

## Volunteering with Age UK - The Consumer Sounding Board Pilot

*Giving older people a voice in Age UK's Social Enterprise*

### Terms of Reference

#### 1.0 Background

Age UK is the country's largest charity dedicated to helping everyone make the most of later life. Age UK provides services and support at a national and local level to inspire, enable and support older people.

Commercially, Age UK charity shops provide a range of donated and brand new items for purchase. Age Co provides a range of products and services designed to meet the needs of older consumers, ranging from financial to independent living solutions.

More information can be found via the following links:

Age UK charity: <http://www.ageuk.org.uk>

Age UK charity shops: <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/services/charity-shops/>

Age Co: <https://www.ageco.co.uk>

#### 2.0 Aim of the Consumer Sounding Board Pilot

The Consumer Sounding Board Pilot provides an opportunity for people in mid to later life to volunteer with Age UK and to provide insight directly to Age UK's social enterprise.

Members of the Consumer Sounding Board Pilot are called **Consumer Voice Volunteers** and will fulfil their role by having opportunity to:

- i) Engage with senior Age UK commercial staff and provide personal views and perspectives on **products & services, charity shops and strategy** – including current offerings, the wider marketplace and future opportunities.
- ii) Provide insights on Age UK's trading **practices, values and customer experiences** across a variety of products and commercial services.
- iii) Provide informed voices **on how businesses communicate with consumers at different life stages** – what currently has or may have, the most benefit for older people.
- iv) Participate in the review of the pilot and share your feedback on, for example, what worked well and what could be improved.

The Consumer Sounding Board Pilot will meet five times between **December 2018 and December 2019**. This includes an induction and taster session on the 4<sup>th</sup> of December 2018 and four full Sounding Board meetings on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2019, Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2019, Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2019 and Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2019.

### **3.0 Sounding Board Membership**

The membership aims to achieve a wide geographical spread across England and to include people who live in different settings. The membership is to be made up of people in mid to later life from diverse backgrounds to help ensure that a wide range of views and experience is available to Age UK's project leads.

Members will be expected to contribute views to a broad range of topic areas and have an interest in one or more relevant areas, such as: customer experience, shopping behaviours and motivations, marketing materials, car insurance, home insurance, travel insurance, legal services such as will writing, funeral plans, equity release; incontinence products, adjustable beds, bathing adaptations, stairlifts, personal alarms, hearing aids, charity shop volunteering, donating or browsing. An informed interest could be demonstrated by, for example, having experience and/or skills in one or more of the following:

- a) As a customer - buying commercial products or independent living solutions, or financial/legal services such as; car, home, travel insurance, funeral plans, equity release, wills, stairlifts, bed and bath adaptations.
- b) As a carer or intermediary - supporting an older person in making decisions about buying commercial products or independent living solutions, or financial/legal services, including but not limited to the above.
- c) Experience of working or volunteering in the voluntary, commercial and/or third sector, to deliver commercial products, independent living solutions and services purchased by older people.
- d) Experience in standard-setting, monitoring and regulation of services or products purchased by older people.
- e) Visiting, donating to, or volunteering in charity shops
- f) Another professional or other informed interest.

Members will be expected to be individual contributors bringing their own knowledge and experience, rather than representing the views of a specific local or national organisation.

The pilot membership will not exceed 22 and will include those in mid to later life and those who are from seldom heard or marginalised communities. Members will be expected to complete an Expression of Interest Form, an Equalities Monitoring Form, and provide a short personal informal biography.

### **4.0 General principles for Operation**

- a) Overall ownership of the Consumer Sounding Board Pilot work-plan and reporting outcomes rests with the Age UK commercial pilot project leads.
- b) The Consumer Sounding Board Pilot is chaired and facilitated by Age UK's Engagement and Involvement Team (E&I), with the agenda jointly agreed between Age UK commercial pilot project leads and E&I.
- c) Age UK commercial staff will participate in Sounding Board meetings and provide timely communications, including topic discussion papers at least 10 working days prior to the meeting e.g. reports and review papers.

- d) Members will be able to consider the papers in advance of meetings and at meetings opportunity will be given to contribute personal views and perspectives in an environment of mutual respect and inclusivity.
- e) Meeting insights/discussions will be recorded by Age UK/commercial project leads.
- f) Information on outcomes from previous Sounding Board participation will be circulated at least 10 days in advance of the next meeting by Age UK.
- g) The Sounding Board will convene five times during the pilot, between December 2018 and late 2019 - any member unable to attend will be provided with an opportunity to input views and comments before or after the meeting on papers issued, but any decisions taken at the meeting will stand.
- h) Meetings will usually be held between 10.15am and 3.15pm in London and volunteer and logistical services will be provided by Age UK staff.
- i) An Induction will be provided to Consumer Sounding Board pilot members on the 4<sup>th</sup> of December 2018 and will cover areas such as volunteering with Age UK, disclosure of documentation, possible conflict of interest and more about the social enterprise.
- j) Sensitive information shared at the sounding board meetings is to remain confidential within the group and not shared more widely.
- k) Participation in the Sounding Board Pilot is voluntary and unpaid. All reasonable travel and subsistence expenses incurred in attending the Sounding Board will be reimbursed in line with Age UK's policy. Age UK will cover a contribution to the cost of an attendant carer to enable a member to fully participate.
- l) The Terms of Reference will be re-visited as part of the pilot review.
- m) The Consumer Sounding Board Pilot is to meet the requirements of Age UK's engagement principles which state that engagement is to be:
  - Mutually beneficial (for the individuals participating and Age UK)
  - Aligned to Age UK's key priority that the UK is a great place to grow older
  - Cost effective and sustainable
  - Inclusive - with potential to move towards being more representative
  - Timely and frequent
  - Flexible and varied
- n) Consumer Sounding Board Pilot members will be invited to become members of the wider Age UK Engagement Consultative Network<sup>1</sup> and will benefit from receiving further central engagement opportunities, as and when available.

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<sup>1</sup> The Age UK Engagement Consultative Network (ECN) is made up of people aged 50yrs+ who live across England who have volunteered to share their views with Age UK on a range of different topics. The Age UK Engagement team offers the ECN different opportunities to join in for example by; responding to surveys, taking part in focus groups or being part of a membership engagement group such as the Policy Sounding Board or Services Sounding Board. Individuals can opt in or out of the ECN at any time. Age UK will also share with the ECN other engagement opportunities that are also relevant to older people that are run by other organisations such as NHS England.