

**ALONE**

Supporting older people  
to age at home



# **Volunteer Handbook**

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COMPASSIONATE - HONEST - EFFECTIVE - INNOVATIVE


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# Thank you

from the Board and staff for volunteering  
with ALONE.

We really appreciate your time and  
generosity in helping to support older  
people to age at home.



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# Welcome

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**Welcome to the ALONE volunteer team! This handbook is designed to give you an insight into the organisation, along with an overview of our procedures and practical advice to support you in your role.**

ALONE was founded by volunteers and the spirit of volunteerism remains at the heart of the organisation. Our volunteers work closely with staff throughout all our services, in a range of different roles. They contribute to the organisation at all levels including the Board, Volunteer Leadership Group and all of our frontline services. Volunteers are essential to our organisation and show how people in the community can look after each other.

At ALONE, we are committed to delivering a quality service and the best experience possible for volunteers and older people alike. In order to provide this, we must be professional in our approach. Each ALONE volunteer has a clear role description and is trained and supported by our staff. We offer a combination of core training modules, preparing volunteers to deliver services directly to those older people in the community who are isolated or vulnerable. All volunteers are backed up by volunteer leaders and staff and know where they should go to for support.

By taking part in training and volunteer meetings you will have the chance to develop your knowledge of the needs of the older people we work with and support them to overcome obstacles and realise their potential quality of life. At volunteer events you can spend informal time with fellow volunteers and celebrate the difference that we make together.

I hope that through your involvement with ALONE and by enhancing the lives of the older people you meet, you will also benefit personally and strengthen your own skills and values. I hope that you can grow in your personal understanding of the ageing process and the challenges and opportunities that later life provides.

Thank you for joining with us in our efforts to support the older people in our society. Finally, I would like to thank all ALONE volunteers and staff, past and present, whose efforts and insights have made this publication possible.



**Seán Moynihan**

ALONE Chief Executive Officer







# Foreword

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**We believe that every older person should have the opportunity to age happily and securely at home. For this to happen we need to reimagine ageing at home in Ireland. ALONE and our dedicated, skilled and trained volunteers are all a part of something much bigger as we try to shape the future of ageing at home.**

We have designed our services to improve the quality of life, independence, health and well-being of older people. These services are Support, Befriending, Housing and Assistive Technology. Demand for our services continues to grow from older people and community organisations around the country. We use individualised care plans to support older people to overcome problems large and small, including loneliness, lack of access to services, poverty, homelessness and housing difficulties.

It is important that we can demonstrate the impact that we have on the lives of older people. By volunteering your time, being a part of ALONE's vision, and using the BFriend web app to help us record our impact, together we will help to affect changes for older people nationwide.

We rely on volunteers for your vital support hours, stories, case studies and quotes relating to your experience as a volunteer. This is so that we can continue to promote the work of the organisation. We believe that we must tell the real stories affecting the older people we deal with. This is in order to campaign for change, promote our services for older people who may need our help and to raise vital funds. Your help here is greatly appreciated.

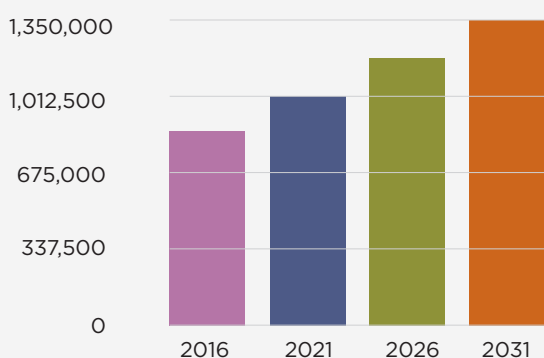
Please link in with us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn, share and support our appeals on social media and encourage your friends and family to follow us. If there is any fundraising opportunity in your community or workplace, please keep us in mind. We can provide you with t-shirts, sponsor cards and support.

You are all ambassadors of ALONE and we are so proud of what you do. We would be so grateful if you could help us fundraise either directly or indirectly by:

- Asking your friends, family and colleagues to donate and get involved with ALONE initiatives
- Encouraging your employer to choose ALONE as your charity of the year or as part of your corporate social responsibility programme
- Organising fundraising events – mini marathon, bag packing day, coffee morning, pub quiz etc.

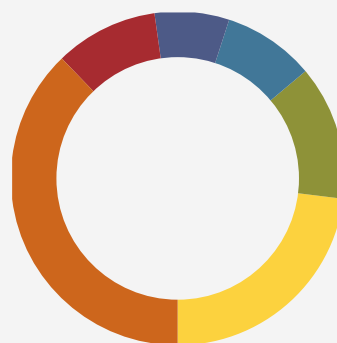
## An Ageing Ireland

The population of people over 60 in Ireland is set to rise rapidly in the coming years:



- 1 in 3 people over 65 live alone <sup>1</sup>
- 1 in 5 people over 65 have frailty issues <sup>2</sup>
- 1 in 10 older people suffer from chronic loneliness <sup>3</sup>
- 103,000 people over 50 often feel lonely <sup>4</sup>
- 788,600 people over 50 are socially isolated <sup>5</sup>
- Only 1 in 3 women and 16% of men over 50 report having no positive, supportive friendships <sup>6</sup>

Of the last 2,000 older people ALONE have supported 36% were aged between 80-90 years old. Their needs consisted of:



