

# Volunteer Complaints and Problem-Solving Procedure

<b>Procedure title</b>	Volunteer Complaints and Problem-Solving
<b>Version</b>	2
<b>Approved by</b>	SLT
<b>Date approved</b>	February 2022
<b>Procedure owner</b>	Director of Corporate Services
<b>Procedure manager</b>	Head of Volunteer Transformation
<b>Date of last minor update</b>	
<b>Related policies</b>	Volunteer Policy
<b>Date for next full review</b>	February 2025

## **Our vision**

**We can all live a happy, connected and purposeful later life**

## **Our mission**

**To ensure that as we grow older, we all have the opportunity to live well with dignity, choice and purpose**

## **Our values**

**Purpose-driven – Compassionate – Expert – Collaborative -  
Accountable - Inclusive**

## 1. Procedure Summary

Whilst we hope that volunteering with Independent Age will be a positive experience, there may be circumstances in which volunteers may find they have cause to raise a concern about a member of staff, another volunteer or someone accessing our services. There may also be instances where a concern is raised about a volunteer.

The purpose of this procedure is to explain what happens if issues arise so that everyone is clear about how to handle them.

All complaints will be recorded and reviewed as a mechanism to improve the quality of our volunteering and service delivery.

## 2. Purpose

The aim of this procedure is to ensure that we have a consistent approach to responding to issues, concerns or complaints relating to volunteers. These issues, concerns or complaints can be raised by a volunteer about Independent Age or about a member Independent Age's staff, about an older person or service user, or about another volunteer. They can also be raised by a member of Independent Age staff about an Independent Age volunteer.

## 3. Definitions

**Volunteer** - A volunteer is someone who donates their time, skills and expertise to support the work of Independent Age. All volunteers are expected to adhere to the volunteer agreement which can be found [here](#).

Our volunteers are unpaid. Volunteering is not a substitute for paid employment and our volunteering roles complement the work of paid staff.

**Complaint** - Independent Age recognises a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction against the organisation or service we have provided or failed to provide. This can be made verbally, by phone or email or in writing.

**Problem Solving** – Covers a concern relating to a volunteer and their conduct. Some of these concerns can be low level which can be resolved informally. Where a more significant concern is raised these concerns will be responded to by following a more robust process. This process is detailed below.

## 4. Roles and Responsibilities

**All staff managing volunteers and our active volunteers are responsible for:**

- reading, complying with, and maintaining up-to-date awareness of this procedure

- attending training as appropriate
- alerting their managers to inaccuracies in the procedure.

### **Head of Volunteering**

- ensuring the procedure supports the implementation of Independent Age's mission and is in line with our organisational values
- ensuring the procedure is reviewed and updated

## **5. Concerns or complaints raised by a volunteer**

### **Informal Process**

We hope that most issues can be solved informally by having a conversation. We encourage volunteers wherever possible to raise concerns directly with the team responsible or their Independent Age contact so that any issues can be addressed promptly. The volunteer's Independent Age contact will do their best to advise and support them to resolve the issue.

Efforts should always be made to reach a mutually acceptable solution. If this does not prove possible, volunteers should notify their Independent Age contact via email, letter or phone call that they wish to make a formal complaint.

### **Formal Process**

When a volunteer raises a complaint, which cannot be resolved informally, Independent Age will carry out an investigation.

An Independent Age staff member will write to the volunteer explaining the next steps and the date by which they should receive a response.

Once the volunteer receives the response, if they are not satisfied with the outcome, they can make an appeal within the next 2 weeks. This appeal should be addressed to the relevant Head of Department, who carried out the initial investigation and Head of Volunteering who will make a decision and inform the volunteer of the outcome within two weeks of being notified of the appeal.

### **Concerns or complaints regarding the volunteer's Independent Age contact**

If the volunteer does not feel able to discuss the issue with their Independent Age contact, or the complaint raised is about them, the volunteer should contact the Independent Age contact's line manager who will respond to the complaint. If unsure of who to contact, please email [volunteering@independentage.org](mailto:volunteering@independentage.org) or call the volunteering line on 020 7605 4255 for confidential advice.

## **Concerns or complaints about the volunteer**

This process is to enable both the charity and the volunteer to resolve any issues raised about a volunteer's suitability to continue volunteering with Independent Age.

Each case will be assessed against the volunteer's conduct and attitude in the context of Independent Age's policies and procedures including:

- Volunteering policy
- Volunteer role description
- Volunteer role boundaries
- Any training the volunteer has received/has been asked to complete
- The risk assessment for the volunteering role
- The volunteer's participation in catch up sessions.

A contact from Independent Age will arrange to have an initial discussion with the volunteer to understand and where possible address the concern or complaint. The outcome of this conversation could be:

- The volunteer carries on with their role or an alternative role
- Adjustments are made, including extra support, additional training or a review of the tasks involved in the role
- The volunteer decides to leave.

If during this initial discussion a satisfactory conclusion cannot be agreed, then a formal process will be initiated. This would involve the Independent Age contact and their line manager organising a time to have a conversation, ideally face to face where possible to explore the concern and/or complaint raised.

For investigations in which the Independent Age contact is involved, another staff member will attend the meeting alongside the Independent Age contact's line manager.

If after this meeting an agreement hasn't been reached, the volunteer may be asked to stop carrying out their duties while the process is resolved. The Independent Age staff member will write to the volunteer explaining the next steps and the date by when they should receive a final response.

The Independent Age staff member will then raise the concern with the Head of Department and Head of Volunteering explaining the case, the actions taken and the volunteer's response. The Heads of Department will make a decision on the suitability of the volunteer to carry on with their role and inform the volunteer within two weeks of them being notified of the concern.

## **6. Gross misconduct**

There are some occasions when a volunteer can be suspended immediately whilst an investigation is carried out. These include, but are not limited to, acts that constitute gross misconduct. E.g.:

- theft,
- assault,
- safeguarding concerns,

- allegations of putting someone at risk,
- act of violence,
- malicious damage,
- deliberate falsification of documents,
- harassment,
- being under the influence of drugs or alcohol,
- bringing the charity into disrepute,
- behaviour which undermines managerial decisions/authority
- Contravening our equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) policy

The decision to suspend a volunteer will be confirmed in writing.

All gross misconduct cases are assessed by the Independent Age contact's line manager, Head of Department and Head Volunteering. The volunteer will be asked to stop their volunteering immediately while the investigation is in process and a formal meeting will be requested within 10 working days. If, following the investigation, the alleged act of gross misconduct is upheld, the volunteer's relationship with Independent Age would be terminated.

## **7. Recording Complaints**

All complaints are logged and reviewed regularly to enable us to learn from these incidents. All complaints will be held confidentially and securely and in line with our Data Protection requirements.

## **8. Commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion**

We celebrate diversity at Independent Age and we champion the differences and nuances which make each and every one of us unique. We believe that everyone should benefit from equity of opportunity and no one should be subject to any form of discrimination.

The contents of this document will be reviewed from time to time to ensure they remain aligned to our equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) commitments. Part of our commitment is to remain compliant with the Equality Act 2010, which enshrines everyone's legal rights with respect to EDI. In the UK, it is against the law to discriminate against someone because of a protected characteristic, i.e. because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

## **9. Feedback**

If you have any feedback or have identified an issue or inaccuracy with this procedure, please contact the Safeguarding, Compliance & Assurance Team at: [Assurance@independentage.org](mailto:Assurance@independentage.org)