



Volunteer Handbook

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My Co-ordinator is:

Their working days are:

Their contact details are:

Tel:.....

Email:

My volunteer role is:.....

The date I started was:.....

The day and time I volunteer (if regular) is:

Notes and Useful information:

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Age UK Lewisham & Southwark

AUKLS is a local charity that has delivered services in South London since 1966. We exist to improve life for older people, especially the most vulnerable, by addressing poverty, isolation, social exclusion and physical, emotional and mental suffering. Our ethos is to empower people to make choices and feel in control of their lives and of the support they receive, and to develop their wellbeing, confidence and skills.

AUKLS recognises that certain individuals and groups in society suffer discrimination on the grounds of age, race, colour, nationality, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation or marital status. We want to ensure that all the people we support are treated equally and won't tolerate discrimination or harassment towards our service users, staff or volunteers. We work actively towards ensuring that our services and resources are relevant to all older and vulnerable adults and are perceived by them as being so. Our staff, trustees and volunteers come from diverse backgrounds. We believe that this enhances the quality of the services we offer.

Community Connections

Community Connections is a project run by Age UK Lewisham and Southwark. We have a variety of services to help residents find and access the activities, groups, services and support that will improve their health, wellbeing and happiness.



Volunteer-Led-Services



Lewisham: Volunteers are matched with residents experiencing isolation and loneliness for a regular friendly chat or meet up.

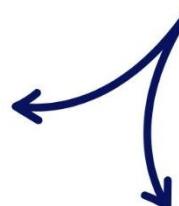
Southwark: Volunteers are matched with a care home in Southwark and make regular visits to residents who do not receive visits from family or friends



Lewisham only:

Volunteer Drivers use their own car to transport residents unable to use public transport.

Volunteer Travel Companions accompany people on public transport who require a little support.



Social Prescribing



Lewisham only:

Our social prescribing team connects residents with groups, activities and services in the local community.

Mutual Expectations

What to expect from us:

- A friendly, relaxed and safe work environment
- Quality training opportunities
- Clear direction from the Volunteer Coordinator on carrying out your role
- ID badge
- Reimbursement for travel expenses involved in carrying out the role
- DBS checks where required, free of charge
- A full induction into your role and regular check-ins with your Volunteer Coordinator
- To be able to change your mind or decline a volunteering activity without feeling pressured
- References for future employment
- Appreciation of your time, skill and dedication through social opportunities and events.

What we can expect from you:

- A reasonable level of regular commitment
- Care and respect for our customers and respect for other volunteers
- Willingness to undertake a DBS check
- Willingness to attend supervision sessions and any training necessary to assist you in your role
- Timely notification of your Volunteer Coordinator of problems or concerns about our customers
- A willingness to ask for help when you need it
- Timely notification of the Volunteer Coordinator if you are unable to perform your voluntary activity, at the earliest opportunity
- Reasonable level of responsiveness to Volunteer Coordinator contact
- Be our representatives in the local community, letting people know about our service
- Uphold the values of Age UK Lewisham and Southwark when carrying out your role
- Respect our policies as listed below.

Key Policies and Guidance

1. Volunteer recruitment and management process

After expressing an interest in volunteering for Age UK Lewisham and Southwark, you will receive this Handbook to read, which should give you a better understanding of your role at Age UK Lewisham and Southwark and the wider context in which you will be operating. Make sure to read it carefully.

Once we have received your DBS check and your references back, we will invite you to an induction. This will be a 2-hour training session, either online or in person depending on what works best for you, where we will go through our main policies and procedures, as listed below, and answers any questions you might have. At the end of the induction, we will ask you to sign our Volunteer Agreement and our Conflict-of-Interest form, and you will be good to start.

Once you start your role, we will check in with you after your first volunteering shift, after your first five and then every 6 months. These are the compulsory check ins, but we are happy to check in with you as often as you would like. During each check in, we will be talking about:

What you are enjoying about your role

- Successes you have had
- Difficulties you have had
- Support or training you might need going forward and any skills you want to develop during your volunteering with us.

We ask for you to be able to find the time for these 6 monthly check ins, to come to them prepared and open minded, willing to give and receive feedback.

