**Signposting to other organisations guidance for Coordinating Volunteers**

**What is signposting?**

Signposting is when you give someone information about another service, because it offers specialist advice or activities that may help them to resolve an issue that they have. When you signpost someone, you are usually leaving them to contact the organisation or service themselves if they want to, but it might sometimes be appropriate to help them to do this (for example, if they have difficulties in communicating).

This is different to a referral, which is when you contact an organisation on behalf of someone else- usually as a professional who thinks that the service offered will be of benefit to them.

**Who is responsible for signposting?**

Only Coordinating Volunteers and Independent Age staff members can signpost older people to other organisations as part of their role. Other volunteers should refer to either their Independent Age contact or their Coordinating Volunteer if they think that any signposting or advice is necessary.

**When you should signpost to the Independent Age helpline**

If an older person has queries about any of the areas below, you should signpost them to the Independent Age helpline (0800 319 6789), where a trained and expert advisor can assist them:

* Finances
* Housing
* Social Care and Health services
* Legal rights
* Power of attorney, wills etc.
* Complaints
* Care Providers

**When you can signpost to local services**

You might sometimes feel that it would be helpful to signpost an older person to local social activities or befriending services, for example. This local signposting could include:

* Social and music clubs
* Community groups and hubs
* Religious group meetings
* Classes and courses
* Gym or health classes
* Carers respite
* Sensory or therapeutic services.

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| If possible, you should signpost to a local branch of a national network (such as an Age UK branch), as those organisations are already part of Independent Age’s national signposting list. If a suitable national service does not exist, local signposting can be considered. Please follow the guidance below about how to do this.  |

**Guidance for local signposting**

* **Step one – choosing a suitable organisation/service**

As a general rule, organisations that you signpost an older person to should be:

* Local
* Easily accessible
* Appropriate for the older persons’ needs
* Free (wherever possible)

However, if the best option is a paid-for service, it is important to make sure that the older person is clear that there will be a charge if they use the service.

* **Step two – complete the ‘Request for local signposting’ form**

Before completing this form, you may want to first check that the organisation isn’t already on our regional signposting spreadsheet (your Independent Age contact can give you access to this). The form is Appendix A of this guidance, and your Independent Age contact can tell you where to find an electronic version.

* **Step three – pass the completed form to your IA contact, and let them know who you plan to signpost to the organisation**

Your Independent Age contact will need to approve the organisation to be added to the regional signposting list.

It is important that your Independent Age contact knows every time you are signposting someone somewhere, so they can record the older person’s details on the regional signposting spreadsheet (using a confidential ID code).

**When you signpost someone**

Remember that you are not making a referral to another organisation on behalf of the older person – you are only signposting or suggesting somewhere that they might want to contact themselves (with support from you if necessary).

Make sure that you are clear about whether or not the service you are suggesting is free. If you think the older person might have financial issues which could prevent them from taking part in those activities, you could consider also signposting them to the IA helpline (0800 319 6789), for some advice about maximising their income.

If, for some reason, a direct referral to an organisation is necessary, please inform your Independent Age contact and they will lead on the referral on behalf of Independent Age, ensuring that they have the older person’s consent to make this referral.

**After signposting someone**

You don’t need to do any follow-up with the older person about whether or not they accessed the service and/or when they stopped using it. We will only gather feedback from people if we find that the organisation has been signposted to lots of times. We may then want to do a check on the quality of the service.

If this is the case, the older person will be asked to complete a simple feedback form to tell us what they thought of the service they received. Your IA contact may ask you to support the older person in completing this form.

**Any questions?**

If you are unsure at any point about whether an organisation would be suitable as a signpost, or about the process above, please get in touch with your Independent Age contact.

**Appendix A – Request for local signposting**

**Name of person making request to add organisation to regional signposting list:**

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**Date this form was completed:**

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**Reason for request (context in which we would signpost to this service – the need it might meet):**

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| **About the organisation (or the particular service/activity of interest)** |
| Name  |  |
| Website |  |
| Main phone number |  |
| Details of what they do, and who they support |  |
| Geographical area they cover |  |
| Do you need to be a member to take part? (is membership free or paid)? |  |
| What are the charges for each service that they offer?  |  |
| Do they have any accreditation / affiliation with an umbrella group worth noting? |  |
| Are they accessible for older people? (eg – wheelchair accessible, able to adapt to individual needs) |  |
| How is the organisation ensuring its own sustainability? (ie – through grants etc) |  |

**What spot checks have been undertaken?**

*Give details of any contact that has been made with the organisation (phone calls/visits etc) to check that the service offered is appropriate*

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