

An introduction to volunteering with Age UK Oxfordshire





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Hello & welcome

Welcome and thank you for your interest in becoming a volunteer.

Your decision to give your time and energy is powerful - and it will help us work together towards a fairer later life for older people in Oxfordshire.

Volunteers bring something truly special to our work. Your commitment, enthusiasm and skills add value, diversity and meaning to everything we do. Together, we can make sure older people and their families have the support they need, when and where they need it, and the opportunity to live life their way.

We offer a wide range of services and activities, from helping people connect with their community and reducing loneliness, to helping people claim entitlements and navigate life's challenges - with lots more in between. At the heart of it all is a simple truth: people need people. Every role you take on helps meet that fundamental human need for connection and belonging.

As a volunteer, you are an essential part of our team. We believe you deserve the same respect, support and access to information and training as any member of staff. You will be valued, involved and empowered to make a real difference.

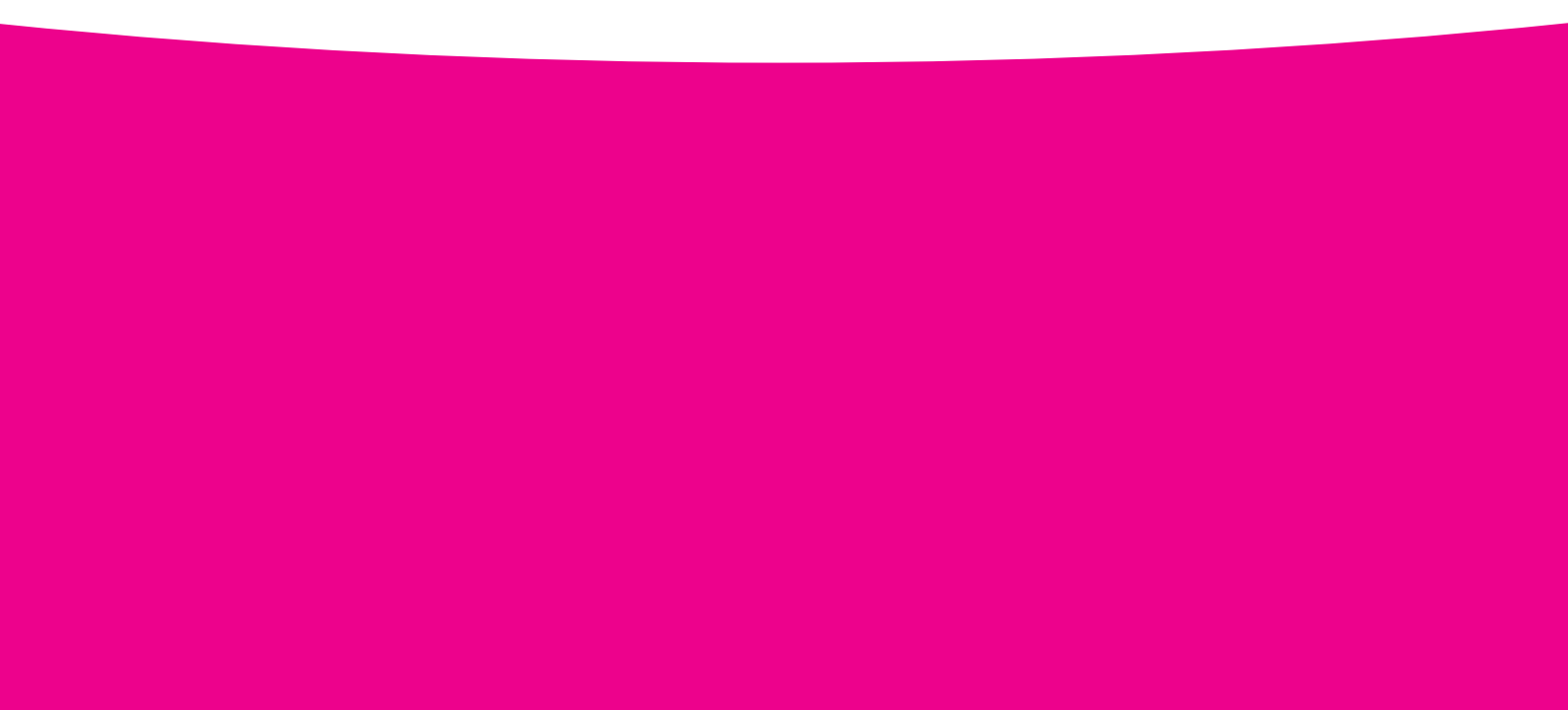
This *Introduction to Volunteering* will guide you through what to expect as a volunteer and how we'll support you. You can also visit our website for more about our work and strategy.