Independently of the formal check in sessions, we encourage you to reach out to your Volunteer Coordinator as often as you need. We also ask that after each shift you feed back to your Volunteer Coordinator to let them know how long your shift lasted and how it went.

Your feedback is essential to us: we want to hear what you enjoy about your role and what you're finding difficult, whether the training and supervision that we provide you with is

adequate, and what you think we could do to provide a better service. Please do always feel free to give your Volunteer Coordinator feedback, be it during your regular catch ups or just via email outside of them.

We organise regular social opportunities for our volunteers to get together as we believe there is much they can learn from each other and we want you to feel part of a team with a shared purpose for our community: please find the ones that work for you and give it a try!

If you face an issue in your volunteer role, we want you to raise it as soon as possible. Potential solutions we might be able to offer include:

- A reminder of the role, its boundaries and what Age UKLS asks from volunteers
- More support or training
- Changing your tasks, or assigning you a different service user to support.

2. Schedules and time keeping

As a volunteer with Age UK Lewisham and Southwark, you need to commit to working within an agreed schedule.

You can change your mind and decline shifts without feeling pressured, but for smooth and efficient working of the service, it is crucial that you inform the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible if you need to re-arrange.

Endeavour to be on time. If you are running late then please call your Volunteer Coordinator or the service user themselves.

3. Communication

Good communication is at the heart of good service, and communicating with the people we support must be at a pace and in a style that suits them, recognising the problems for those whose first language is not English, those with hearing issues, speech impediments, etc. Some people who have difficulty communicating may feel that they are being ignored or of little value to others. This is why you must always make clear to the people you support that what they have

to say is important to you. Always demonstrate patience and understanding and behave in a way that reflects respect for others.

Fundamentals of good communication:

- Always ask the people you support how they wish to be addressed
- Never assume that you know what religious or cultural requirements a person you support may have; always ask should you need this information
- If you are not sure you have correctly understood what the person you support is asking or requiring of you, ask them
- If a person you support questions your actions or views, do not take this personally; be ready to listen and learn from what they have to say
- Never gossip or laugh about the people we support to your friends, family, colleagues etc; a person you support will most certainly be in a position of disadvantage when compared with yourself and should never become the butt of jokes and stories.

There is a danger of perceiving that it is someone else who has the communication problem, but communication is a two-way process and each of us has the responsibility for 'getting through' to the other person.

Self-awareness and body language are important. Be aware of the following:

- Do you make contact with the person when you speak to them?
- Do you mumble or use your lips to articulate clearly?
- Are you more interested in what you are saying than what the person you support understands?
- Do you listen to what is said to you?
- Do you hurry too much?

This will be covered in your induction, and you will get a chance to practice and ask questions.

4. Person Centred Working

Age UK Lewisham and Southwark prides itself on working in a person-centred way with its staff, volunteers, and service users. This means that we see each person as unique and want to offer them the support that is right for them specifically. We also expect our volunteers to work with our service users in a person-centred way. To achieve this:

- Take care not to stereotype people we support, treat each person you support as an individual, and don't make assumptions based on their age, gender, ethnicity, etc.
- If the physical condition of the person you support demands a lot of attention, don't assume that their mental state has equally deteriorated
- Do not patronise people we support. Respect their wishes and choices. They know best what is right for them at this specific moment
- Do not make an unnecessary fuss of the people we support, even though you may enjoy doing extra things for them – this will only persuade them to be less independent
- Encourage them to do as much for themselves as possible.

5. Boundaries

A big part of your role as a volunteer is to establish positive relationships with our service users, enabling them to live fuller and happier lives. Relationship-centred working may cause uncertainty for some about how to carry out their roles and responsibilities: one might wonder for example how a befriending relationship differs from a friendship. Boundaries help us to make sense of this and can be described as the 'boundary between what is acceptable and unacceptable for a volunteer both within their volunteering role and outside of it'. The relationships you will establish during your time volunteering with us differ from personal relationships as they are time limited and have a clear purpose. It is your responsibility as the volunteer to keep the relationship on track and uphold the boundaries.