- **Loneliness** - 38%
- **Personal Care** - 10%
- **Security** 7%
- **Physical Health** 9%
- **Finance** 13%
- **Housing** - 23%

1. Central Statistics Office Ireland, [www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie)  
 2. "Wellbeing and Health in Ireland's over 50's 2009-2016", November 2018, TILDA  
 3. Victor, C. (2011). Loneliness in old age: the UK perspective. Safeguarding the Convoy: a call to action from the Campaign to End Loneliness. Age UK Oxfordshire  
 4. <https://hapaidotnet.files.wordpress.com/2018/06/hapai-survey-report-2018.pdf>  
 5. "Wellbeing and Health in Ireland's over 50's 2009-2016", November 2018, TILDA  
 6. "Wellbeing and Health in Ireland's over 50's 2009-2016", November 2018, TILDA



# ALONE

## Vision, Mission and Core Values

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### ALONE Vision

Every person has the opportunity to age happily and securely at home.

### ALONE Mission Statement

To reimagine how we age by offering innovative and supportive services for every older person.

### The ALONE Way - Our Values

The ALONE Way sets out our guiding principles and core values. These principles and values underpin everything the organisation does: how we organise ourselves, how we behave, how we make decisions, how we engage with our stakeholders including older people, volunteers, staff and partners. Ensuring we listen to and promote the voice of every older person is central to the ALONE Way. Together, we are all ambassadors for ALONE.



## **Compassionate**

- To be conscious of the challenges older people face and work with them to find solutions.
- To respect and value the dignity of older people.
- To be non-judgemental and empathise with every older person.
- To respect, value and promote the welfare of our volunteers and staff.

## **Honest**

- To be accountable and transparent in all we do.
- To communicate clearly and regularly with all of our stakeholders.
- To constructively challenge issues and ask questions of our colleagues and peers.
- To campaign and communicate in response to the needs of older people.

## **Effective**

- To be a solution-focused organisation.
- To deliver evidence-based services and measure our impact.
- To share knowledge and work collaboratively to improve services.
- To deliver solutions which are transferrable, scalable and sustainable.

## **Innovative**

- To design solutions which respect the choices and needs of older people.
- To act as proactive influencers for change.
- To acknowledge challenges and learn from our mistakes and take action.
- To lead and collaborate with other organisations to provide innovative solutions.



# Equal Opportunities

**ALONE is committed to being an equal opportunities organisation. Volunteers will not be treated differently because of gender, marital status, family status, age, race or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religion or disability.**





# Volunteer Rights & Responsibilities

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**ALONE was founded by volunteers and this spirit remains at the heart of the organisation. We value the volunteer's role and are committed to your further development within the organisation. We recognise that every volunteer has rights and responsibilities that underpin your role. These recognise the two-way nature of the volunteering relationship.**

## Volunteer Rights

- To know what is expected from you
- To receive suitable training, support and direction
- To be given the opportunity to develop your role in the organisation
- To know who to go to if you have a concern
- To be made aware of policies and procedures relevant to your role
- To be treated fairly and with respect
- To have your views and opinions listened to in a respectful manner
- To be appreciated and recognised
- To be insured while providing services for ALONE
- To have your personal information kept confidential
- To receive regular updates about ALONE
- To be informed of any relevant changes regarding the organisation
- To be able to say no and to leave your voluntary role if you wish to do so

## Volunteer Responsibilities

- To treat people with respect and dignity
- To respect the values and aims of the organisation
- To be committed to these values and aims, and to your role in the organisation
- To be reliable and give the organisation enough notice if unable to attend
- To respect confidentiality
- To be punctual
- To attend essential training and meetings
- To record your visits and any additional support provided through the BFriend web app
- To maintain a high standard service and competency
- To contact ALONE if you are experiencing problems and to seek support
- To feedback any issues or concerns regarding the older person you visit
- To contact ALONE if the older person you visit passes away
- To act as an ambassador for ALONE
- To get involved and support ALONE's communications and campaigns
- To assist with fundraising initiatives by ALONE
- To help support the use of technology used by ALONE and older people

## Confidentiality

ALONE respects the right to privacy of volunteers and of visited older people. It is important that in carrying out the volunteer role that you respect information that involves older people visited, other volunteers, staff members or overall ALONE organisational business.

Where there is a concern about the health, safety or general welfare of an older person, it is accepted that information may have to be passed on to a staff member. Situations or concerns that are reported to the office will be handled with discretion.

## Volunteer Meetings

ALONE hold volunteer meetings during each year. The volunteer meetings are a confidential space and all volunteers are bound by this confidentiality. ALONE encourages volunteers to share information, stories and insights at volunteer meetings without naming people. However, it is important that sensitive information is not disclosed. If in doubt you can discuss with a staff member.

It is essential that this confidentiality agreement is respected and adhered to. This is in order to maintain good practice and to protect and support fellow volunteers and the older people we work with. Failure to maintain confidentiality may result in the termination of the volunteer's relationship with ALONE.

## Volunteer Privacy Statement

ALONE needs to keep and process information about our volunteers to help us deliver our services, for general administrative tasks and to meet certain quality standards. We also keep this information to manage the relationship with our volunteers effectively, lawfully and appropriately. It is used during the volunteer recruitment process, while you are volunteering with us, or when you cease volunteering and up to a period of 24 months afterwards.

ALONE will always ask your permission before collecting any information about you.

