

October 2024

Volunteer

Policy and Procedure

Policy Statement

People volunteer with Age UK for a variety of reasons, bringing with them a wealth of skills and experiences and their passion for supporting Age UK and the older people we serve. We welcome volunteers from across communities and greatly appreciate the time, energy, dedication, and expertise they bring to our work.

Volunteers are at the core of everything we do to serve older people, and we strive to make clear the reasons why we involve volunteers with our Volunteering Fundamentals:

Age UK Volunteering Fundamentals

1. Volunteers bring authenticity and credibility to our work, whether through their lived experience or by freely choosing to support and empower older people.
2. Volunteers enable us to reflect the diversity of older people who need our support and help us reach diverse communities across the UK.
3. Volunteers offer a passion, energy and insight to our work that enthuses and inspires our staff and supporters to transform the lives of older people.

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1. Definitions

People volunteer with Age UK in a variety of ways reflecting their priorities, values, and choices. We offer both formal and informal volunteering opportunities.

1.1 Volunteer

Any person who spends their time doing something that benefits others (who are not, or in addition to, close friends or relatives) without any payment or retribution in kind. A volunteer does not have the same responsibilities as an employee nor serves as their replacement.

Volunteering is undertaken by choice; and, indeed, this freedom to volunteer also implies a freedom to stop volunteering at any time.

Volunteers do not get paid for their support in money or in kind. Nonetheless, to ensure no one is out of pocket as a direct result of their volunteer activity with Age UK, agreed genuine expenses can be reimbursed. For further information on the volunteer expenses procedure, please read the dedicated [section 5. Volunteer Expenses](#).

1.1.1 Formal Volunteers

These are volunteers who have a regular commitment and are involved with Age UK with a clear and structured role description. Formal volunteers register their interest in a volunteer opportunity through Age UK approved recruitment online and offline channels, mainly, but not restricted to, the Volunteering Hub, and become volunteers once they have successfully completed the recruitment process. This can be done individually or with the assistance of a Volunteering Leader in the case of prospective volunteers with additional support needs or who are non-digital users.

1.1.1.1 Trustees and Committee Members

Trustees are formal volunteers who have statutory responsibilities for the management and administration of Age UK under company and charity law.

Committee members are also formal volunteers who contribute their time and expertise at the strategic level to Age UK. Whilst their roles are similar to Trustee roles, they do not have the same statutory responsibilities as Trustees.

Due to the nature of their roles, and the specific way they are involved with Age UK, a different set of procedures apply to Trustees and Committee member, including, recruitment, expenses, and solving problems¹.

¹ For further information about procedures that apply to these volunteers, please contact Age UK Governance Team.

1.1.2 Informal Volunteer

Informal volunteers offer a light touch support to Age UK; for instance, they might sign petitions or write to their MPs in a less structured role and with no commitment to make their participation regular. Due to the nature of their involvement with Age UK, this policy does not apply to Informal volunteers.

1.1.3 Ad -hoc Volunteer

Ad hoc volunteering does not require a regular or scheduled commitment. Volunteers participate in activities on an ad hoc basis or for short periods, with less structured involvement. Examples include Readers Panel volunteers, who are engaged when information guides need to be created or updated, and event fundraisers, who support specific events for a limited time. While Ad hoc volunteers generally provide light touch support, this is not always the case. Depending on their level of involvement, Ad Hoc volunteers can be formal if their participation is more structured (i.e. volunteer panel members, participating on regular basis) or informal if they dip in and out of volunteering activities with a lesser structured approach (i.e. volunteers on call to provide support at different events every now and then) This policy applies to formal Ad-hoc volunteers. However, due to the nature of their involvement it does not apply to Ad-hoc informal volunteers.

1.2 Volunteering Leaders

Age UK Volunteering Leaders are members of staff who are responsible for guiding and/or leading volunteers in their teams or divisions.