We hope you find your volunteering experience rewarding and enjoyable and we will do all that we can to help and support you in your role.

Your support is not only precious to us - it's life-changing for the people we support, many of whom face real challenges in achieving the later life they deserve.

Thank you for being part of our mission to create a fairer later life for older people in Oxfordshire.

Paul Ringer
Chief Executive



About Age UK Oxfordshire

Our vision An age-friendly Oxfordshire where every older person and unpaid carer is seen, heard, included and valued; every day matters for everyone.

Our mission To provide community-based support that promotes independence, tackles inequality and drives change where it matters most, focusing on older people and unpaid carers affected by poverty, loneliness or illness/disability.

Our values Shaped by our staff, the people who know our work best, our values sit at the heart of everything we do and guide every decision: listening deeply, acting with compassion and empowering people.

Listen

Compassion

Empower

Our people

You will be part of our team of over 400 people (130 staff and over 300 volunteers) who bring a mix of lived and professional experience and share an ambition to improve the lives of older people and unpaid carers in Oxfordshire.



Our strategy

As an independent local charity, we have a role and responsibility to amplify the voices of, and shine a spotlight on, the most pressing issues affecting older people and unpaid carers in Oxfordshire.

Services are oversubscribed, underfunded and facing growing demand. Therefore, we must focus our efforts where they are needed most.

Our priority is to support those experiencing poverty, loneliness or social isolation, as well as those living with illness or disability - or caring for someone who is.

We will continue to challenge ageism and address the exclusion of older people and unpaid carers.

Our ambitions for 2030

Design services around people's real lives

Focus support where it makes the biggest difference

Centre on lived experience to drive lasting change

Raise our profile to inform, influence and inspire

Double our volunteers and grow our ambassadors

Diversify income and grow voluntary support

You can find a full copy of **Our Strategy 2025-2030: For a fairer later life** on our website www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire/about-us.



Our services

Our support focuses on three key areas; advice and advocacy, empowerment and independence and social connection.

Knowing the full range of support and services we offer across Age UK Oxfordshire helps you make an even bigger difference. Understanding what's available means you can connect older people to other opportunities that might improve their lives - whether that's reducing loneliness, accessing benefits, joining social activities or getting more active.

A-Z

Our **bereavement support** helps people who have been bereaved and would value the opportunity to meet others who understand.

Community Links Oxfordshire is a free information service that we provide for all adults aged 18+, linking people into what matters to them through locally based community teams.

Our **digital support** assists those who may need help with their phone, computer, or tablet. Helping develop skills and safely getting people involved with the online world.

Dementia Oxfordshire, our dementia support service, provides support, information and advice for people with dementia and their families, from the point of diagnosis until end of life or a move to a care home.

Our **foot care** service offers a basic toenail cutting service for adults over 50, helping people stay comfortable, healthy and active.

Our **fraud and scams support** team offer group talks to raise awareness of scams, and one-to-one sessions for those who have been affected by scams.

Homeshare Oxfordshire, our Homeshare service, carefully matches older people who may need a little help to continue to live independently at home, with another person who needs affordable accommodation, wants to be part of a home, and can lend a hand.

Our **information & advice line** offers free and confidential information and advice for older people, their families, carers, friends and professionals, on a range of subjects, including staying independent at home, social opportunities, welfare benefits and entitlements, and much more.

We offer groups for older people in the **LGBTQ+** community which offer the chance to meet others in a welcoming, relaxed and friendly environment.

We are partners in the **Oxfordshire Advice Partnership** which brings together a variety of agencies to provide impartial advice. The **Oxfordshire Advice Navigator** is a key tool in this initiative, providing free accurate, tailored and relevant information on benefits, entitlements and debt support.

Our telephone befriending service, **Phone Friends**, provides a free and friendly telephone call from a caring, trained volunteer at the same time each week to someone who feels lonely.

