

VOLUNTEER NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER FOR AGE UK SUNDERLAND VOLUNTEERS

July 2020 Update

Director's COVID 19 Update



I would just like to start my update by giving a special thank you to all volunteers who have supported Age UK Sunderland during this challenging time, we are all so grateful for your hard work and dedication.

At the beginning of the crisis we gave all volunteers the option of either taking a break from their volunteering activities or to continue to work safely from their homes.

I am sure you all understand that the health and safety of all of our volunteers is paramount. Throughout the pandemic we have undergone strict adherence to all government guidelines to ensure we fulfilled our duty of care to our volunteers and staff.

Although there has been easing of some government restrictions in relation to COVID 19 we must still proceed with caution to ensure the ongoing safety of staff and volunteers during this challenging time.

The organisation has carried out a very detailed COVID risk assessment and procedure regarding the return of staff and volunteers to the workplace which involves a very tentative and staged approach to ensure all social distancing and hygiene rules are adhered to at all times.

We currently have an aspirational plan for staff to start returning to the workplace in August on a part time basis, with a view to all staff to be back to the work place full time in September.

This will need to be done slowly and safely whilst we monitor the R rate and potential second wave of the virus going forward. As Age UK Sunderland is one of the biggest charities in the city there will be a higher number of staff and volunteers returning to our buildings which increases the potential risk of future COVID infections so we must control any potential footfall very carefully in line with government guidelines .

With this in mind we hope that our volunteers are able to return to their pre COVID roles sometime in September if everything goes well. However this will be heavily dependent on government guidelines regarding older people coming together in groups in the coming weeks.

We will update you in due course if this aspirational plan changes.

I understand if you are feeling frustrated in relation to the inability to return to your volunteering role at Age UK Sunderland offices at this time, but we must be confident that we can ensure the safety of all when we do so in response to all set government guidelines.

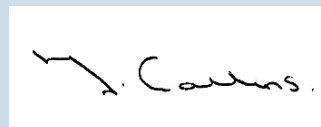
Thank you for continuing to support us and we look forward to you resuming your volunteering support in your previous environment once the threat has passed.

Volunteer Expenses & Resources

In terms of volunteer expenses, all volunteers should continue to claim for out of pocket expenses as usual and ask for support from their named coordinators to claim any expenses they occur if needed. Your named coordinators will also continue to provide any resources you need whilst you are working from home.

Thank you for your patience and support.

Please Stay Safe

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Tracy Collins'.

Tracy Collins
Director
On behalf of Age UK Sunderland

Lunches on Wheels



Lunches on wheels continues to be a very successful and well received service.

Since COVID 19 lockdown commenced we have delivered 6,000 home cooked meals, averaging over 90 meals delivered each day to older people who may otherwise have struggled to get a hot meal due to self isolation.

It is not only the hot meal that is welcome but also the opportunity to see a smiling delivery driver at their door when their meal is delivered safely. The drivers relate just how much they are enjoying seeing the clients and how rewarding they are finding the work, knowing that for some this is the only person they will see all day, or even all week. Similarly the feedback from clients tells us not only how much they enjoy the meal but how much they enjoy seeing a friendly face.

Co-ordinator Adrian Bowmer Explained, *“Recently one of our drivers delivered a meal to a client and was concerned about her health that day. He offered to go back at the end of his day’s deliveries to see her and make sure she was ok. The concern shown was enough to prompt the client to call her doctor and she was quickly taken to hospital in need of urgent care. Her daughter later rang to ask that we pass on our thanks to the driver concerned as without his intervention her mother would have probably soldiered on and gone without the care she desperately needed.*

“This is just one example of how much this service has meant to some clients and it has been humbling to receive calls from clients and their family members and knowing that the meal deliveries have made a difference during such a difficult time.

“We do have capacity to take on more clients and would love to be running at full capacity every day, so if you know someone who could benefit please get in touch.”

Many of our services are currently running including information and advice, advocacy, Lifestyle domestic cleaning/shopping support, hospital discharge and social prescribing services. Here we update on other services which have adapted to meet the needs of our clients during the Covid 19 lockdown...

Welfare Calls

The value of Keeping in Touch has never been as important as in the last few months. Age UK Sunderland’s Keeping in Touch (KIT) service has been an essential lifeline for many years. KIT co-ordinator Nick Hall explains how the service has adapted to the current situation.

“The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown has, for many people, brought a period of loneliness and enforced social isolation. Sadly, for many of our Keeping In Touch clients this is an everyday experience and contact with a volunteer is a treasured part of the week.

Contact between clients and volunteers has continued during the lockdown with a few changes: Friendly Faces (face to face) visits have been suspended in line with government guidelines but volunteers are keeping in touch with a regular telephone call. Telephone volunteers report that the calls are getting longer as the lockdown continues and clients become more isolated. Friendly Face volunteers have taken on extra telephone calls to meet demand.”

Clients who access Age UK Sunderland’s other services have also received welfare calls and shopping support during this period from both staff and volunteers. We may require additional help to continue welfare telephone calls to clients who are still unable to leave the house due to increasing demand as the crisis continues..

If you would like to help us make weekly welfare telephone calls please get in touch us using the contact details shown at the bottom of the page.

Essence Service Update.

Essence usual activities were suspended at the end of March due to the Coronavirus pandemic in line with government guidelines.

The service has continued to support people with dementia and their carers via welfare calls during this difficult time.

We have been developing a ‘Virtual Activity Programme’ using Zoom. The sessions are fun and informal and if you would like to get involved please get in touch.

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