1.3 Volunteering Divisions

These are all Age UK (national) divisions that involve volunteers in their regular activities such as providing direct support to older people, participating in panels, campaigning, providing administrative support etc.

2. Introduction

Age UK volunteers contribute their time, skills, and experience to Age UK in a variety of roles which enhances our reach and impact in support of the older people who need us most. This policy adheres to the principles of best practice in volunteering management to ensure we offer meaningful, enriching, and positive volunteering experiences to everyone who volunteers with Age UK, regardless of their type of involvement and role.

Age UK aims to:

- Attract, recruit, retain and support a diverse pool of volunteers;
- Provide an ample variety of enriching and meaningful volunteering opportunities that encourages volunteers to fulfil their potential and maximise their contribution; and
- Host a welcoming and inclusive volunteering environment where volunteers are and feel recognised, valued, and enabled to carry out their roles safely and efficiently.

2.1 Scope

This policy applies to formal volunteer roles including **Ad-Hoc formal volunteer** with Age UK (national).

Trustees and committee members are formal volunteers but due to the nature of their role, the set of policies and procedures that apply to them is different to those relevant for volunteers in other roles within Age UK.

Although Age UK supports programmes such as the People in Probation service, these are not deemed voluntary and therefore this policy does not apply to individuals joining the organisation through these schemes.

All members of staff are responsible for ensuring this policy is applied within their volunteering opportunities.

Volunteering Leaders are responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the policy and its area specific guidelines.

The Volunteering Team is responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented and kept up to date in line with best practice in volunteering management. The Volunteering Team is also responsible for providing advice, guidance, and support in all aspects around volunteer involvement to staff and volunteers alike.

Employees and volunteers are responsible for their own conduct and behaviour and are expected to familiarise themselves with the principles of this policy.

2.2 Our commitment

Age UK is committed to equity, diversity and inclusion and believes that volunteering should be open to all. We want to recruit and retain, the best volunteers, with the right skills, knowledge, and passion to support our work and deliver strong outcomes for older people. As part of this commitment, we will not unlawfully discriminate against any person or treat them unfairly on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, trade union membership, political beliefs or offending background (that does not create a risk to vulnerable groups including children). For further information, please see our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policy.

To ensure volunteers enjoy their role, get the most out of it and that there is a mutually beneficial relationship with the charity, we also commit to:

- Provide relevant training, ongoing support, and guidance to help volunteers develop in their role,
- Treat volunteers fairly by offering an environment that does not accept unlawful discrimination, is sensitive to their individual needs and works proactively to resolve any issues and/or concerns in a fair and just manner,
- Clearly explain our expectations and standards and support volunteers to achieve and maintain them,
- Ensure all volunteers have direct access to staff they can contact to enable them to express their feedback and seek direction as required,
- Be as flexible as the nature of the role allows to respond to and address individual volunteer's needs,
- Offer a consistent and quality volunteer journey to all volunteers, enabling and encouraging them to explore different volunteering opportunities with Age UK to meet their diverse and changing needs,
- Provide adequate insurance cover for formal volunteers whilst undertaking the agreed volunteering activities,
- Reimburse any genuine and agreed expenses volunteers may incur to be able to carry out their volunteering activity with Age UK,
- Recognise and celebrate volunteers' individual and collective contribution to Age UK both privately and during Volunteers Week, and through other public initiatives and events to highlight the impact volunteers have on the lives of older people,
- Lead an inclusive and age friendly volunteering programme, providing great experiences for people of all ages but particularly to older people wishing to play an active role in their communities, and
- Offer a safe volunteering environment meeting our duty of care to volunteers so they are enabled to carry out their volunteering activities.

3. Procedure

To offer a great volunteering experience, Age UK endeavours to provide a structured volunteering journey that is engaging, fair, flexible, relevant, inclusive, and safe. We aim to ensure members of the public interested in volunteering with Age UK (nationally or locally) find it easy to get involved with any opportunity they may consider.

