

Volunteer Policy

Age UK Camden

Introduction

Volunteers are at the heart of the Age UK Camden Group and integral to enhancing the quality of services we provide. This policy aims to reflect the value and respect the Age UK Camden Group holds for volunteers. It also recognises the skills, energy and experience they bring to helping us achieve the best possible outcomes for older people.

The Age UK Camden Group recognises that volunteering offers an opportunity for people to learn new skills, meet new people and potentially have a positive impact on physical and mental health for the people who give their time and support.

The Age UK Camden Group recognises that volunteering must benefit the individual as well as the organisation.

This policy outlines the principles for volunteering with the Age UK Camden Group. It informs how the organisation sets out to support people in volunteering along with the expectations the organisation may have of the volunteer. The document is relevant to anyone who is responsible for recruitment, support, development and coordination of volunteers across the charity.

Reference to the Age UK Camden Group in this document is inclusive of its subsidiaries.

Our Commitment to Volunteering:

The Age UK Camden Group will commit to continually reflecting on and reviewing the relationship of volunteers and the organisation. The Head of HR and Central Services (which includes Volunteering) reports to the Chief Executive and regular reports are presented to the charity's Board of Trustees. This ensures volunteers and volunteering issues are represented at the highest level.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The Age UK Camden Group's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy covers both

staff and volunteers. The organisation will not tolerate less favourable treatment on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and parenthood including maternity, paternity, adoption and surrogacy, race (including colour, nationality and ethnic and national origin), religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or any other reason which cannot be shown to be justified.

Who is a Volunteer?

A volunteer is someone who freely offers to donate their time, skills or experience to undertake a task on behalf of the Age UK Camden Group. It is without expectation of financial compensation beyond the reimbursement of expenses.

The Age UK Camden Group understands that the volunteering relationship is flexible and informal and distinct from employment. This allows volunteering to enhance the quality of our services and support paid staff.

The Age UK Camden Group understands that the relationship between the volunteer and the organisation is one of mutual agreement and understanding. There are no contractual obligations on volunteers, beyond the expectation that volunteers will undertake required training/induction and associated checks for the role they are undertaking.

The partnership is based on trust and understanding and is not intended to be legally binding.

The Age UK Camden Group will endeavour at all times to:

- Ensure that volunteers are properly integrated into the organisational structure and that mechanisms are in place for them to contribute to its work
- Ensure paid staff are trained to work with volunteers
- Will not introduce volunteers to replace paid staff
- Expect that staff at all levels will work positively with volunteers
- Provide clear role descriptions
- Respect volunteers, listen and learn from their experiences and encourage two-way communication
- Ensure that volunteers have a good understanding of what the Age UK Camden Group is and does
- Provide accurate information about policies and guidance
- Provide ongoing support.

Recruitment and Selection

The Age UK Camden Group starts from the premise of identifying tasks and roles that need doing and then recruiting volunteers to carry them out.

Age UK Camden Group takes a needs-led approach to volunteer recruitment while remaining open and welcoming to individuals who wish to contribute their skills. Expressions of interest are encouraged, and we aim to match volunteer abilities with suitable opportunities whenever possible.

Application Process

This procedure allows the Age UK Camden Group to provide information to the prospective volunteer about the organisation and the current roles. It also provides an opportunity for the volunteer to tell us about their skills, experience and interests along with why they want to be part of the organisation, and their expectations of the experience.

This allows the Age UK Camden Group to make a fair decision as to whether a suitable role can be offered.

The Age UK Camden Group endeavours to provide a consistent and fair recruitment and selection process in line with our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

Volunteer Roles

The Age UK Camden Group will provide role outlines or descriptions that reflect the range of roles volunteers can engage in. These will be reviewed and updated to reflect any changes in services.

Interviews & Trial Sessions

All prospective volunteers will have an initial meeting with the relevant coordinator of the service they are planning to link with, and/or the Head of HR and Central Services.

In some instances, volunteers are also invited to have a shadow/trial sessions (eg: at the Day Centres). This allows the Age UK Camden Group to assess suitability. If for any reason, a person is not suitable, alternative roles within the organisation will be considered, or they will be directed to suitable roles with other organisations if possible. Volunteers will be made aware of this when they make their initial enquiry.

References

Potential volunteers are asked to provide written details of two referees whom the Age UK Camden Group can approach for references. Volunteers may provide a combination of professional and personal references, but a minimum of one professional reference is required.

DBS Check

Age UK Camden Group is committed to safeguarding adults at risk and ensuring the safety of clients, staff, and volunteers. All volunteers applying for roles that involve contact with clients or access to sensitive information will be required to undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check at the appropriate level before starting their role.

The level of DBS check required will depend on the nature of the volunteering role and will be determined in line with legal and regulatory guidance.

Volunteers will not be permitted to begin their role until a satisfactory DBS clearance has been received, unless a formal risk assessment has been completed and approved.

Volunteers who already hold a DBS certificate may be able to use the DBS Update Service, subject to eligibility and verification.

All DBS information will be handled in strict confidence, stored securely, and processed in accordance with data protection legislation and Age UK Camden Group's Confidentiality Policy.