Some of the key reasons boundaries are important:

- Ensures that both you and our service users are clear on what can be expected of the other

- Ensures that both you and our service users remain safe
- Ensures our service users retain their autonomy and independence and don't come to rely on your good will for essential aspects of their daily lives (shopping, washing, laundry, etc.)
- As an Age UK Lewisham and Southwark Volunteer you are the 'face' of the organisation. The public's perception of the services our organisation provides is affected by your actions, and therefore we must request that you act within the parameters of the role that we are trusting you with.

Do not:

- Discuss your personal finances or problems with service users
- Make or receive personal calls while volunteering, in the presence of our service users
- If you have a personal emergency, just excuse yourself and step away
- Give out your, or another worker or volunteer's personal phone number or address to a service user – if you need to call a service user, dial 141 before their number when calling them, to anonymise your details
- Enter into a service user's home in the course of your volunteering, unless otherwise agreed with the Volunteer Coordinator
- Take people we support or members of their families to your home
- Be discourteous or rude to people we support, the public or colleagues from other agencies or professions, even when under provocation
- Visit our service users or do things for them (laundry, shopping etc.) in your own time - you should instead signpost to other services that can offer assistance, or consult your Volunteer Coordinator
- Attempt to provide specialist advice such as medical advice, legal advice, counselling, etc.
- Borrow or buy anything for a service user, or lend or borrow money from a service user
- Touch personal belongings without asking first. Never open a service user's personal mail
- When interacting with our service users in busy environments, always ensure that you are able to maintain confidentiality before discussing personal matters, and check that they are comfortable discussing such matters in this setting
- Try and avoid physical contact with service users. If you feel like reaching out your hand

- would be useful, ask for consent first
- Conceal information about the service users you support to the Volunteer Coordinator, for example, not reporting incidents and concerns, safeguarding issues, etc.

Do:

- Always take your ID when meeting up with a service user in-person. Even though the person you were assigned may get to know you, there can still be instances when you will need to prove your identity.

6. Confidentiality and data protection

Whilst volunteering with Age UK Lewisham and Southwark, you will have access to vulnerable adults' personal data: their name and phone number, and potentially their age, gender, ethnicity, health conditions, etc. For our service users' safety, it is crucial that all their information remains confidential.

You have a legal responsibility to ensure that the confidential information you come across in your role doesn't get into the wrong hands. In order to do that, please follow these steps:

Do not:

- Disclose confidential information about our service users to anyone outside of Age UK Lewisham and Southwark, including the service user's friends and family.
- Try to get information about a service user you support that you don't need to perform your role or try to get information about service users you don't support. Service users' information should be disclosed on a need-to-know basis.
- Have telephone conversations with or about service users in busy places. Always be conscious about who could overhear and what they could do with this information.
- Print or write down **all** a service user's confidential information in one place. If you need to write something down, write as little as possible, for example just the phone number or the postcode with initials rather than the full name, address, phone number, lists of topics to discuss, etc. If your document got into the wrong hands

make sure it would be as useless as possible.

- Write down or print out information about our clients to then misplace the document.
Misplacing a document with a service user's details on it is a data breach and needs to be reported to your Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible.
- If a service user's data has been communicated to you via email or is stored on your phone or computer, don't open junk emails or click on links in emails unless you are absolutely sure of what you are clicking on. Your computer could be hacked, and the confidential data leaked.

Do:

- Keep written records secure at all times: make sure you only keep service users' details for as long as you need them, shred any written document you no longer need and try to keep information online rather than on paper.
- Securely lock all devices from which you access clients' data and make sure you are the only person with access to them.
- Have a safe password:
 - Use a combination of letters, numbers and symbols. For example: Invi\$iblePanda1 or Deci\$ivePl@nt
 - Use a minimum of 6 characters
 - Use something memorable, but not too obvious
 - Don't make it too personal to you, or something that can be guessed by someone who knows you
 - Never write it down
 - Never share it
 - Change it regularly.

If you have any reasons to believe that confidential information about our service users or volunteers has been leaked, please inform the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible so steps can be taken to mitigate this. It is far easier to address issues early than to wait.

7. Health and safety

Our Health and safety guidelines are in place to ensure that you can carry out your volunteer role safely and effectively. During your volunteering with Age UK Lewisham and Southwark you should never do anything that could put you or others at risk of physical injury.