3.1 Recruitment and Onboarding

Volunteer roles with Age UK are recruited through either non-digital or other designated channels or the web-based Volunteering Hub, which is a tool that enables us to effectively recruit and support volunteers from engagement to departure.

Prospective volunteers are required to complete an application form and depending on the type of role they apply for, this process may involve an interview, identity verification, DBS check, and pre-enrolment training.

Applicants who need assistance at any step of the recruitment process can access support by getting in touch with the point of contact mentioned on the application form for the role they are applying to, or the Volunteering Team by email at volunteer@ageUK.org.uk. The team will assess individual support needs and act accordingly.

Volunteers who have started their onboarding process (those whose application has been progressed and accepted) will be provided with their team's volunteering leader or leaders' contact details at the point of acceptance, so they can get in touch when they need to (within opening hours of the service).

3.1.1 Safer Recruitment

Age UK seeks to confirm at least one reference for all formal volunteers; however, we are committed to assessing on a case-by-case basis volunteering applications from prospective volunteers struggling to provide suitable references.

Roles that require a DBS check, those involving the provision of advice and/ or carrying regulated activities² will clearly state what level of checks is required, so prospective volunteers can make an informed decision.

² Regulated Activities include the provision of healthcare, personal care, social work, assistance with general household matters (such as paying bills or shopping on behalf of an older person), assistance in the conduct of a person's own affairs and transporting vulnerable people to or from places where they have received, or will be receiving, health care, relevant personal care, or relevant social work. for further information please visit <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7cba32ed915d63cc65c7ce/Regulated-Activity-Adults-Dec-2012.pdf>

Having positive disclosures (information relating to convictions, cautions, reprimands and/ or any “soft” information relating to non-convictions that the police deem relevant) does not automatically exclude people wishing to volunteer³. Age UK will take reasonable steps to assess an individual’s suitability for a role on a case-by-case basis.

3.2 Induction

Newly recruited volunteers are provided with an induction to their role which may include training, role-shadowing, or a conversation with a member of staff in order to ensure the volunteer has the knowledge and information required to carry out their role.

Volunteering leaders will provide volunteers with access to key policies and procedures such as this Volunteer policy; depending on their role, volunteers may be made aware of other policies such as Safeguarding, Whistleblowing, Data Protection, Health and Safety, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, as relevant. Volunteers should in turn familiarise themselves with these documents, the volunteer orientation pack, or other team developed resources which contain all the key info from these documents.

3.3 Support and Supervision

Volunteers will be provided with the contact details of a Volunteering Leader and/or other staff members, from whom they will receive ongoing support which will be appropriate to the responsibility and frequency of their role.

Depending on their role, volunteers may be invited to one-to-one or group meetings to talk about different topics relevant to their volunteering activity. The frequency of these will depend on the nature of their role and time commitment. Volunteering leaders are expected to explain in further detail to volunteers in their teams what support is available to them.

3.4 Standards of Conduct and Volunteer Agreement

Volunteers are expected to familiarise themselves with the Age UK Standards of Conduct. These are the minimum standards of behaviour expected from all staff and volunteers at Age UK.

“The standards apply to all staff, formal volunteers (those required to carry out on-boarding training), trustees, and non-executive directors that work for or volunteer with Age UK and its charitable and commercial subsidiaries (...) The standards apply when you are conducting work on behalf of, or volunteering for, these organisations, and when your personal activity could affect our beneficiaries, customers, or other stakeholders, or damage the reputation of Age UK or its subsidiaries.⁴”

³ [Guidance on the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the Exceptions Order 1975 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-on-the-rehabilitation-of-offenders-act-1974-and-the-exceptions-order-1975)

⁴ [Age UK's Standards of Conduct](#)

To ensure a quality volunteering experience both for volunteers and Age UK, the volunteer agreement describes the arrangement between individual volunteers and Age UK. This agreement, binding in honour only, states what the volunteer can expect from Age UK ([Please refer section 2.2 Our Commitment](#)) and what is expected from the volunteer:

- To carry out their role to the best of their ability, communicating in a timely manner any additional resources or reasonable adjustments required,
- To meet the agreed time commitments informing their volunteering leaders with as much notice as possible of any potential changes or absences, and if they are unable to continue volunteering, or no longer wish to volunteer with Age UK,
- To act in a professional manner, treating Age UK staff, fellow volunteers, supporters and clients with dignity and respect,
- To act in a way that doesn't unlawfully discriminate against anyone,
- To follow Age UK's policies, procedures, and standards of conduct, and
- To use responsibly any equipment that belongs to Age UK.

3.4.1 Giving and Accepting Gifts

Volunteers can't give or accept gifts, gratuities or bequests from a beneficiary or their friends and family. If a gift is accepted, we would be duty bound, under our safeguarding policy, to conduct an investigation surrounding the circumstances of the gift or bequest and where these have been accepted, we will be unable to allow a volunteer to continue to help us or support our work.

3.5 Additional support

Regardless of their role and whether they are remotely based or on location, volunteers are encouraged to reach out to their Volunteering Leaders whenever needed. However, we acknowledge that there will be instances where volunteers may need further specialist support. Formal volunteers are enrolled on [BUPA EAP](#) so they can access free-of-cost confidential legal and financial telephone support; a dedicated online area with information covering a range of health and wellbeing topics and specialist (counselling) telephone support.

3.6 Volunteer Recognition

At Age UK we recognise the importance of the contribution made by volunteers with and for older people in need of support. Therefore, we are committed to demonstrating the value volunteers add to every area of our work. We do so through delivery of various public and private volunteer appreciation initiatives.

3.7 Volunteer Absence

Volunteers are not obliged to be present at set times or dates. However, due to the nature of our work, we rely on volunteers supporting with delivery of agreed schedules. When a volunteer knows they will be absent, we request that they let us know as soon as is practically possible so other arrangements can be set in place. If a volunteer is no longer required to attend a pre-agreed schedule, Volunteering Leaders should ensure they contact the volunteer with enough time in advance.

Due to the nature of our work, volunteers who consistently fail to meet the requirements of their role by not attending to their agreed volunteering activity without a reasonable explanation, may be asked, at the discretion of their volunteering leader or leaders, to pause for a period of time or, depending on the circumstances, to step down from their volunteering role. Therefore, volunteers are encouraged to talk to their Volunteering Leader if they think that due to illness, personal events and /or other responsibilities they think they will need to pause their volunteering. Age UK will be as flexible as possible in supporting them to return to volunteering with us at a future date.

3.8 Volunteering Hours

Depending on their availability, capacity and volunteering activities, some individuals may want to allot long stretches of time every week to their volunteering involvement with Age UK. Volunteering Leaders are expected to have a friendly conversation with volunteers looking to contribute over 18 hours of their time per week to assess if this is a viable possibility. To ensure a healthy life to volunteering balance, the maximum weekly number of volunteering hours is 35.

Volunteering Leaders are expected to ensure that volunteers who spend more than 4 hours in at any given time, have a proper break from their activities allowing them enough time to rest and/or eat at ease.

The minimum time commitment expected from volunteers varies according to the role, and it is always stated on the published Volunteering Opportunity.

3.9 Departing Volunteers

For a variety of reasons, volunteers may choose at any point of their journey to stop their involvement with Age UK. They are not required to give notice, or an explanation if they decide to withdraw from volunteering. However, we request volunteers inform their Volunteering Leader of any such decision as soon as possible so alternative plans can be made. Depending on the nature of their role and any relationships they have established with older people who use Age UK services, their carers, and/or loved ones, it may be appropriate for the volunteer to close that relationship prior to their departure. Volunteering Leaders will provide guidance to ensure a seamless ending to their relationship.

