



# Telephone Service Volunteer Handbook

COMPASSIONATE - HONEST - EFFECTIVE - INNOVATIVE

# Telephone Support Volunteer Handbook

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## Welcome

**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 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 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

**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 and being a part of ALONE's vision, 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.

## ALONE

### Vision, Mission and Core Values

#### 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

*Compassionate – Honest – Effective - Innovative*

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.



## 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

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.

- 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

## 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 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.

## Requirements of your role

Not having someone to talk to can be lonely. A friendly call can make all the difference.

### Your role involves:

- Providing support to help to reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation.
- Informing ALONE if the older person needs additional support.
- Staying up to date with official COVID-19 information from trusted sources.
- Helping access information for the older person as required.
- Logging the phone calls provided.
- Dealing with issues in a confidential way.
- To follow the ALONE telephone support volunteer protocols and guidelines, including Health and Safety guidelines throughout your time with ALONE.
- To inform ALONE if the older person needs any further additional support.
- To report any concerns regarding an older person's health, safety or welfare to ALONE.

### Your responsibilities include:

- To treat people with respect and dignity
- To respect the values and aims of the organisation and be committed to them and your role
- To be reliable, punctual and act as an ambassador for ALONE
- To maintain a high standard service and competency
- To support and get involved in ALONE's communications and campaigns

## Telephone Support Volunteer Guidelines

### General ALONE Guidelines

- Deal with issues in a confidential manner. Confidentiality is limited to where there is a threat to the older person, yourself, or another individual.
- Be empathic and helpful, your role is a supportive one and is meant to provide social contact and companionship.
- Contact the Telephone Support Coordinator if you have a concern for your older person's health, safety or welfare.
- Don't promise things you can't deliver. If the person needs additional support, please contact the Telephone Support Coordinator.



- Don't offer advice on professional matters - for example, legal issues or non COVID-19 related health issues. If the older person needs advice on professional matters; please contact the Telephone Support Coordinator.
- Don't get involved in the older person's family matters.
- Don't impose your religious or political views.
- If you have a concern for the older person, e.g. they do not have adequate heating or supplies or you are concerned about their mental health, please inform the Telephone Service Coordinator
- Log all calls by completing the online form that will be provided

### Helpful Questions to Ask while on the phone to an older person

- Tell me how things have been for you over the past few days?
- Ask the older person about themselves. You don't know when someone last asked them about themselves and actually listened
- Listen and reflect back the older persons chat or concerns.
- Use open ended questions, those starting with: How, Where, What, Who, Which.



## Do's and Don'ts

### Do's

- Be positive and present during the call to the older person
- Respect the older person's opinions
- Be mindful of boundaries
- Practice confidentiality
- Contact ALONE if the person you call requires extra supports or information
- Follow ALONE guidelines and procedures

### Don'ts

- Do not offer advice on family, legal, professional matters
- Do not give out or ask for personal details
- Do not promise things you can't deliver or create expectations
- Do not try to resolve everything for the older person yourself if you come across a difficult situation. This is not your role. If you have concerns, please contact ALONE
- Do not be afraid to get in touch with ALONE and ask a question
- Do not forget that what you are doing is making a difference.



## Safeguarding

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 you have a concern about abuse or neglect of an older person please report it to an ALONE staff member.

## Code of Conduct

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.



## Health and Safety Whilst Volunteering

The safety of the older people we support and the safety of volunteers is paramount. When carrying out your volunteering role we ask you follow health and safety measures for your own safety and the safety of others. Below are some additional health and safety guidelines that we ask volunteers to follow.

### Suspected Cases of Coronavirus

If you are in communication with an older person and you suspect the older person you have communicated with may have coronavirus, or they suspect themselves that they may have it, please follow the below:

- Reassure the older person there is no need to worry and support is readily available.
- Ask them to follow the HSE guidelines if they have the symptoms. You may offer to call their GP on their behalf if there are agreeable or ask ALONE to do this.
- Report this to your line manager through Salesforce

### Managing Challenging Calls

- If you are on a call and the individual is struggling with suicide ideation, please inform your ALONE contact who will follow up. However, if the individual seems to be in immediate danger of self-harm or suicide, please contact emergency services by calling 112 or 999.
- If you are on a challenging call and do not know how to manage this, it is ok to tell the individual that you will get a staff member to call them back. Contact your ALONE contact/supervisor and ask them to follow up.
- You should not tolerate abuse or inappropriate comments. If this happens on a call, end the call and report this to your ALONE contact/supervisor.

### Emergencies

Before contacting ALONE, call 112 or 999 in a medical emergency when someone is:

- Seriously ill
- Injured
- At risk of dying
- Suicidal and in immediate danger

### Maintain Boundaries

The issue of boundaries is covered within the volunteering training, please continue to follow these guidelines and maintain boundaries. Boundaries are there to keep everyone safe, to prevent things like over dependency on individual volunteers and ensure transparency.

If an issue of boundaries arises e.g. you are feeling pressured to become too involved in an older person's finance or family situation, please contact ALONE.

## Your Mental Health and Wellbeing

Your mental health and wellbeing are just as important as the people you are supporting in your volunteering role. We do not want volunteers to feel overwhelmed by their role.

- Please ensure you take time to switch off from volunteering and focus on yourself, perhaps spend time talking with family and friends or exercising.
- Please keep in contact with your supervisor/ALONE contact and let them know if you need more time out or are becoming overwhelmed.
- Please feel free to make use of the LAYA Assistance Programme (below)

## Volunteer Assistance Programme

Volunteers have access to 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 placement 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.

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.

***Please do not take any additional risks in relation to your health and safety or the health and safety of others. If you have any health or safety concerns in relation to your volunteering role, please contact ALONE.***

# **THANK YOU for all you do!**