they listen to a chatty radio station and if they are feeling lonely to put some extra pictures around of people they care about
- if you feel comfortable sharing your number with the person you support, you can do so to stay in touch

Sharing NHS advice

- wash our hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- always wash our hands when getting home
- use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- cover our mouth when we cough or sneeze
- put used tissues in the bin straight away and wash afterwards
- try to avoid close contact with people who are unwell
- do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean

Supporting someone who is very emotional

There's often little you can say that's actually useful or helpful. The most important part is just your presence and your time.

- **Let them cry.** They are sharing a vulnerable moment with you, allow them to express what needs to be expressed without telling them how to feel. Avoid telling them to stop crying or that whatever they are crying about isn't worth their tears. Emotions when vented are better than if they are stored inside.
- **Don't jump to creating solutions.** If the person is crying and upset about a situation, don't try to immediately solve the problem for them. It's more important for you to do less talking and more listening. Their crying is a way to express their emotions. Let them do so without interfering.

- **Don't try to turn the conversation instantly positive.** It's a natural tendency to want to help the person feel better by having them look at the positive side. However, when you do that, they may feel like you are glossing over what's wrong and they may feel like their feelings aren't important.
- **Ask what they need.** Don't assume you know what they want. Asking what they want and need puts the other person in control and gives you the opportunity to listen and respond. Whatever they ask for or need, respect what they say.
- **Acknowledge your helplessness:** For example, you could say, "I'm so sorry you're going through this. I don't really know what to say to make it better, and I know no words really could. But I want you to know that I'm here for you when you need me".



If you have any concerns about their wellbeing, share them as soon as you can with your Independent Age contact or the Out of Hours Safeguarding number on **020 7605 4455 from 5–9pm on the week days and 9am–9pm on the weekends.**

What to do if...?

What to do if someone doesn't answer your call?

- if you can't get hold of them at the agreed time, try again in 15 minutes and then again in another 15 minutes
- if you have still not been successful, leave a voicemail and ask them to contact their local Independent Age contact

Inform your Independent Age contact of the situation or call the Out of Hours Safeguarding Team on **020 7605 4455** (5–9pm on the week days and 9am–9pm on the weekends)

- if the older person is at immediate risk, for example if there is a medical emergency, contact emergency services on 999



If you can't get hold of your Independent Age contact as soon as possible, contact the Out of Hours Support number on 020 7605 4455, 5–9pm on the week days and 9am–9pm on the weekends.

- You are concerned about the older person's Wellbeing, for example:
 - getting shopping or prescriptions
 - carers not being able to visit/ have not been around
 - how to stay fit and well if they can't leave the house

On those and other similar situations, let your Independent Age contact know as soon as possible so they can liaise directly with them.

Our website has a great source of answers to some of the questions we are being asked most often through our Helpline www.independentage.org/FAQCOVID19. You can have a look at them or direct the older person to them if they can access online resources.

Take care of yourself

These are uncertain times for all of us. We have never experienced anything like this in our lives, so make sure you also look after your own wellbeing.

Mind website has very good resources on how to look after your own wellbeing: www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing

Some other practical tips are:

- read and surround yourself with uplifting information
- reduce the amount of news you expose yourself to (particularly false news)
- think of what you have control over
- create a temporary new routine
- continue to prioritise your emotional wellbeing
- take deep belly breaths (in through you nose 3 seconds and out through your mouth 5–7)
- explore how you stay grounded so you can ground others and be a reduce of the viral anxiety and panic
- this too shall pass

**Remember, look after yourself,
there is only one you!**