3.10 Reference provision for Current and Departed Volunteers

If requested Age UK can provide factual references for current and departing volunteers specifying start date and end date (if relevant), and the role (s) carried out. No comments or personal opinions regarding the personal attributes, attitude, skills, experience, or knowledge of individual volunteers will be provided. In the event of a volunteer having been asked to terminate their volunteering involvement for inappropriate behaviour or due to a safeguarding concern the reason for leaving will be stated. i.e. Reason for leaving – Dismissal – Inappropriate Behaviour.

Volunteering Leaders will inform volunteers the reference procedure for their team.

3.11 Data Retention

Age UK will keep volunteers, prospective volunteers, and former volunteers' information that is relevant to their volunteering activity or activities for as long as needed, and will dispose of it when no longer have a reason to keep it, complying with law and regulations⁵

Our current retention periods for volunteers' data are as follow:

Active volunteers	Volunteers who are currently carrying out a volunteering role with Age UK	Retained all the time they are active + 7 years from date of their last volunteering participation
Prospective volunteers (via Volunteering Hub)	Have not participated nor completed an onboarding/vetting process	Retained for 1 year from date of expression of interest (The current data retention for Prospective Trustees is 3 years from date of expression of interest)
Rejected applicants.	Prospective volunteers who are not accepted	Retained 3 years For rejected applicants for the Telephone Friendship Services the data is retained for 1 year unless there are concerns about the person re-applying, in which case this data will be kept for 7 years.

⁵ [Data Protection Act 2018](#)

4. Problem-Solving Procedure

When things go wrong, volunteers and volunteering leaders are encouraged to look for amicable ways to address any difficulties encountered. However, Age UK acknowledges that this may not always be possible, and, therefore, each team has in place a problem-solving procedure for when things do not go as expected.

5. Volunteer Expenses

Age UK wants to minimise the barriers to volunteering to ensure that nobody is out of pocket because of their volunteering involvement with us. Volunteers are encouraged to claim any agreed expenses incurred in order to fulfil their volunteering role.

For further information on Age UK Volunteer Expenses procedure please refer to section [10 Appendix, a. Volunteer Expenses Procedure](#).

6. Volunteers with additional support needs and/or in exceptional circumstances

At Age UK we recognise and celebrate diversity as a strength. As such, we are committed to attracting and retaining volunteers from diverse backgrounds with the broadest range of skills and experiences. Whilst we actively encourage volunteers from across communities, we know that some groups and individuals may face additional barriers to engaging with us, including financial constraints, caring responsibilities, health conditions and disabilities. We encourage volunteers to talk to their volunteering leader and/or to contact the volunteering team by email to volunteer@ageuk.org.uk so we can understand their needs and work collaboratively to provide support and where appropriate make reasonable adjustments. Reasonable adjustments are changes made to remove or reduce a disadvantage related to a person's disability.

Any information disclosed will be kept confidentially and only shared on a need-to-know basis, for example to facilitate the implementation and management of agreed support measures.

6.1 Young people volunteering

Age UK welcomes the participation of young volunteers aged 16- 18 and have made some of our volunteering opportunities available for them.

Age UK has an 'enhanced duty of care' towards young volunteers. Therefore, members of staff supervising young people volunteering have a responsibility to keep them safe. There should always be at least two adults (two staff members or a staff member and a volunteer) onsite when a young person is volunteering. If this was not possible (i.e. due to holidays, sick leave, etc.), the young volunteer should be invited to participate on a different date/ shift when two adults would be present. A separate [Young Person's Risk Assessment](#) will be completed whenever we involve young volunteers.

Volunteers under 18 are not allowed to operate equipment such as the steamer without adequate supervision while using it.

Although Age UK does not specifically seek parental consent when advertising roles available for younger volunteers, if their application is progressed and they become volunteers we will expect to obtain parental consent. If this is not possible, Age UK would carry out an assessment on a case-by-case basis.

Some roles may not be always available to volunteers under the age of 18.