As an organisation we use volunteer data to provide weekly befriending and support visits, daily telephone befriending and support calls and our social activities. However we may sometimes need to use, or share your data with others to help us meet the needs of the older people we serve. For example, during extreme weather spells we might share your first name, your number and general location to help coordinate and provide additional supports to older people, where we rely on the shared support from staff, volunteers and other groups to meet those needs.

If ALONE needs to collect any sensitive information relating to a volunteers' racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious and philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, biometric data or sexual orientation, we will always obtain your permission first.

ALONE will only share sensitive information about you with others where;

- Sharing is necessary to prevent injury or damage to the health of an individual
- It is required by law
- It is made available to the Gardaí in relation to a criminal investigation

If in the future ALONE intend to use your personal data for any reason other than the reason which it was collected, we will provide you with information on that new reason and any other relevant information first.

Under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) you have a number of rights with regard to your personal data.

You have the right to ask us for access to, correction of, or the deletion of your personal data. You have the right to limit processing, the right to object to processing as well as in certain circumstances, the right to data portability (data portability means we provide you with your data in a format you can use elsewhere). If you have provided consent for the processing of your data, you have the right to withdraw that consent at any time.

You also have the right to lodge a complaint with the Data Protection Commissioners' Office, if you believe that we have not complied with the requirements of the GDPR with regard to your personal data. For the purpose of the GDPR, ALONE is the controller of volunteer data.





# ALONE Volunteer Roles

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***“It’s the people that make it; people giving their time”***

*Older person visited by an ALONE volunteer*

**Volunteers are hugely important to ALONE and have been the foundation of ALONE since the organisation began. Volunteers are involved in every aspect of the organisation, from the Board to carrying out our frontline services. Without volunteers, ALONE simply could not carry out its work. Volunteers play an essential role and contribute highly to the overall success of the work. We aim to always keep standards of volunteer support high while expecting the most from our volunteers.**

**We work to have roles available in all departments to ensure volunteers are integrated into the staff team. There are also opportunities for those who do not want to visit weekly, but would like to contribute their time in other ways.**

## **Volunteer Roles & Activities**

### **Befriending & Support**

Befriending & Support visitation volunteers provide companionship to an older person who would like extra social contact through a weekly visit. Volunteers can also help with practical supports such as helping with technology, internet searches, linking in with other services and setting up appointments.

Telephone Befriending & Support volunteers provide companionship to an older person who would like extra social contact through a weekly or daily telephone call. Volunteers can also help with practical supports such as accessing information regarding services, activities and linking in with our Support Staff. The service is free, confidential and informative.

### **Social Activities**

Volunteers help support ALONE’s local activities for older people. These activities enable older people to develop friendships and support systems while participating in activities that promote social inclusion and improve quality of life. We will also link in to other activities within the community.

### **Specialist Skills**

Individuals offer their specialist or professional skills in a voluntary capacity. This can be for a particular project or on an ongoing basis. These roles may include: administration support, finance, maintenance, gardening, driving, IT support, legal advice, etc. We look to embed volunteers into our service and all departments.

## Getting Involved in the Wider Organisation

Volunteers are encouraged to get involved in the wider organisation by representing volunteers on Project Teams and on the Board. This could include work on initiatives such as helping to develop local activities and support the use of ALONE technology. This ensures that volunteers have the opportunity to take on leadership roles within the organisation and ensures an ethos of working in partnership between volunteers and staff.

## Other Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers participate in time-defined projects with ALONE that are organised by other bodies or agencies. These include corporate volunteering opportunities, student placements and other volunteer referral programmes. In these cases, a special agreement must be in effect with the body or agency that identifies responsibility for management and care of the volunteers.



# Befriending & Support Visits

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**Befriending & Support is a supported one-to-one relationship between a volunteer and an older person who has been linked in with ALONE. The ALONE Befriending & Support Service provides companionship and practical support to older people who are socially isolated through a weekly volunteer visit.**

**This role may change over time if the older person faces new and different challenges such as frailty, mobility or dementia. ALONE will provide further support and training on these issues for you should these challenges arise.**

## The Role of Befriending & Support Volunteers

- To provide companionship to an older person by visiting them at least once a week
- To provide basic practical additional support for the older person where necessary. (Volunteers are not substitutes for home-help or care assistants and should not take on these roles)
- To record your visits and any additional support provided to the older person through ALONE's BFriend web app
- To be flexible around travelling to and from visits
- To follow the ALONE guidelines throughout your time with ALONE and attend training
- To attend additional training workshops and the annual volunteer social meeting
- To support the older person when attending ALONE social activities
- To support the older person to integrate in their community – such as encouraging them to join local groups and initiatives for older people
- To contact the ALONE office if there are concerns for the older person's health, safety or welfare
- To participate in ALONE volunteer surveys and assist older people in ALONE service surveys

## Additional Supports

Additional support means providing basic practical help to the older person to support the older person to age happily and securely at home. We ask that you record these supports through the BFriend web app so that ALONE is aware of the needs of the older person.

Examples of some additional support may include:

- Help with using technology and mobile phones
- Help accessing information through internet searches and signposting to other services
- Help with filling out forms
- Helping with setting up appointments
- Help with basic daily tasks that you are comfortable with. Remember you are not a replacement for home help

Each older person will have their own set of circumstances and challenges they face. By providing these basic practical supports for the older person you are improving their quality of life, mental health and well-being.