General health and safety rules:

- Before performing any task, do your own assessment based on common sense. What could go wrong? What do you need to put in place to mitigate the risk?
- Do not put yourself at risk; if you do not feel safe discuss the situation with your Volunteer Coordinator. If the danger is imminent, leave the dangerous situation before calling your Volunteer Coordinator.
- Do not undertake a task you don't feel able or prepared to take on. Instead, contact your Volunteer Coordinator and ask for help or advice.
- Report all accidents, injuries, near-misses, and dangerous occurrences to your Volunteer Coordinator immediately so they can make a record of it and ensure the situation doesn't happen again.
- We have a zero-tolerance policy to abuse to our staff and volunteers. If you feel like a service user is abusive to you, please feel free to end the contact immediately and let your Volunteer Coordinator know so it can be followed up.

Lone working

When working on your own, always make sure that you let your Volunteer Coordinator know when and where you will be performing your volunteer role. During office hours (Monday-Friday 9-5) you should be able to contact your usual Volunteer Coordinator or Community Connections' main phone line (0330 058 3464). Take a mobile phone with you and ensure that it is charged. Ensure the Volunteer Coordinator has a record of your mobile telephone number and can contact you if they are worried.

When performing a task as a volunteer, ask yourself these questions to assess whether the risk is reasonable:

- Do I feel safe? Do I feel prepared for the situation in front of me?
- Is there anything about the environment that could cause me harm? Can I do anything to reduce this harm?
- Would mitigating the risk of harm prevent me from being able to do the task I am here to do?
- **If in doubt, remove yourself from the situation and contact your Volunteer Coordinator.**

Home visits

In rare instances, and with prior consent of your Volunteer Coordinator, you might visit a service user in their own home. In someone else's home, it must always be recognised that you are far more vulnerable than in other situations, due to several factors: you are on the service user's territory, you will be less familiar with the surroundings than them, prior to entering you will not know who is in the property, etc. Therefore, the below precautions should always be taken:

- Do not enter a property if the person you expect to see is not there
- Ensure that your exit is never impeded
- Be alert at all times to signs that a situation is getting out of hand. If you feel that this is happening, make your excuses and leave immediately
- Be aware that people may have dogs or other animals in their home, and these could be used to intimidate you. If you feel uncomfortable, ask for them to be moved to a separate room (an exception may be when a dog is provided as a support for a disability)
- Always stay calm and do not return aggression as this may aggravate the situation
- Trust your instincts and act on them.

Illness and disease transmission

We don't want you volunteering if you are not feeling well, as it is important that you look after yourself and we wouldn't want to put our service users at risk. What might just be a little cold for you could be very dangerous for someone who is frail. If you feel well enough to volunteer but a

bit “under the weather”, make sure you wear a face mask, and wash your hands and surfaces regularly.

Alcohol, drugs & cigarettes policy

The use of alcohol and drugs may impair the safe and efficient running of our organisation and/or the health and safety of our staff, volunteers, and service users: please ensure you don't consume either drugs or alcohol before or during your volunteering. If your performance or attendance is affected as a result of alcohol or drugs, or we believe you have been involved in any drug related action/offence, you may be subject to disciplinary action and dependent on the circumstances, this may lead to your dismissal.

Make sure not to smoke on our premises or in proximity to our staff and service users.

8. Safeguarding

Safeguarding means protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect.

Abuse is mistreatment that violates a person's human and civil rights. The abuse can vary from treating someone with disrespect in a way that significantly affects the person's quality of life, to causing actual physical suffering. Forms of abuse include:

- Physical abuse such as hitting, pushing, pinching, shaking, misusing medication, scalding, restraint, hair pulling
- Sexual abuse such as rape, sexual assault, or sexual acts to which the vulnerable adult has not or could not have consented, or to which they were pressurised into consenting
- Psychological/emotional abuse such as threats of harm or abandonment, being deprived of social contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, being prevented from receiving services or support
- Financial/material abuse such as theft, fraud or exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance, misuse of property, possessions or benefits
- Neglect and acts of omission such as ignoring medical or physical care needs and preventing access to health, social care or educational services or withholding the necessities of life such as food, drink and heating

- Discriminatory abuse such as that based on race or sexuality or a person's disability and other forms of harassment or slurs
- Institutional abuse can sometimes happen in residential homes, nursing homes or hospitals when people are mistreated because of poor or inadequate care, neglect and poor practice that affects the whole of that service.