Our **physical activity** team offers in-person and online exercise and wellbeing classes to help people get moving in later life, along with a specialist falls prevention programme.

Volunteering for Age UK Oxfordshire

Who are our volunteers?

There is no upper age limit for volunteering. Volunteers of all ages bring valuable interests, skills and experience that support older people and strengthen our charity.

Service volunteers must be 18 or over, though we sometimes offer supported volunteering opportunities for younger people.

We are an inclusive charity and encourage people with personal experience to get involved. Volunteering benefits both the people we support, and the volunteers themselves, helping to break down stigma and misunderstanding affecting older people, their carers and families.

Volunteers give their time and energy so that Age UK Oxfordshire can be there when it matters most. Whatever role you choose and however much time you can give, you'll be making an incredible difference for older people at a time in their lives when they need support the most.

We're always looking for friendly, enthusiastic volunteers to join our team. Our roles are flexible and available across Oxfordshire - whether you have family commitments, work full-time or part-time, are retired, or currently looking for work, there's a role for you.

Volunteering doesn't just change lives - it can change yours too. Here's how:

- **Make a positive impact on the lives of older people**
- **Support your local community**
- **Share your knowledge and experience**
- **Learn new skills and enhance your CV with valuable experience**
- **Meet new people and make friends**
- **Boost your own wellbeing**

Our current volunteering roles:

Bereavement Support: As a Bereavement Support Volunteer you can help support older people in the county who have been bereaved. Support is provided in a variety of settings.

Befrienders: Help support people to overcome barriers and loneliness, build social connections and rebuild confidence. A DBS check will be required.

Digital Support: In the digital age we live in, you can make a real difference by helping to build someone's confidence online by guiding them to get online and help provide support to get the best use out of their tech. A DBS check will be required.

Admin Support: Providing general administration support across many of our services.

Physical Activity: The physical activity team offer a variety of classes across the county, as well as online classes, all suitable for people in later life. The role would include supporting the exercise tutor to welcome and register participants, helping create a friendly and sociable environment.

Phone Friends: Help us fight loneliness in Oxfordshire, by becoming one of our telephone befrienders. Make regular calls and build friendships while being supported by the team.

Activity & Group Volunteer: Do you have a hobby or take part in an activity which you think you could help deliver in one of our groups?



Our volunteer commitment

We see volunteering as a two-way relationship—one built on mutual trust, respect and shared purpose. That's why we believe it's important to be clear about what you can expect from us and what we ask of you in return.

Together, we can create a positive experience that empowers you as a volunteer and ensures the best

What we ask of you

- Commit to our charitable objectives and uphold our values in all activities.
- Carry out your volunteering role and key responsibilities, as outlined in your role description, to the best of your ability.
- Take part in training relevant to your role and as identified through support and supervision sessions.
- Stay informed about our policies and procedures relating to the people we support, whether you work with individuals or groups.
- Act in the best interests of those we support - working in an empowering and motivating way that helps them achieve their personal goals.
- Follow any reporting requirements for your role and maintain regular contact with your service lead. Let them know if your contact details change or if personal circumstances affect your availability.
- Maintain confidentiality at all times—both for clients and for all matters relating to the charity.

What you should expect from us

- A full induction about Age UK Oxfordshire - covering our vision, mission, and values - plus in-service training and ongoing support for your chosen volunteering activity, along with any additional training identified during your volunteering journey.
- A dedicated service contact who will provide regular guidance and support.
- Clear information on the standards we expect, in line with our charity's policies and procedures.
- Reimbursement of all reasonable travel and out-of-pocket expenses.
- Insurance cover for approved volunteer activities.
- A fair and transparent process for resolving any problems or difficulties, including the opportunity to discuss unresolved matters in line with our complaints policy.
- Opportunities to share feedback on your volunteering experience.
- Regular updates about the charity and its work.
- The chance to change or expand your volunteering role if you wish.

We will also strive to ensure that you...

- Are kept informed about any changes or developments that may affect your volunteering role, as well as new opportunities to get involved.
- Have the chance to take part in discussion groups and decision-making - especially in areas where you have experience and insight.
- Feel confident to say “no” to any requests outside your agreed volunteer role.
- Know that your contribution is valued and appreciated by us.
- Can see how your efforts fit into our broader charitable objectives and the difference they make to creating a fairer later life.