# Befriending & Support Volunteer Guidelines

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## Do's

- Be positive during your visits.
- Listen and show an interest in the older person. Ask them about themselves. You don't know when someone last asked them about themselves and actually listened.
- Let the older person set the pace. The visit is for their benefit.
- Be consistent and reliable. If you say you are going to visit at a certain time and day, then do. The chances are the older person has been looking forward to your visit.
- Carry your ALONE ID card with you.
- Record your visits and any additional support provided to the older person through ALONE's BFriend web app.
- Be mindful of your boundaries. Set boundaries that you are comfortable with and if you are unsure please contact ALONE.
- Let the older person know in advance if you are unable to visit. Things come up in people's lives; people get sick, go on holidays, etc. so do not feel guilty about any of these situations.
- Respect the older person and their home. It is not appropriate to comment on the appearance of an older person or their home. Remember not to place your own personal standards on an older person. You are not there to change the older person; you are there to keep them company.
- Deal with issues in a confidential way. Only share information on the older person you visit if you have their permission. Contact ALONE if you have a concern for your older person's health, safety or welfare.
- Contact ALONE if you or the older person need support or advice.
- Contact ALONE if the older person you visit has passed away.
- Pace yourself in terms of time, energy and commitment to avoid burnout.
- Dress appropriately.
- Use the Laya Volunteer Assistance Programme if you need emotional support (please see page 27).



# Befriending & Support Volunteer Guidelines

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## Don'ts

- Don't be afraid of silence. Sometimes it is enough to have your company. A visit may just be watching TV together.
- Don't promise anything you can't deliver.
- Don't stop visiting an older person without telling them and ALONE first.
- Don't offer, take or lend money. Contact ALONE if the older person has financial difficulties.
- Don't offer advice on professional matters, for example legal or health. If the older person needs advice on professional matters, please contact ALONE.
- Don't administer medication to an older person at any time.
- Don't be judgemental. Remember you are a visitor in their home.
- Don't get involved in the older person's family matters.
- Don't impose your religious or political views.
- Don't carry out a task you are uncomfortable with, you can say no. Contact ALONE regarding the situation if needed.
- Don't stay overnight in the home of an older person you visit. If they ask, please contact ALONE.
- Don't try to resolve everything for the older person yourself if you come across a difficult situation. This is not your role and can lead to frustration and burnout. If you have concerns, contact ALONE.

## Volunteer Health, Safety and Welfare

ALONE will take all practical steps to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of volunteers, staff and the older people of ALONE. Volunteers have a duty to look after themselves and the older people they come into contact with through volunteering with ALONE.

### Health and Safety Guidelines

- Log your visits and updates on the ALONE BFriend web app.
- Take your mobile phone with you when on visits and let someone know that you are going.
- If an incident occurs to you or the older person during a visit please report it on the BFriend web app or contact ALONE with relevant details.
- Do not carry out tasks with or for the older person if you feel there is a health or safety risk to yourself or the older person.
- If a visit or a situation causes you undue stress, please contact ALONE for support.
- Never stay in a situation where you are uncomfortable or feel you are in danger. Trust your instincts and leave immediately. Contact ALONE regarding the situation.
- Volunteers should not tolerate embarrassing remarks, gestures or suggestions of an inappropriate nature from any older person.
- If you notice that your older person does not have adequate heating and food, please report it on the BFriend web app or contact ALONE with relevant details.
- If an emergency occurs during a visit please contact emergency services on 999 or 112.
- If a volunteer suspects elder abuse\* they should contact ALONE.

*\*Elder abuse is defined as “a single or repeated act, or the lack of appropriate action (where there is an expectation of trust), which causes harm or distress to an older person or violates their human and civil rights”. (Protecting Our Future: DoHC Report of the Working Group on Elder Abuse 2002). For further details please check the HSE guide on Safeguarding vulnerable adults here: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/socialcare/safeguardingvulnerableadults/safeguardingvuladts.html>*



## Safeguarding

Safeguarding is a term used to denote measures to protect the health, well-being and human rights of individuals, which allow people – especially children, young people and vulnerable adults – to live free from abuse, harm and neglect.

The “Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse - National Policy and Procedures”, outlines a number of principles to promote the welfare of vulnerable people and safeguard them from abuse. These include a requirement that all services must have a publicly declared “No Tolerance” approach to any form of abuse and must promote a culture which supports this ethos. Some of the principles underpinning the policy include:

- Respect for human rights
- A person centred approach to care and services
- Promotion of advocacy
- Respect for confidentiality
- Empowerment of individuals
- A collaborative approach

All vulnerable people have a right to be protected against abuse and to have any concerns regarding abusive experiences addressed. They have a right to be treated with respect and to feel safe, regardless of the setting in which they live. If a volunteer has a concern about abuse or neglect of an older person please report it to an ALONE staff member.



# Matching Process

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**ALONE will aim to match new Befriending and Support Volunteers after they complete their training and paperwork. When matching you with an older person ALONE will take into account the locations, gender preferences and interests of the older person and the volunteer.**

ALONE will contact volunteers about a potential visit and will give some information about the older person. This will be done with the permission of the older person and any information supplied is given to the potential volunteer in confidence. The name and address of the older person will not be supplied until the potential volunteer has agreed to take on the match.

If there are things that you would feel uneasy with, please let us know before you are matched with an older person. Some people may feel uneasy around pets or smoking. Whatever the issue may be, feel free to let us know and we will keep this in mind before you are matched.