Any of these forms of abuse can be either deliberate or be the result of ignorance or lack of training, knowledge or understanding. Often if a person is being abused in one way they are also being abused in other ways.

What should you do if you suspect abuse?

If you suspect abuse, it is your responsibility to inform your Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible. Don't presume that something is nothing. It is always better to be safe than sorry. It is not your responsibility to investigate any alleged abuse – we will do this.

What should you do if a service user makes a disclosure to you?

A disclosure is when a person brings to your attention that they have been harmed or abused by someone. This is a rare and unlikely occurrence, but is important you understand your responsibilities:

1. Your first concern must be to ensure the safety and well-being of the alleged victim:

- Assure them that you are taking them seriously
- Listen carefully to what they are telling you, stay calm, get as clear a picture as you can, but avoid asking too many questions at this stage
- Do not promise to keep anything secret
- Do not be judgmental or jump to conclusions.

2. Make an immediate evaluation of the risk and take steps to ensure that the adult is in no immediate danger. Where appropriate, dial 999 for an ambulance if there is need for emergency medical treatment. Consider contacting the police if a crime has been or may have been

committed.

If the police have been called it is important that forensic and other evidence is collected and preserved. Do not disturb or move articles that could be used in evidence, and secure the scene, for example, by locking the door to a room. Evidence may be present even if you cannot actually see anything.

4. Explain to the service user that you have a duty to tell your Volunteer Coordinator about this, and that their concerns may be shared with others who could have a part to play in protecting them. Reassure them that they will be involved in decisions about what will happen.

Do not discuss the concern with the person alleged to have caused harm, unless the immediate welfare of the vulnerable adult makes this unavoidable.

5. It is vital that a **written record** of any incident or allegation of crime is made as soon as possible after the information is obtained and kept by the person raising the concern. Your record must include:

- Date and time of the incident
- Exactly what the adult at risk said, using their own words (their account) about the abuse and how it occurred or exactly what has been reported to you
- Appearance and behaviour of the adult at risk
- Any injuries observed
- Name and signature of the person making the record
- If you witnessed the incident, write down exactly what you saw.

6. Inform the Volunteer Coordinator immediately.

9. Volunteer Expenses Policy

Volunteers give their time and skills freely and are not expected to incur the costs of volunteering. Volunteers are encouraged to claim reimbursement for any reasonable out of pocket expenses incurred whilst carrying out their role on behalf of Age UK Lewisham & Southwark. Expenses can be claimed against receipts for the following:

- **Travel on public transport within London Zone 6** – Keep all bus/train receipts. If you are a volunteer Driver, use of your car will be paid at the rate of 45p per mile: make sure to check your mileage from the time that you leave your home, and again when you return. Age UK L&S is unable to pay for parking tickets/penalty fayres received by volunteers whilst carrying out their role. Service users should pay for parking directly if paid parking is necessary.
- **Lunch** - Volunteers working over 3.5 hours during lunch time can claim out of pocket expenses for a meal up to the value of £5 against receipts.
- **Miscellaneous** - Age UK L&S accepts that not all costs may be foreseen. In such instances costs must be agreed with your Volunteer Coordinator.

How to claim expenses:

- Volunteers must complete a volunteer expense form and give it to the Volunteer Coordinator, along with receipts
- Expenses are paid in arrears, not in advance
- Expenses must be claimed less than 3 months after the original purchase.

10. Gift Policy

You must not for any reason accept money or gifts from a service user and/or their relatives. There may, however, be exceptional circumstances when a modest gift other than money may be accepted - where refusal would cause offence (examples: a packet of biscuits or other small food item, a fridge magnet or other cheap souvenir).

You must report all gifts to the Volunteer Coordinator so that it can be recorded on the customer's file.

11. Emergency situations

Fortunately, these are few and far between, and most situations can be sorted out using your own common sense. However, it is good to have a set of guidelines to follow.