For further information about Age UK's approach to safeguarding please refer to please refer to [section 10 Appendix d, Safeguarding Procedures](#)

6.2 Refugees and asylum seekers

We actively encourage and support asylum seekers and individuals with refugee status to volunteer with Age UK and recognise and value the skills and experiences they bring to our work. We understand structural inequities and personal circumstances may mean both groups face additional challenges to accessing and participating in volunteering opportunities. This may include financial constraints, language barriers and experiences of discrimination. We are committed to ensuring our volunteering opportunities are inclusive, and we will work collaboratively with individuals to support their engagement with us. For example, providing support to complete paperwork, increased flexibility around volunteering hours, additional training and/or supervision and reimbursing expenses in advance⁶.

Should a volunteer or volunteering leader require confirmation of the legal right for Refugees or Asylum Seekers to participate in volunteering, please refer to the Home Office's Asylum Policy Instruction⁷ Permission to Work.

Please note the individual will be volunteering, not doing voluntary work⁸— an important distinction

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/handling-applications-for-permission-to-take-employment-instruction/permission-to-work-and-volunteering-for-asylum-seekers-accessible>

⁷ [Permission to work and volunteer.docx \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

⁸ Voluntary workers have a contractual obligation to carry out their work (even in the absence of a written contract), in exchange, they may be paid in kind for their work. For instance, an individual completing a set number of hours to be able to access training, accommodation, paid employment, products, or services from an organisation. This is a transactional relationship that implies that voluntary workers must commit their time in order to receive something in return. Voluntary workers may also be accountable for the running of a service.

Volunteers do not have an obligation to commit their time and are not accountable for the running of services. Volunteers are free to come and go as they feel and are not paid in retribution for their volunteering involvement.

7. Volunteers' voice and feedback

Age UK will actively seek to hear from volunteers, we do this to ensure we consistently review and evolve our volunteering practices. Volunteers are encouraged to discuss their concerns, ideas, and opinions with their Volunteering Leaders at any time and can also raise these matters with the central Volunteering Team by emailing volunteer@ageuk.org.uk

By listening to and acting upon feedback from volunteers, we aim to offer a volunteering experience that is co-designed by volunteers themselves.

8. Health and Safety

Volunteers are covered by Age UK Health and Safety policy. We will endeavour to provide a safe and healthy environment where volunteers feel free and safe to carry out their volunteering activities. For further information about Age UK Health and Safety Policy, please visit [Section 10 h. Health and Safety](#)

In addition to this, Volunteers are also covered by [Age UK Unreasonable, discriminatory and/ or abusive behaviour policy](#)

9. Insurance

Age UK volunteers aged 16 or older are covered by the following Insurance Policies:

- **Employers' liability:** Provided that volunteers are conducting activities which are authorised by Age UK.
- **Professional indemnity:** For volunteers who may provide advice to members of the public, provided that in doing so volunteers are under the direct supervision of a designated Age UK member of staff or team, and that the advice falls the types of professional services which Age UK provides to its supporters and beneficiaries⁹.

⁹ Age UK – A charitable company limited by guarantee and ultimate parent Age UK is a registered charity preventing and relieving poverty in older people, advancing education, promoting equality and diversity, promoting human rights, advising older people (and their families and carers) in need by reason of health, disability, financial hardships, and social exclusion, we lobby government and campaign on behalf of older people for changes in policy and practice.

10. Appendix- Links to relevant policies and procedures

- a. [Volunteer Expenses Procedure](#)
- b. [Age UK Standards of Conduct](#)
- c. [Age UK Volunteer Agreement](#)
- d. [Safeguarding Procedures](#)
- e. [Young Person's Risk Assessment](#)
- f. [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#)
- g. [Bupa EAP](#)
- h. [Health and Safety](#)
- i. [Lone Working and Volunteering Policy and Guidance](#)
- j. [Unreasonable, discriminatory and/ or abusive behaviour policy](#)

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