If a volunteer is agreeable to take on the match, ALONE will contact the older person and tell them a little about the volunteer. If both sides agree to the match the first visit will be organised. An ALONE staff member will accompany you on your first visit with the older person.

Please note that it can take some time to match a volunteer with an older person. This depends on the locations where matches are needed and the availability and areas that suit volunteers to travel to.

## Your First Visit

A staff representative will go with you to your first visit. The older person will receive a reminder phone-call from ALONE on the day of the visit. A staff representative will again explain the role of the Befriending and Support Volunteer to both the new volunteer and the older person. During the visit you agree with the older person what day and time suits both of you best for the next visit to take place.

You will be provided with the contact details of the older person, relevant information regarding the visit and other details such as their emergency contact person. This information is confidential and should be kept in a safe place. None of these services should be contacted without the older persons' permission, unless in the case of an emergency.

The person you are to visit will be given an information card with your name and the contact details of the ALONE office should they wish to contact you or ALONE. Your personal contact details will NOT be given out.

## Visiting in Pairs

In certain instances volunteers will be assigned to visit in pairs. This is where ALONE deems it appropriate for two volunteers to support each other in carrying out a particular visit.

## Next Steps

- An ALONE staff representative will not accompany you on your second visit unless otherwise requested or agreed.
- ALONE will contact both the volunteer and the older person within the first few weeks of the visits commencing to ensure that you are both happy with how the visits are going.
- If there are any problems after this time then ALONE should be contacted.

## Other Support Needs

When staff are working on any additional supports with an older person, they will keep the volunteer informed. This will be in consultation with the older person and with the understanding that disclosing this information will be in the interest of both parties.

ALONE offer a range of learning and development training sessions to volunteers. A range of topics will be covered throughout each year to help support, improve and develop the volunteer role and knowledge.

## Helpful Hints

- It is natural to feel nervous before your first visit.
- You may not feel totally relaxed having an ALONE staff representative there with you on your first visit. Remember they are there to support you, not judge you.
- It can take time to build a relationship with an older person. This is natural as relationships take time.
- Matches can sometimes fall through. An older person may change their mind about using the service and being visited by a volunteer. The volunteer will be informed of this as soon as possible. This can be difficult for a volunteer who has been prepared for the visits. This is simply the nature of the service, so please don't take it personally. ALONE will look to find you a new match straight away. We will remain in contact with the older person and will look to match them with a volunteer in the future should they decide to reapply.
- Some matches don't work out. This could simply be because the service is different from what the older person expected, because the older person's situation may have changed or because sometimes people just don't hit it off. Try not to take this personally, it does not mean that you won't be considered by ALONE to take on another match.
- Through volunteer encouragement the older person may have become more involved in local social groups or services and, as a result, have less time available for visits. Sometimes family become more involved in an older person's life when there is awareness that there is a volunteer from ALONE visiting.
- Given that volunteers are working with older people, the nature of the visit you take on will change over the years, for example, if the person's health, mobility or memory deteriorates. You should keep ALONE informed of such changes to your visit which can be done through the BFriend web app. We will provide further training on such issues to ensure you are prepared for the changing nature of your role.



# Financial Matters and Insurance

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## Expenses

Whilst ALONE would like to reimburse volunteers for out of pocket expenses such as mileage, financially this is not viable.

ALONE recognises that there may be some emergency circumstances when expenses will be incurred such as an unexpected taxi to the hospital. On such occasions we advise volunteers to keep all receipts and submit them to the ALONE office within one month for reimbursement along with an expenses claim form.

However, we believe that the cost of volunteering should not prevent a person from volunteering. Therefore, in certain circumstances, we are able to reimburse for preapproved expenses such as transport costs.

## Gifts and Money

ALONE understand that older people who are visited may want to give their volunteer a small gift as a token of thanks at certain times such as Christmas and birthdays. Appropriate gifts include a box of chocolates, bottle of wine, lunch, small gift vouchers, and small impersonal items with a minimal financial value. Gifts should not exceed around €10 because of the risk of changing the relationship. For example, if an older person has been given a gift they may feel pressure to reciprocate, when they may not be able to afford it. Also, if you accept a significant gift from your older person you may feel obligated to offer extra support.

Gifts that are deemed inappropriate by ALONE to accept include cash, jewellery, property and items from the house of the person visited. If you are offered gifts that fall into the 'inappropriate category', you should politely explain the policy to the person you visit. Where the person would still like you to accept their gift, please contact ALONE.

ALONE volunteers should not offer or lend money to the person they visit. Please contact ALONE if the person has financial difficulties.

If gifts are being given on a regular basis, please contact ALONE to seek advice and have this documented. This is to protect both yourself and the older person you visit.

## Financial Matters

Volunteers should not be involved in the financial affairs of the older person they visit. Please contact ALONE if this has become an issue or you have been involved in any financial matters to date.

Older people should not be involved in the financial affairs of a volunteer. Please contact ALONE if this is an issue.

If a volunteer encounters an older person in financial difficulty or in urgent need (of food, clothes, etc.), this should be referred to the ALONE office. Support can then be given to address this person's needs on a long-term basis.

## Wills

At no time are volunteers permitted to be beneficiaries in the will of an older person linked to ALONE. If you are asked by an older person to act as an executor of their will, please contact ALONE.

## Next of Kin

If you are asked by an older person to be their 'next-of-kin', please contact ALONE.

## Insurance

### Public Liability and Personal Accident Insurance

Volunteers are protected by ALONE's public liability and personal accident insurance.