If your client is expecting a visit or a call from you and fails to answer, carry out the following procedure step by step:

1. Knock or ring again a few minutes later. Keep trying for up to 15 minutes: they might just be running a bit late! Check that you have the right time and place for this appointment.
2. If you are at their doorstep:
 - a. Call their phone.
 - b. Take a general look around for things out of the ordinary, e.g. smell of gas, curtains closed. Look in through windows see if you can see anything or anybody.
 - c. Try to speak to the service user's neighbours: just ask them if they have seen their neighbour recently or if they know how long they will be away for. Be mindful not to disclose any personal information about the person you support.
3. Call the Volunteer Coordinator, and if they don't pick up try the Community Connections main line number until you have got through to someone who can reassure you that they will be taking it from there. We hold contact details for our service users' next of kin and will ring you back when we know more.

If a service user falls whilst you are with them – do not panic!

1. If they can get up themselves, they should do so
2. Even if they appear uninjured, it's always a good idea for them to seek medical advice following a fall
3. If they cannot get up themselves, do not attempt to help them up, as you may injure yourself. Call for an ambulance, and follow the steps below.

If a service user collapses or gets injured – do not panic!

1. Do not move them, except to ensure that the air passage is clear
4. Speak to them; assure them that you will get help
5. Phone an ambulance
6. Ensure that they are warm
7. Continue to offer reassurance until help arrives
8. Call the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible. We may ask you to come into the office to give us information, as well as us supporting you.

If a service user you support talks about committing suicide, do the following:

1. Remain calm. This will help the person to feel calmer too.
2. Take them seriously. People who talk about suicide do sometimes act on their feelings — it's a common myth that they don't. It's best to assume that they are telling the truth about feeling suicidal.
3. Try not to judge. You might feel shocked, upset or frightened, but it's important not to blame the person for how they are feeling. They may have taken a big step by telling you.
4. If the Service User appears in immediate danger of harming themselves, call 999.
5. Inform them that you have to tell your Volunteer Coordinator about this conversation, and they will get in touch to discuss further support available.
6. Call your Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible, and if they don't pick up try the main line Community Connections number until you have got through to someone who can reassure you that they will be taking it from there.

If a service user becomes aggressive or abusive:

1. Do not shout or argue back.
2. Say, very calmly, that this behaviour is unacceptable and inform them that you will have to leave.
3. As soon you have left, inform your Volunteer Coordinator immediately.

If at any time you feel that you are in physical danger, LEAVE. You do not need to make excuses. These situations are rare, but we are interested in your health and safety as well as that of the people we support. Volunteering should be enjoyable. We greatly appreciate your time and skills and hope that you will enjoy being a part of Age UK Lewisham and Southwark.

Volunteer FAQs

Who do I speak to if I don't know what to do or don't understand something?

Ask your Volunteer Coordinator, who will help you and answer any questions you may have at any time. You will also be invited to a 6 monthly review with your Volunteer Coordinator to discuss how you are getting on in your role.

How can I make comments or suggestions about the organisation?

We would love to hear your thoughts and suggestions for improvement to our services. If you have any feedback, please don't hesitate to speak to your Volunteer Coordinator.

Is There a minimum commitment?

We ask for a minimum commitment of at least 6 months, volunteering for a minimum of 1 hour per week.

What should I do if I am ill or can't carry out my volunteer role for any reason?

Please contact your Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible, so they can begin to find another volunteer to cover if needed. Please also let us to know in advance when you are planning a holiday or any other break.

Other Ways You Can Help

We are continuously recruiting new volunteers allowing us to help more vulnerable people in the community. As the face of Community Connections and Age UK L&S, you are in a great position to spread the word about our services to let people know how they can be part of our wonderful team.

Thank you!

We are so grateful for your kind support, enthusiasm and dedication to Community Connections and Age UK Lewisham & Southwark.

You are the face of our amazing services that will change the lives of vulnerable people in the community, and we couldn't do it without your help.

On behalf of all the vulnerable people who will benefit from your generosity, we thank you.



Useful Contacts

Name	Role	Contact number	E-mail
Sandra McGregor	Befriending Coordinator	07934 554 601	Sandra.mcgregor@ageuklands.org.uk
Imogen McCurdy	Transport Coordinator	07927953487	Imogen.mccurdy@ageuklands.org.uk
Rachel Salenius	Volunteer-Led Services Manager	07561 121 076	Rachel.salenius@ageuklands.org.uk

APPENDICES

The extra information below is made available to you should you ever need it, as a reference point, but you won't need to know this to perform your role.