FAQs

How much time do I need to give?

There's no upper limit on how long you can volunteer with us - we value every hour you give. However, for most administration roles, we usually ask for a minimum commitment of six months, and for befriending roles, we seek a longer-term commitment to build meaningful relationships.

On average, volunteers usually give between two to four hours per week but this may depend on the volunteering activity. For example, a befriender volunteer may spend 2 hours per week with a client with a little bit of travel time on top of that. Whereas office volunteers may be able to offer half or full days on a regular or intermittent basis.

Some volunteers take on more than one regular role, while others support one-off activities such as fundraising events, focus groups or awareness campaigns.

We actively encourage volunteers to explore new opportunities within the charity as they arise - training and support are always provided to help you grow and make the most of your experience.

What happens if I need to stop or take a break from volunteering?

We understand that sometimes volunteers may need to take a break or end their volunteering earlier than planned due to unforeseen circumstances.

If this happens, we ask that you give us as much notice as possible so we can put alternative arrangements in place to maintain service continuity. For example, if you volunteer with our Phone Friends team, we may need time to find a suitable replacement to ensure the client continues to receive support without interruption.

Occasionally, a volunteer may find their role challenging. Even after additional support and discussion with the service lead, it may be agreed that the role isn't the best fit. In these cases, some volunteers choose to stop volunteering altogether, while others may wish to explore alternative opportunities within the same service or elsewhere in the charity.

If a complaint arises from or about a volunteer, it will be handled in line with our complaints policy and procedure. As a last resort, we reserve the right to end a volunteer's role if we believe the task or performance is not benefiting service users or the charity, or if a complaint cannot be resolved.

Can I volunteer if I am an asylum seeker or refugee?

Yes you can. Many of our volunteer roles are available to asylum seekers and refugees.

Can I ask for a reference?

Age UK Oxfordshire is pleased to provide references for volunteers who have completed at least six continuous months of satisfactory volunteering with us.

All references will be issued by a senior manager and will include factual information only - such as the dates of volunteering, a brief overview of the roles undertaken, and any training completed. A copy of each reference will be retained in your volunteer record by our People Team.

Can I claim benefits while volunteering?

Yes. The benefit regulations are clear that you can volunteer but you should inform the appropriate agency before you start volunteering. For more information please visit

www.gov.uk/guidance/volunteering-and-claiming-benefits.

What if I don't have experience, can I still apply?

You don't need experience, specialist skills or qualifications for most of our roles. We're simply looking for volunteers who are:

- Reliable and supportive
- Able to relate to older people with empathy
- Good communicators and attentive listeners
- Patient, flexible, non-judgmental and positive
- Willing to reflect on and challenge their own assumptions

You'll receive full training and ongoing support from the charity.

What if I have a criminal record, can I still volunteer?

At Age UK Oxfordshire, we are committed to equality, diversity, and inclusion, and we value the contribution that all volunteers can make. We understand that some applicants may have criminal records and may worry about fairness when applying. We want to reassure you that we treat all

Will I be given equipment or a uniform?

If your volunteer role requires any particular clothing or equipment, this will be discussed with you as part of the application process and provided free of charge.

Can I volunteer if I am under 18 years of age?

Most of our volunteer roles are for those aged 18 and over. Occasionally we do have opportunities for those aged 16-17. If these opportunities are available, they will be advertised on the volunteer webpage.

Can I volunteer for you if I live outside the UK?

Our volunteering roles are mainly Oxfordshire-based, therefore whilst volunteering for us, you must be a resident in the UK and we are unable to support a sponsorship application.

When am I normally expected to volunteer?

Most volunteer roles take place during office opening hours (Mon-Fri 8.30am–4.30pm). This is so that there is always someone around should you have any questions/queries or need to get hold of someone. Anything outside of these hours must be pre-arranged and you will be given a separate contact number in case of any emergencies.



“On a personal level Age UK Oxfordshire volunteering has brought me such joy, confidence, and structure to my week. Not to mention such valuable experience I have learnt making these calls each week. I take so much pride in these calls, and always go above and beyond.” Phone Friends Volunteer

Supporting volunteers

Training and induction

All volunteers must complete our basic training courses as part of the recruitment process. These courses are delivered online, and if you don't have access to a computer, we can arrange for you to complete them in our office.