### Motor Vehicle Insurance

Volunteers who use their own motor vehicle in the course of volunteering duties do so at their own discretion and risk and under their own vehicle insurance.

Insurers typically require to be notified if the car is used for volunteering purposes. This depends on the relevant insurance company and it is the responsibility of the volunteer to check. It is the volunteers' responsibility to request a letter from ALONE stating that you use your car for volunteering purposes to provide to your insurance company.





# Volunteer Support

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**Your welfare as a volunteer is very important to us at ALONE. It is essential that there is good ongoing communication between ALONE and our volunteers. It is of great importance to ALONE that the volunteer voice remains strong within the organisation.**

**Communication with volunteers will take place at ALONE Volunteer meetings, through ALONE newsletters and e-bulletins, BFriend web app, the ALONE website, social networking sites and through regular communication with Volunteer Leaders and staff. If you have any concerns, please contact the ALONE head office on 01-6791032 and you will be directed to the relevant person. We have a variety of services in place to help support you in your role.**

## Volunteer Support Officers

Volunteer Support Officers are involved in the recruitment, training, matching and engagement with our Befriending and Support Volunteers. This is to ensure you are supported in your volunteering role. Please contact the ALONE office directly if you would like to speak to your Volunteer Support Officer regarding any issues relating to your volunteering role.

## Support Staff

The older person you visit has been linked in with an ALONE Support Staff member from the first time they contact ALONE. If there are any concerns or issues regarding the older person you visit, please contact the ALONE office. The Support Staff member for your older person will then be in touch.

## Volunteer Leaders

Volunteer Leaders are experienced Befriending and Support Volunteers with ALONE. The role of the Volunteer Leader is to offer peer support and a listening ear when required. Volunteer Leaders work closely with ALONE and are actively involved with volunteer meetings. For any issues that will need to be followed up by staff please call the ALONE office directly.





## BFriend Web App

BFriend is a web application for ALONE Befriending volunteers who are visiting people in the community. The BFriend web app has been developed to enhance your volunteering experience. BFriend is available to use on a mobile phone, tablet, laptop or personal computer. The web app has the following features:

Ability to provide feedback on how your older person is doing

- Ability to request a follow up call for your older person if you have any concerns
- Check in and out functionality
- Ability to record additional supports

You will record your visits to the older person through the web app by checking in when you are at the house and checking out when the visit is completed.

We want to be able to support you and your older person as much as we can and to be able to provide ongoing training to you, depending on the needs of your older person. The web app is quick and easy to use, and acts as a great tool for you to keep in contact with us here at ALONE.

To register, email [bfriend@alone.ie](mailto:bfriend@alone.ie).



## Volunteer Check In Calls

As an additional support ALONE will make check in calls with volunteers from time to time. The purpose of the call is to give volunteers the opportunity to talk about their visits and their thoughts on their volunteer role. A key aspect of the call is to also provide information on key topics.

## Volunteer Meetings

You will be invited to attend a Volunteer meeting each year. These meetings are a chance for volunteers to meet, get support and learn from each other. Why attend?

- To get support, share experiences and learn from each other
- To link in with your Volunteer Leader and ALONE Staff
- To gain information on relevant plans and services

## Volunteer Learning & Development

As an additional support ALONE offer a range additional learning and development sessions throughout the year. Volunteers are welcome to make suggestions on topics that they feel would be relevant for them in their role. All volunteers, regardless of their length of service with ALONE, are expected to attend sessions that will support them to maintain high standards. This ensures a high standard of service and volunteer competency for all older people that are catered for by ALONE.

Additional learning and development modules on particular topics such as Dementia, Mental Health and Additional Supports for Older People will be available for all volunteers.

## Volunteer Assistance Programme

This is a free and confidential care service available 24 hours a day, seven days a week provided by Laya Healthcare. You can access this service in relation to your work with ALONE or with any personal or work related problems that you or your family might be facing.

Qualified and experienced counsellors will listen in confidence and make sure you get the help you need. Their counsellors are experienced in both personal and work related issues and can support you through a wide variety of problems including stress, anxiety, relationship issues, bereavement and more.

In addition to counselling, you have access to a wide range of other services. These include free telephone consultations with legal and financial experts, career counsellors, life coaches, healthcare professionals and more.

You can call on 1800 911 909 or have access to live chat and video counselling through their site [www.layaeap.ie](http://www.layaeap.ie). The password is in capitals: LAYAEAP.



# Volunteer Care and Recognition

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**Research has found that volunteering can have a positive impact on those involved and in particular on volunteers' mental health and well-being<sup>7</sup>. Through volunteering you can gain confidence, learn new skills, meet people and make a difference in your community.**

**We hope that volunteers will take care of themselves while helping ALONE. While the time people spend with us as volunteers can be rewarding and enriching, it may also be challenging.**

You will need to look after yourself and make self-care a priority when acting in a volunteering capacity. We ask that you contact us if you have questions or need support. This may be regarding dementia, bereavement or when an older person moves to a nursing home. You lead and decide on what works for you.

You also have access to the Laya Volunteer Assistance Programme, see page 27, that helps you with any personal or work related problems that you or your family might be facing.

## Recognition

ALONE recognises the contribution volunteers make to the organisation. This is done through a variety of ways such as volunteer social events, thank you cards, monthly newsletters and National Volunteer week. Without the support, time and skills of the volunteers we wouldn't be able to help older people.

