

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: DIARY SHEETS

After listening to your feedback, we have improved our diary sheet and guidelines on how to complete the diary sheet. The new sheet will be much more efficient for us as it will automatically upload your information onto our database. This enables Independent Age to be clear to donors, funders, referrers and older people about the number of people we are supporting. It also helps us to show how much value our wonderful volunteers are bringing to the lives of the older people we support.

Q 1. Why do I have to send in diary sheets?

Diary sheets are essential proof of the work we do. They evidence the support our volunteers deliver and, the impact of friendship services in reducing loneliness. We use them to report on the work we deliver through volunteering activity; internally to senior management and trustees and externally to funders.

If you are unable to send your diary sheets by email, you can print them off and send them in the post alongside your expenses. Alternatively, you can speak to your local Independent Age contact who can call you for a catch up about your volunteering.

Q 2. I usually send a printed copy to my Independent Age contact, can I continue doing so?

If you usually send your forms in the post, you can continue doing so. As we move forwards and grow our number of volunteers, we would like as many of you as possible to use the new form electronically and, send to us by email. Saying that, we will always allow for alternative ways of completing and sending the forms to us.

Q 3. Can't I use the old version, it looks almost the same?

Although the new and old forms look practically the same, there is a big difference in the way the form works, or using IT language "software functionality". We have an electronic database where all information about volunteers and service users is securely kept. The new diary sheets can be auto-uploaded in this database, a functionality the old forms didn't have.

As the new forms are quicker to process this means your local Independent Age contact can spend less time on admin and more time supporting volunteers, the older people we support and, reaching out to more people in the area.

Q4. I don't have a computer, laptop or similar. How can I fill these in?

We appreciate that not everyone has a computer so we will send out copies of these ready printed. Please call your local Independent Age contact and they will arrange for these to be sent to you.

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Q 5. Will the forms work in my Mac/ iPad?

The format of the new forms is not supported by all computers. If you have an Apple computer with a basic Open Office program you won't be able to use the new forms. So we have created a new editable PDF version which is supported by all computer systems. If you email volunteering@independentage.org they can send you this form. Otherwise, you can send your forms in the post.

Q 6. The process to download the forms is very complicated

These new forms contain "macros". This is great as it allows us to automatically upload them in our database but, it also creates large emails that are difficult to send. We worked with our IT and website team and they came up with this way of downloading the forms.

Once you have followed the process and downloaded the form once, you can keep it in your computer for future use. If you have problems downloading the form, either your local Independent Age contact or the Volunteering team can email you one, just contact them on volunteering@independentage.org. Be aware this will be a large file size and you will need to ensure your email inbox is able to receive this.

We are exploring having a dedicated website space where our volunteers can access forms, videos, resources and materials and will be working on this during 2017/18.

Q 7. The diary sheet takes a long time to download and then I cannot type into it

Because it uses macros, the form takes a bit longer to download than a normal form. If you experience problems downloading the form, let us know and we can email you one.

Once the form is downloaded, you need to save it in your computer and then you will be able to type into it. Otherwise, when opening the form just click on the "enable editing" message that might appear on the top of the form. When you complete the form save it with a file name such as J.Smith Feb 17. This will keep the original form as a template for future use.

Q 8. I am not sure who my contact is

We sent out details about your new contact a few months back. If you are not sure who your contact is, please let us know by emailing volunteering@independentage.org.