

## York Neighbours Volunteer Code of Practice

Volunteers with York Neighbours (YN) will be coming into contact with frail, vulnerable and socially isolated older people. We therefore ask all volunteers to sign up to work to the following Code of Practice.

We appreciate that this may all seem very formal for someone just wanting to help their neighbours with small tasks, but because the people we are visiting are classed as vulnerable adults and volunteers may be visiting them in their homes, taking them out in their cars and possibly handling cash etc, it is necessary.

### Procedure for applying to volunteer

**1. Application form.** When someone expresses an interest in becoming a YN volunteer they will be given/sent some information on YN and given an application form to complete.

**2. Informal interview.** When the application form is received the applicant will be asked to come into the YN office for an informal interview. This will be an opportunity for both parties to ask questions to help find out if YN is the right volunteering job for them.

**3. References.** If after stage 2 both parties wish to continue with the application applicants will be asked to provide two references from people who have known them for at least 2 years and who are not friends or family members, for example, an employer, work colleague, neighbour, religious cleric etc.

**4. Disclosure & Barring Service (police check).** If both references are satisfactory applicants will be asked to complete a Disclosure & Barring Service form.

**5. Confidentiality.** Volunteers will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. It is really important that volunteers don't pass on personal information that neighbours share with them however harmless this seems. However, it will be

explained to neighbours that there will be a two-way exchange of information between the Co-ordinator and volunteer as necessary for providing a safe and efficient service. For example, all contacts will be recorded and monitored between the Co-ordinator, neighbour and volunteer.

If, in the course of their work a volunteer is concerned there is a serious threat to the safety or well-being of the neighbour or someone else they should encourage the neighbour to share this with the Co-ordinator. However, the volunteer should explain that in any case they will have to speak to the Co-ordinator about it under the agreement that they and the neighbour has signed.

**In the case of an immediate and serious threat it may be necessary to break the rule of confidentiality and contact a statutory or emergency service but this will be explained before any action is taken to both the volunteer and the neighbour unless this would endanger the safety of anyone involved.**

**6. Identity cards.** Neighbours will be given the name of the volunteer who is going to visit them and either the Co-ordinator or the volunteer will ring the neighbour to say when they will visit. On completion of steps 1-5 above all volunteers will be asked to provide a photo, or have their photo taken, so they can be given an identity card before taking on their first task.

**Health and Safety of volunteers.** The Co-ordinator, or someone appointed by them, will have visited neighbours to conduct an acceptance visit, so prior to a volunteer being asked to visit a neighbour they will be given details of what to expect. For example, is there anyone else living with them, do they have a pet, do they suffer from a serious illness or condition, is there a door entry system etc.

Information is collected at the acceptance visit so that neighbours and volunteers can be given choices about who is matched to them eg gender, heavy smoker, no pets and so on.

At the acceptance visit the Code of Practice will have been explained and agreed with the neighbour. Obviously some neighbours will not always remember this but

volunteers will be able to refer back to the visit and the agreement made with them.

In addition, each time a neighbour rings in with a request the task will be discussed with them and the exact details agreed before the volunteer goes out to see them. This is to ensure that volunteers know what to expect and are not put in the difficult position of being asked to do more than has been agreed.

So, for example, if a request is made for a volunteer to replace a lightbulb then it will be established if the volunteer needs to buy the bulb, and if so, what type of bulb and does the neighbour have the cash to pay them for it? If the neighbour doesn't know what type of bulb they need the volunteer will be told beforehand that the task is to go to the house and establish this before buying it and returning to fit it. The YN office will establish how urgent the job is so the volunteer knows exactly what is involved before they decide to take the task on.

If the neighbour asks a volunteer to do something extra and the volunteer has time and is happy to do so that is okay but they should let the Co-ordinator know. However, if an extra request is made and the volunteer cannot, or does not want to, do it they should suggest the neighbour rings the office with the new request or offer to do this on their behalf.

Following the task the Co-ordinator will telephone both the volunteer and the neighbour to make sure both parties are happy with what happened.

**Expenses.** Volunteers will be given expenses claim forms and will be able to claim the travel costs incurred in visiting a neighbour or going out with them. However, all expenses must be agreed before being incurred as we may not be able to reimburse unauthorised costs. This can usually be agreed with the Co-ordinator when the task is discussed.

Volunteers will be asked for receipts/tickets/proof of purchase etc. for each expense. Part of the expense form will contain a log of mileage for travel by car to be paid at 45p per mile.

**Money.** Under no circumstances should a volunteer accept gifts or donations of money from those they visit or take out. If a volunteer is offered money they

should remind the neighbour that they are not permitted to accept it and let the Co-ordinator know so they too can remind the neighbour that this forms part of the Code of Practice they signed.

If offered money the volunteer can explain to the neighbour that if they would like to show their thanks by making a donation to the work of York Neighbours they can do this by contacting the office, or if the volunteer has their duplicate receipt book with them they can take the donation and issue a receipt. However, it should always be emphasised that a donation is not necessary or expected to receive, and continue to receive, our service.

Receiving gifts is discouraged but, if it seems rude, or might really upset the person, it is okay to accept **small** gifts other than money eg apples from the garden, a jar of homemade jam but please let the Co-ordinator know when this happens. This is an area open to abuse and should not happen on a regular basis.

If the volunteer goes out with a neighbour then the neighbour will pay for any of their own items of shopping and their own bus fare. The volunteer can claim their bus fare or, if going by car the neighbour will be asked to pay £4 for the journey which they will give to the volunteer. This is a standard fee for all journeys where a Neighbour is going out in a volunteer's car.

If the volunteer is having something to eat or drink when out with a neighbour and the neighbour wants to pay for this then this may be accepted but the volunteer must let the Co-ordinator know. However, it must be clear to the neighbour that this is not expected of them.

If a request is to go shopping without the neighbour then the volunteer will be told beforehand by the Co-ordinator whether they have cash to give them or whether they will need to give them a cheque.

**Under no circumstances** must a volunteer accept a bank card and pin number to go and get cash out on behalf of a neighbour. If a neighbour is unable to get hold of cash this must form part of their request when they ring the office so that an

arrangement can be agreed prior to the volunteer visiting. Where no such arrangement has been advised beforehand and a volunteer is asked to get cash for a neighbour they should explain they are not allowed to do this and they should contact the Co-ordinator.

Volunteers will be given a duplicate receipt book so that if they are given cash to go shopping the amount should be recorded on the receipt and the neighbour asked to sign. The neighbour will then be given the top copy of the receipt. When the volunteer takes the shopping back they will give the neighbour a sales/till receipt with any change and get the neighbour to sign the copy in the receipt book to confirm they are happy with the transaction.

To avoid any possible problems volunteers should not use their own store club/loyalty card to benefit from goods purchased on behalf of the neighbour when they are not accompanied by them. This is because, strictly speaking, it is legally fraudulent to do so under the Supply of Goods and Services Act 1982 and we have been advised that it has caused problems in other organisations. Although these procedures will often seem unduly complicated and strict it provides a safeguard for both the volunteer and the neighbour and must be followed in all circumstances.

**Complaints procedure.** If either a volunteer or a neighbour is unhappy with an aspect of the YN service they should speak to the Co-ordinator in the first instance. The Co-ordinator will do her best to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of both parties but if this is not possible they will be given a copy of the complaints procedure.

If the complaint is against the Co-ordinator they should ring the York Neighbours office on 01904 891627 and ask for a copy of the complaints procedure.