## Volunteers on Holidays

ALONE wants to ensure that when volunteers are on holidays they can 'switch off' and not be concerned about the older people they visit. It is also important that when an older person is in need that they have ongoing contact with the office while their volunteer is away. For this reason we ask volunteers to let ALONE know if they are going to be away for any time and need the office to check in with the older person you visit. It is essential that volunteers inform us through the BFriend web app or contact the office if they are going on extended holidays.

## Volunteer Leave of Absence

ALONE understands that you may need to take time off from volunteering depending on personal circumstances or the death of an older person you visit. If so, you should apply for a leave of absence. ALONE will work with you to ensure that a replacement volunteer is found to take over a visit where needed. We will support you until such a time as you decide to return to volunteering.

After a lengthy leave of absence, volunteers should liaise with staff before recommencing volunteering with ALONE. Volunteers may also be required to re-attend Volunteer training or certain additional training.

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<sup>7</sup> "The impact of volunteering on the health and well-being of the volunteer", Volunteer Ireland (2017)



## Volunteers Leaving

In some instances a volunteer may wish to step back from visiting but to remain engaged in other aspects of the organisation, such as continuing to attend the volunteer meetings or taking on a different volunteer role. The nature of volunteering is temporary as people's ability to volunteer and their other commitments often change over time. Where possible, when leaving your role as a volunteer, ALONE requests that volunteers:

- Give a minimum of one month's notice so that a replacement volunteer can be selected to cover the visit
- Carry out a handover visit with the new volunteer where possible
- Complete a volunteer exit form and return your volunteer ID card
- Carry out an exit interview so that ALONE can get feedback on your volunteering experience, both the positive and negative elements, and your reason for leaving where possible



# Code of Conduct

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**We work to ensure that everyone's involvement with ALONE is a positive and pleasant experience. ALONE therefore ask all volunteers to commit to a Code of Conduct that promotes a positive environment. Where volunteers operate outside this Code of Conduct, they may be asked to discontinue volunteering.**

The following behaviours are considered to be in breach of the Code of Conduct:

- Theft
- Corruption
- Criminal conduct
- Breach of confidentiality
- Assault, verbal abuse or threatening behaviour towards older people, fellow volunteers, staff or the general public
- Abuse of alcohol and drugs
- Non adherence to health, safety and hygiene standards
- All forms of bullying, sexual abuse, harassment and discrimination
- Lack of respect for people with disabilities, fellow volunteers, staff and the general public
- Adherence to good practice in regard to reliability and commitment
- Misuse of telephone, email, internet and other facilities on ALONE office premises
- Viewing or downloading of pornography on ALONE office computers
- Gross negligence

This list is not exhaustive. Remember you are representing ALONE while volunteering.

## Dispute Resolution

For serious incidents or allegations involving a volunteer, the volunteer will immediately be asked to step back from volunteering duties. ALONE will ensure the older person and volunteer is protected while the situation is being investigated and that all parties are heard. All parties will be given due process. Depending on the result of the investigation the volunteer will be reinstated or asked to leave. If asked to leave you will have a right to appeal. Dispute resolution will be carried out as confidentially as possible.

## Volunteer Complaints and Grievances

If a volunteer wishes to make a complaint they should initially discuss their grievance with a staff member. If problems cannot be resolved they can put their complaint in writing and ALONE will determine the appropriate action following due process procedures. Our Complaints and Grievances Policy is available upon request.

## Asking a Volunteer to Leave

Volunteers who do not adhere to the policies and procedures of ALONE or who fail to satisfactorily perform their volunteer role will be informed of concerns and issues arising. No volunteer will be asked to leave until they have had an opportunity to discuss the reasons for these concerns with the HR Department. Where appropriate a volunteer may be moved to a more suitable volunteering role. In situations where a volunteer must be asked to leave, HR will discuss the situation with the CEO and, where necessary, will consult with the Board.

# Frequently Asked Questions & Scenarios

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**This section deals with FAQs from volunteers and scenarios that may arise for volunteers in their role with ALONE. Please note that this list is not exhaustive – please contact ALONE with any questions you have.**

## **Will the older person's family know that I am visiting?**

This differs from case to case and depends on how the person was referred to ALONE. The single most important aspect for ALONE is that we have the permission of the older person themselves to send in a volunteer. Once an older person has agreed to a visit, it is at their discretion to inform family members. ALONE will only inform family members that a volunteer will be visiting if requested to do so by the older person.

## **Should I give my personal contact details to the person I visit?**

ALONE strongly advise against volunteers giving out their phone numbers or addresses in the early stages when you are getting to know the older person you visit. This is to ensure that volunteers do not end up taking on more than they have signed up to. The dependency levels of the older people visited by ALONE vary and it is important that volunteers are protected, and protect themselves, against taking on too much and getting too involved.

We recommend that if you need to get a message to the older person regarding a visit that you can call the office on 01 6791032 and we can pass the message onto the older person. We realise that over time, the relationship will develop and the volunteer may choose to give out their phone number, but this is done at the volunteers' own discretion.

## **What should I do if I am unable to reach the person I visit on the phone or if they are not answering their door?**

If the older person is not in when you call, leave a note stating the day and time that you called. Contact ALONE if you are concerned about the older person. If contact cannot be made, a Support Staff member will follow up with other relevant services linked in with the older person or the older person's emergency contact person. If you are outside the older person's home and you feel that something is wrong, call the Gardaí on 999.