If a DBS check reveals relevant information, this will be reviewed fairly and confidentially, and a decision will be made based on risk assessment, safeguarding responsibilities, and the nature of the role, rather than automatic exclusion.

Age UK Camden Group reserves the right to refuse or withdraw a volunteer placement if DBS clearance is not obtained or if concerns arise regarding suitability for the role.

Induction, Training and Development

Volunteers joining the Age UK Camden Group attend an Induction Session. Depending on the role or task being undertaken, additional training may be required before a volunteer can undertake the role. All volunteers based at one of our sites will receive an induction to the respective building.

An induction checklist is provided as Appendix 1.

Ongoing Support

Every service or project that involves volunteers will have a named person responsible for the team. They will ensure that volunteers have received the proper induction and training for the role they are undertaking. They will provide clear guidance and tasks. They will offer constructive feedback and deal with issues as they arise.

Health and Safety

Age UK Camden Group is committed to taking all reasonable steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its volunteers. Volunteers will be provided with copies of relevant health and safety procedures and receive appropriate support and training relevant to the role/ task they are undertaking. Volunteers are required to follow Age UK Camden Group's Health and Safety Policies and guidelines.

Expenses

Volunteers will be reimbursed travel and other approved expenses as laid out in the Age UK Camden Group Volunteer Expenses Policy.

Insurance

Volunteers will be covered by the organisation's insurance policy while engaged in approved roles for the Age UK Camden Group.

Data Protection and Information Sharing

Volunteers will potentially have access to personal information and/or administer personal data on individuals and will, therefore, be expected to comply with the Age UK Camden Group Information Governance Policies and Procedures. Some roles may require further training.

Standards and behaviour

While we hope that the volunteer experience will be a positive one, it is important that measures are in place to allow both the individual and the organisation to deal with problems and issues if they arise. Volunteers and staff are the "front line" of the organisation. The Volunteer Handbook reflects the organisation's *Code of Conduct* and there is an expectation that volunteers will comply with it. Volunteers receive a copy of this at Induction. If informal processes are found wanting, the Volunteer Procedure for Communications and Resolving Problems document outlines steps for dealing with any grievances a volunteer might raise, as well as how the organisation would conduct investigation of allegations about a volunteer. Volunteer can expect to be treated fairly and with respect by colleagues and clients as they carry out their tasks. The organisation understands that it has a

responsibility to address any issues or problems as they arise and deal with them fairly and transparently. The organisation expects the volunteer to maintain regular communication with their coordinator and take responsibility for flagging up any issues or problems they have or encounter.

Moving on

The Age UK Camden Group recognises that volunteers may stop volunteering with the organisation at any time. When a volunteer decides to leave, the organisation will, whenever possible, provide an exit interview or an opportunity to complete an exit questionnaire. This process provides a platform to discuss the benefits of the experience to both the individual and the organisation, raise any issues or concerns, and gives opportunities to share ideas and provide constructive feedback. This process also allows volunteers to request a reference, where appropriate.

Acknowledgement

The Age UK Camden Group recognises the importance of acknowledging and saying thank you to volunteers for their contribution. The organisation will use different methods, such as certificates, gatherings, awards and general PR to message this.

Appendix 1:

Induction checklist

A new volunteer needs certain information as they begin volunteering. A good introduction can make a real difference to feeling welcomed into a project and knowing what is expected, and who the key people are they will be liaising with.

Name of the Volunteer:	Service Volunteering with:
Service induction conducted by:	Service Induction Date:

Items	Date complete	Items	Date complete
Volunteering at the Age UK Camden Group premises or hosting activities at other premises on behalf of the AUC Group			
Show volunteer around building		Support and Supervision systems discussed (how often/format agreed)	
Introduce volunteer to staff & other volunteers		Review meeting with the volunteer- set date	
Telephone (if role requires)		ID badge	
Photocopier (if role requires)		Set up Age UK Camden Group email address (if role requires)	
Charity Log set up & training (if role requires)		Information Governance online training	
Where and how to report accidents (Provide a copy of the H&S Policy & Procedure)		Buddy Assigned (if role requires)	

First Aid box / First Aid Officers & Health and Safety Procedures relevant to role (for AUC group premises)		Charitylog Training (if role requires)	
Signing in and out book		Safeguarding training (All volunteers must undertake online training)	
Fire procedures /warden (for AUC group premises)		Food Hygiene (if role requires)	
Volunteer Handbook issued		Volunteer Procedure for Communication and Resolving Problems Guidelines issued	
Any other relevant info to building (kitchen/café/loos)		Shadow/ Trial sessions (where role requires)*	
All Projects/Services			
Items	Date complete		
Project Induction by Key person			
Role review by Key person			
Tasks assigned			
Days / Times			
Confidentiality for Older Persons and Organisational Confidentiality			
Claiming out of pocket expenses			

Agree communication/ reporting			
Volunteer Signature:		Signed by Manager/ Key Person	
Volunteer Name:		Manager/ Key Person's name:	
Date:		Date:	

*Information Governance & Data Protection is covered in the General Induction, and all volunteers sign to say they have received it.

+ All volunteers must complete Safeguarding training (online).