Our essential courses include:

- Safeguarding
- Data protection, GDPR and Confidentiality
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Additional training may be needed as added.

Once you've completed these courses, you'll receive an induction for your role from your service lead. Depending on your role, you may also need to complete a Lone Working course.

Additional training opportunities

We offer extra learning through our Click Learning online courses, designed to help you deepen your knowledge and enhance your volunteering experience.

As part of your induction, your service lead will talk through the different options available to you and recommend courses that can support your role.

From time to time, we also share ad hoc training opportunities across the charity—giving you the chance to learn new skills and broaden your impact.

Support and supervision

Every volunteer will have a named service lead as their main point of contact for day-to-day questions and support. If your service lead is unavailable or you have a general enquiry, help is always available from our main office during normal working hours.

We actively encourage volunteers to take part in support and reflection sessions. These may be one-to-one or as part of a team meeting. They provide a safe space to talk through any challenges, share experiences, build confidence, strengthen team morale and promote a sense of togetherness.

At Age UK Oxfordshire, we are committed to treating all volunteers with fairness and respect. If you ever encounter a personally distressing or difficult situation involving a client, staff member or other volunteer, please speak to your service lead first. If that's not possible, contact the main office as soon as you can - we're here to help.

Disclosure and Barring Service check (DBS)

We may request a DBS check as part of the volunteer recruitment process, if required for your role.

These checks help us make safer recruitment decisions—but they are just one part of our robust recruitment process. Once your DBS check is complete, you will receive a DBS certificate, which remains in your possession.

All volunteers must inform the People Team of their certificate number and date of issue so we can update our records.

Expenses

All volunteers receive guidance when they first start, outlining which expenses can be claimed and how to submit claims. This guidance is reviewed periodically to ensure it remains up to date.

Car mileage is currently paid at 45p/mile. Cycle mileage will be paid at 25p/mile. All expenses claims must be submitted within 3 months of the date of the activity/receipt. Payments are usually made by BACS transfer directly into your nominated bank account.

Health and wellbeing

To ensure your safety and provide any necessary support, we ask that you inform us of any health conditions that could affect your volunteering. This may include asthma, allergies, epilepsy, or mental health conditions. Please also let us know if you require any additional support.

All information you provide will be treated with the strictest confidence.

Personal safety and ID cards

Volunteers whose roles require them to be out of the office or away from home will be issued a Charity ID Badge which must be worn/carried at all times when volunteering. As part of the recruitment process we ask for an emergency contact and telephone number in case of emergencies.

Personal appearance and what to wear

If your role involves contact with service users or members of the public, it is essential that you maintain a professional manner at all times. This includes dressing appropriately and presenting yourself in a way that reflects the values of the charity.

Your appearance and conduct are important not only for the people you support but also because you represent the charity in the wider community.

If you need to make a complaint

Although dealing with complaints can be difficult, it can give us a positive opportunity to improve and provide a better service for people.

We have a complaints policy and procedure (<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire/about-us/comments-complaints-and-suggestions-policy>) to ensure all complaints - formal or informal - are handled promptly and fairly. If you wish to make a complaint, or if someone raises a complaint about your service or any aspect of the charity's work, please pass it directly to the People Team at peopleteam@ageukoxfordshire.org.uk.

Recruitment and application process

We are open to applications all year round and details of the current roles can be found on our website (www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire/get-involved/volunteer) or you can call **0345 450 1276** or email volunteering@ageukoxfordshire.org.uk.

After your enquiry, we'll invite you to an informal chat. This is a chance to make sure the role, the service, and you are a great fit. It's important for everyone that expectations and requirements are clear before moving forward.

If you're happy to proceed, you'll complete an application form and the process will begin! Our People Team and your team lead will stay in touch throughout to guide you. We'll arrange references, complete a DBS check (if required) and ensure you have any mandatory training. These steps can happen at the same time, so things move quickly.

Once you've had your induction with your service lead, you'll be ready to start making a difference!

“Volunteering is a two-way affair; we get as much benefit as the client does – if more people knew this, more people would find a volunteering niche that suits them.” Digital Support Volunteer



For a fairer later life

Age UK Oxfordshire is an independent local charity.

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Registered office: 10 Napier Court, Barton Lane, Abingdon, OX14 3YT.