## **Should I take on more than one visit?**

This is at the discretion of each volunteer and will depend on your own personal circumstances and time available. There is no expectation from ALONE that a volunteer should take on more than one visit. ALONE would advise against volunteers taking on more than two visits at any time.

## **Is it okay to introduce the person I visit to my family and friends?**

The older person has agreed for you, as a volunteer selected and trained by ALONE, to visit them in their home, not anyone else. It is very important that this is respected. In time, a scenario may arise where you would like to introduce the older person you visit to your family and/or friend. This is at the discretion of the volunteer. However consideration should be given to how this may affect the dynamic of your relationship. This should always be with the agreement of the person you visit and not a regular occurrence.



### **I do not seem compatible with the person I visit, what should I do?**

If you feel that the match is not working out, is causing you undue stress or is simply not an enjoyable experience for you, talk with a staff member. ALONE will work with you in stepping back from the visit and will work with the older person if they request another volunteer. Not all human relationships work out and that is okay.

### **The person I visit has asked me to collect their pension or carry out their personal banking, what should I do?**

Please refer to the section on 'Financial Matters'.

### **The person I visit has accused me of taking money or belongings, what should I do?**

If this situation arises, please contact ALONE. A record will be kept that you reported this issue and an incident report form filled out. ALONE will work with you and the older person as appropriate to resolve this situation.

### **Is it okay to have an alcoholic drink with the person I visit or bring them for a drink?**

ALONE acknowledge that there are circumstances where having an alcoholic drink with the older person you visit may arise and that you are both adults. However, alcohol can have an adverse effect on people. We would advise that consumption of alcohol is done responsibly and in moderation – not in excess. It should not become the basis of your regular visits. We strongly advise against drinking alcohol with an older person where there is a known alcohol problem. If the older person you visit has an alcohol problem, please contact the office for advice.

### **The person I visit has become confused and forgetful, what should I do?**

Unfortunately, in the nature of this volunteering, the health of the older person you visit may deteriorate and memory may be affected. If you have a concern please contact ALONE. ALONE offer dementia and memory difficulties training to all volunteers. Be careful of making a diagnosis of what is wrong - leave this to the medical experts.

### **The person I visit has become overly dependent on me.**

If this is the case and you are feeling too much pressure and stress from the visit, please contact ALONE. Staff will work with you to look at options to support you and/or alleviate this pressure. Where necessary, you will be supported to phase out or step back from visits.

### **The older person I visit is incontinent.**

It is not the role of the volunteer to engage in dealing with incontinence and personal care issues for the older person you visit. This is the role of HSE professionals. If you have concerns relating to incontinence issues for the person you visit, please contact ALONE. We will link in with the older person's Public Health Nurse if needed. Volunteers should handle issues of incontinence sensitively and discretely, and ensure the privacy and dignity of the older person they visit is respected at all times.

### **The person I visit has been admitted to a Nursing Home, do I continue to visit?**

If the nursing home is in a geographic area that suits you to visit and you are still available, then please continue your visits as normal. ALONE can explain your role in writing to the Nursing Home if needed. If the Nursing Home is in a location that you are unable to get to, ALONE can look for another volunteer who may be available in that geographic area.

### **The person I visit has passed away.**

Unfortunately given the age demographic that ALONE works with, this is an issue that may arise during your time volunteering with ALONE.

You will be contacted by ALONE if the older person you visit passes away (where ALONE are informed). If you are aware of the death of an older person please contact ALONE immediately. Staff will be there to act as a support and to attend the funeral with you if this is something you request. A card will be sent by ALONE to the family of the older person, and to you in acknowledgement of your relationship with the older person.

### **The person I visited has passed away and family, who were not in contact with the person, are making all the funeral decisions. I feel I am not being acknowledged for the role I played in the older person's life.**

This can be a very difficult situation for a volunteer. However, when it comes to arranging funerals, volunteers must take a step back and allow family to handle this. If the older person has not specified their funeral arrangements in their will, then family will make these decisions.

It can occur that a volunteer may visit for years and receive little acknowledgment from the person's family when the older person dies. Of course, the opposite can also occur. Please contact ALONE if you need support in dealing with any situation regarding the death of the person you visited.

### **My personal circumstances have changed and I am unable to continue my visit. How do I walk away from the visit without hurting the person's feelings?**

We understand that people's circumstances change and that volunteers may have to step back from visits and from being an ALONE volunteer. This is something that will have been explained to the older person who is visited. ALONE will work with you in planning how you step back from your visit, taking into account the relationship between you and the person you visit. We find that honesty is the best policy and that the older person will understand if you are unable to continue visiting. Staff will work with you to ensure that a new volunteer is in place to cover the visit. Where possible, it is helpful to introduce the new volunteer to the older person on their first visit so that a smooth transfer takes place.

### **I am unable to continue my role as an ALONE volunteer but would like to call in to the person I visited every now and then, is that okay?**

We understand that relationships and friendships are built up by the very nature of the visitation service and that some former volunteers may wish to continue to visit the person who they used to volunteer with. This is at the discretion of the former volunteer. When the volunteer leaves, it will be explained to the older person that you will no longer be representing ALONE or visiting in the capacity of an ALONE volunteer.









**Again,  
thank you.**





Supporting older people  
to age at home



### **ALONE Head Office**

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Find us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram & LinkedIn  
Registered Charity Number: CHY8259



COMPASSIONATE - HONEST - EFFECTIVE - INNOVATIVE

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