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# Becoming a Sharing Time Volunteer

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# About the Role

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Sharing Time is about spending time with an older person, offering friendship to reduce feelings of loneliness or isolation.

## **What is the aim?**

We are a home visiting service for older people, who feel lonely or are isolated. The aim of the service is for a volunteer to provide support, company and conversation by sharing their time with an older person and for friendship to develop between them.

## **Why is loneliness a problem?**

Loneliness is associated with depression, sleep problems, impaired cognitive health, heightened vascular resistance, hypertension, psychological stress and mental health problems. It is one of the biggest issues amongst our older community.

## **What is a sharing time volunteer?**

A volunteer who is able to offer consistent one to one company and friendship to an older person, who is struggling with loneliness or isolation, for an hour each week. Or who is able to make regular weekly telephone contact with one or more older people for a chat.



“My volunteer’s  
visits are the  
**highlight of my week.”**”



## Contacts and Emergency Details

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### Support and Guidance

If at any time you are concerned about anything at all to do with the visit please contact us.

It is important that you don't keep any anxieties or concerns to yourself. We are here to support you at all times.

### Contacts

Your Named Contact is:

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Tel:

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Email:

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If your named contact is unavailable and you need **urgent assistance** within office hours contact:

**Team Member Name:**

Tel:

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Service Manager:

Tel:

Email:

Senior Manager:

Tel:

Email:

### **In an emergency out of office hours:**

Please use your initiative and call the police or other emergency service as necessary telephone **999** or **101** (police non immediate emergency).

If the situation requires an immediate social care intervention the Contact Centres are:

**Cambridgeshire – 0345 045 5205**

**Peterborough – 01733 747 474.**

# Being a Sharing Time Volunteer



## What types of things can a Sharing Time volunteer do?

It is for the older person and the volunteer to decide how they would like the time to be spent, but it might be:

- Conversation/listening and talking
- Sharing/encouraging reminiscing and/or looking at photos or collections
- Reading to (post/information/newspaper/magazines/book)
- Listening to music/the radio and sharing conversation about it
- Watching TV or a film together (sharing thoughts/observations)
- Playing board or card games, doing a crossword or puzzle together
- Helping with correspondence or telephone calls (with the older person's permission)
- Be a point of contact for the older person to access other services (signpost to your organiser)
- Post a letter
- Other similar tasks may be carried out, if in doubt speak to the organiser responsible for guidance.



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### **What a Sharing Time volunteer must not do:**

- Provide any personal care
- Undertake household chores
- DIY
- Give advice - please remain impartial. Allow an older person to work out a situation, share in discussions, but avoid advising and pressing your solutions.
- Impose your own standards or ideas of acceptable behaviour on an older person.
- Keep written records or notes on the person you visit (data protection and confidentiality)
- Receive money or gifts from the older person, other than specified in our policy, give a loan to or receive a loan from an older person.





## Helping things run smoothly

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These points are an outline only of the full details given at your induction and contained within the Volunteer Handbook. If you have any worries or concerns please do not hesitate to speak to your organiser who is here to help and support you.

### **Confidentiality**

We advise you not to disclose your telephone or mobile number in the early stages of visiting an older person.

Although most older people would never take advantage, unfortunately there are some who may, resulting in them running the risk of becoming dependent on you.

If this happens you may receive unwanted contact.

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## Boundaries

Be aware that people have different emotional needs. Please be respectful of their boundaries and personal space.

Avoid personal contact or anything that could be misconstrued and place you, as a volunteer, or the older person in a vulnerable position. Your role is to spend approximately an hour a week having a friendly chat.

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**Please resist the temptation to carry out household cleaning duties and general chores.**

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## Finances

An older person's financial affairs and associated paperwork are confidential to them. During your conversations, if anything crops up concerning this matter and the older person needs advice, please refer them to our Information and Advice Service.

## Outings

The older person may ask you to take them out occasionally.

You will already have been asked to ensure your car insurance company is aware you are using your car for voluntary visiting.

If you wish to take the older person out, please speak to your Organiser/Co-ordinator about this first. We are unable to pay expenses for outings.



“I trust Age UK  
to send me someone  
**that I can rely on**  
and trust.”

### **Time Allocation**

It is better to keep visits to an hour a week initially to create a regular routine. If over time you feel you can do a little more, gradually increase the time.

### **Memory Problems**

Some older people you visit may experience memory loss or have a diagnosis of dementia. For example, they may display some repetitiveness without being aware of this. It is usually best to “go with the flow” if you can. You can find out more about dementia on the website [www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk).



### **Hints on how to build a Relationship**

It can be very daunting when you first visit someone. What do you find to talk about? In most cases you will find that the older person takes the lead and the conversation will flow naturally.

However, if things are a little stilted, try taking photographs in or asking the older person about their photographs.

- What about their family?
- What did they used to enjoy or work at when younger?
- Have they ever travelled?
- What holidays have they taken?

Usually when the conversation turns to the old days there are no problems, it can be a very useful starting point.



### **Making an Exit**

Sometimes an older person can be very lonely and you may be the only person they see all week, so you may find it difficult to say you have to go. It is often helpful to say to the older person before you have to leave:



“I am going to have to go in 15 minutes, I’ve really enjoyed our chat, let’s arrange another time for me to come and see you.” **Be firm - but kind.**

### **Being Observant**

If you notice anything that is clearly affecting the older person’s welfare, or are told anything that concerns you, please inform your Organiser/Co-ordinator immediately. Possible issues to be alerted to may concern cleanliness, health problems, neighbour issues, safety and abuse of any kind.



## Guidance and Information

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### **Illness**

If there is any possibility that you may have an infectious illness it is wise not to visit until you are completely well. Please contact the older person directly, or if that is not possible, your Sharing Time Organiser/Co-ordinator.

### **When the older person you visit dies**

You will generally be visiting older people who are frail. Sadly, on occasion, the person may die. This may be a very difficult time for you as a volunteer as you may have built up a close relationship with the older person. Do not feel you have to cope with these feelings alone. Contact your Organiser/Co-ordinator who will arrange to talk to you and if necessary help you to receive some bereavement counselling.



## **Supervision, training and meetings**

You must complete an annual review and declaration, and participate in supervision. We ask that you attend training sessions and social events when possible.

These meetings give us an important opportunity to support each other, as you are part of a local team of volunteers representing Age UK Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

## **Emergencies**

Please take action if you are unable to gain entry to an older person's home when you expect them to be there, check with neighbours, ring the older person and/or their named contact, and consult your main contact or a manager during office hours. If you find the older person ill/collapsed, call emergency help in the usual way and let your main contact know as soon as possible.

# Our Services

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Age UK Cambridgeshire & Peterborough offers a variety of services for older people and their carers.

## **Information and Advice Services:**

Including Visiting Support Service for Older People

## **Practical Services:**

- Community Wardens
- Home Support (Housework & Shopping)
- Cambridgeshire Handyperson Service
- Hospital Discharge and Hospital Admission Avoidance Support

## **Social Opportunities:**

- Day Services & Friendship Clubs
- Sharing Time & Telephone Befriending
- Volunteering

## **We also:**

- Campaign on issues that affect older people
- Offer **free** talks to clubs and professionals
- Hold fundraising events and activities



For more details about any of our services, please call us on: **0300 666 9860** or email **[infoandadvice@ageukcap.org.uk](mailto:infoandadvice@ageukcap.org.uk)**

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#ProudtobeAgeUK

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## **Age UK Cambridgeshire and Peterborough**

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