1. Complaints and Grievance policy

1.1. *Performance issues and complaints against volunteers*

Should someone i.e. another volunteer, a member of staff or a member of the public have a complaint about one of our volunteers, this should be discussed with your Volunteer Coordinator. The Coordinator will then discuss it with the volunteer, and this conversation might highlight a need for training, extra support and supervision, or a change in role for the volunteer.

If the issue cannot be resolved in that way, the complaint should then be put in writing to the Service Manager. The volunteer has the right to offer their case to the Service Manager and may have a colleague present if they wish.

Following this, an informal warning may be issued to the volunteer, in an effort to improve conduct or performance. This will be recorded in the volunteer's personal file as general supervision, not as a warning. A date for a review meeting must be set to discuss any improvements. If sufficient progress has been made at this point, no further action will be required.

If however there is insufficient progress, a verbal warning will be issued. This is part of the formal process. The volunteer will be notified in writing that a warning has been given and that any further warning may lead to the end of their voluntary role with Age UK L&S.

If there proves to be need for further action, a written warning will be issued. A volunteer has the right to appeal against a complaint to a Senior Manager.

If following the Senior Manager's investigation the complaint is upheld, the volunteer may take the complaint to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), whose decision will be final.

1.2. Serious misconduct

If a volunteer is suspected of serious misconduct (e.g. theft, an act of violence, malicious damage, deliberate falsification of documents, harassment or abuse), Age UK Lewisham & Southwark reserves the right to suspend them immediately and ask them to leave the premises. Suspension shall continue for the duration of the investigation. Their ID will be returned to the Volunteer Coordinator. During this investigation, the volunteer will have the right to represent themselves to the investigator, with a colleague present should they choose.

The volunteer will be notified of Age UK L&S' decision within 28 days of suspension. Any appeal against a decision to end the volunteer's role must be made to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) within 14 days of notification. The decision by the CEO will be final.

1.3. Grievance procedure

The purpose of the grievance procedure is to settle any grievances fairly, giving volunteers step by step guidance to resolving disputes.

1. If a volunteer has a complaint or problem with another volunteer or a member of staff this should first be discussed with the person involved if possible.
2. If the grievance is unresolved, the volunteer should discuss it with the Volunteer Coordinator (or the Service Manager, if the grievance is against the Volunteer Coordinator) to find a solution to the issue together.
3. If the grievance is not resolved verbally, the volunteer may make a complaint in writing to the Service Manager. Where possible this will be acted on within 21 days. Written complaints will be dealt with by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and will be treated confidentially. The CEO and the Service Manager will liaise to discuss previous actions.

4. If the complaint is not resolved by any of the above, it may be taken to the board of Trustees. The decision of the Trustees will be final and there will be no further course of action.

2. Whistle Blowing Procedure

If in the course of your volunteering with us you discover that Age UK Lewisham and Southwark is, has or is planning to:

- Committing a criminal offence
- Failing to comply with a legal obligation
- Causing or allowing a miscarriage of justice
- Endangering the health and safety of an individual
- Causing or allowing environmental damage
- Concealing any information relating to the above.

You should take the following steps:

1. In the first instance report any concerns you may have to your Volunteer Coordinator, who will treat the matter with complete confidence. If you are not satisfied with the explanation or reason given to you, you should raise the matter with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). If you still remain dissatisfied you should report your concern to the appropriate organisation or body, e.g. the Police, the Environment Agency, Health and Safety Executive or Social Services Department.
2. If you feel you cannot report your concerns to your Volunteer Coordinator or the CEO, you may take a qualifying disclosure direct to the appropriate organisation or body.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 prevents you from suffering a detriment or having your contract terminated for 'whistle blowing' and we take very seriously any concerns which you may raise under this legislation.

We encourage you to use the procedure if you are concerned about any wrong-doing. However, if the procedure has not been invoked in good faith (e.g. for malicious reasons or in pursuit of a

personal grudge), then it will make you liable to immediate termination of engagement or such lesser disciplinary sanction as may be appropriate in the circumstances.