

Galway Contact Volunteer Handbook

Rev A

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Approved by: John Cunningham

Note:

ALONE's Volunteer Handbook formed the basis of this handbook.

Welcome

Welcome to the Galway Contact 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.

Galway Contact was founded in 1981 and the spirit of volunteerism remains at the heart of the organisation. Our volunteers contribute to the organisation at all levels including the Board of Directors, Management Committee, Area Leaders, Friday Morning Club, Befriending service. Volunteers are essential to our organisation and show how people in the community can look after each other.

At Galway Contact, 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. Our Volunteer Handbook contains the duties, responsibilities and key tasks of all our volunteers. Each Galway Contact volunteer receives induction and is supported by our trustees and management committee, Area Leaders and office staff.

By taking part in induction 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 Galway Contact 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.

Thank you from the Board and staff for volunteering with Galway. We really appreciate your time and generosity in helping to support older people to age at home.

Galway Contact

Mission Statement/Main Objective:

The Mission of Galway Contact is to offer innovative and supportive services to older people and their families in the Galway community, through 1:1 befriending, social inclusion, and the Seniors Alert Scheme for personal alarms.

Aims:

- To engage in the relief of loneliness, isolation and distress among the elderly in their own homes and in residential care and hospitals and to organise outings and leisure activities for the elderly in the interest of their social well-being.
- To engage in the relief of distress among the elderly and the provision of support for the persons caring for the elderly
- To raise all necessary funds and to obtain all relevant grants for the elderly and the Charity for the said purpose, and to employ all necessary personnel on a full time or part time basis and to co-operate with all relevant statutory or other bodies and persons, to achieve the said objectives and to train personnel for the said objectives.

Galway Contact – Values

- **We are Caring:**

- We offer the hand of friendship and a listening ear to all our older friends, supporting their need for safety & wellbeing.
- We engage with other caring organisations to the benefit of our volunteers and older friends.

- **We are Passionate:**

- We give priority to the wellbeing of our older friends in our decision making.
- We are committed to contribute to the reduction of loneliness and social exclusion among our older friends.
- We are committed to contribute to the good of society by enabling our volunteers to make a difference.

- **We are Respectful:**

- We assist our older friends to live with dignity and in safety.

- **We are Honest:**

- We act with integrity and sensitivity respecting the confidentiality of our older friends and volunteers.

- **We are Inclusive:**

- We will welcome volunteers and elders regardless of their religious affiliation, race, colour or nationality.
- We will strive to ensure an inclusive culture that encourages, supports and celebrates the diverse voices of our volunteers and older friends.
- We will strive to ensure that any volunteer is entitled to serve on our Management Committee and Board of Directors.

Volunteer Rights & Responsibilities

Galway Contact 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 Galway Contact
- To have your personal information kept confidential
- To receive regular updates about Galway Contact
- 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 cooperate in the garda vetting process and provide the required information in a timely manner
- To maintain a high standard of service and competency
- To contact Galway Contact if you are experiencing problems and to seek support
- To feedback any issues or concerns regarding the older person you visit
- To contact Galway Contact if the older person you visit passes away
- To act as an ambassador for Galway Contact
- To get involved and support Galway Contact's communications and campaigns
- To assist with fundraising initiatives by Galway Contact
- To help support the use of technology used by Galway Contact and older people

Confidentiality

Galway Contact 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 Galway Contact 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/Feedback

Area Leader reports are the main way volunteers provide feedback and receive support in relation to their befriending visit. However, from time to time Galway Contact may hold a volunteer meeting or survey. The volunteer meetings are a confidential space and all volunteers are bound by this confidentiality. Galway Contact 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 Galway Contact.

Volunteer Privacy Statement

Galway Contact 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 6 months afterwards. Galway Contact will always ask your permission before collecting any information about you. As an organisation we use volunteer data to provide weekly befriending visits, 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. If Galway Contact 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.

Galway Contact 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 Galway Contact 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, Galway Contact is the controller of volunteer data. Refer also to Galway Contact Privacy Statement on www.galwaycontact.ie website

Befriending Visits

Befriending is a supported one-to-one relationship between a volunteer and an older person who has been linked in with Galway Contact. The Galway Contact Befriending Service provides companionship 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.

The Role of Befriending Volunteers

- To provide companionship to an older person by visiting them once a week
- To be flexible around travelling to and from visits
- To follow the Galway Contact guidelines throughout your time with Galway Contact and attend induction
- To attend additional training workshops, if necessary, and the annual volunteer social meeting
- To support the older person, if necessary, when attending Galway Contact 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 your Area Leader or the Galway Contact office if there are concerns for the older person's health, safety or welfare
- If required, to participate in Galway Contact volunteer surveys and assist older people in Galway Contact service surveys

Note: Volunteers are not substitutes for home-help or care assistants and should not take on these roles.

Additional Supports

The primary objective of your befriending visit is to ease loneliness for an older person by providing company through conversation, listening, social activities (eg. reading, playing cards, looking at photos together, crosswords, board games).

Providing additional support is a secondary objective and means providing basic practical help to the older person to support the older person to age happily and securely at home. It is up to the volunteer whether they want to offer this support during a visit.

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 (it is not permitted to help with any forms that involve the older person's financial or legal affairs)
- 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 Volunteer Guidelines

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.
 - Be mindful of your boundaries. Set boundaries that you are comfortable with and if you are unsure please contact your Area Leader or Galway Contact office.
 - 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 your Area Leader or Galway Contact office if you have a concern for your older person's health, safety or welfare.
- Contact your Area Leader or Galway Contact if you or the older person need support or advice.
 - Contact your Area Leader or Galway Contact if the older person you visit has passed away.
 - Pace yourself in terms of time, energy and commitment to avoid burnout.
 - Dress appropriately
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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 Galway Contact first.
- Don't offer, take or lend money. Contact Galway Contact 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 Galway Contact.
- 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 Galway Contact regarding the situation if needed.
- Don't stay overnight in the home of an older person you visit. If they ask, please contact Galway Contact.
- 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 Galway Contact.

Volunteer Health, Safety and Welfare

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

Health and Safety Guidelines

- 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 contact your Area Leader or Galway Contact office 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 your Area Leader or Galway Contact office for support.
- Never stay in a situation where you are uncomfortable or feel you are in danger. Trust your instincts and leave immediately. Contact your Area Leader or Galway Contact office 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 contact Galway Contact 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 Galway Contact.

*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 your Area Leader or a Galway Contact office staff.

Matching Process

Galway Contact will aim to match new Befriending Volunteers after they complete their paperwork, induction and garda vetting. When matching you with an older person Galway Contact will take into account the locations, gender preferences and interests of the older person and the volunteer. Galway Contact 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,

Galway Contact 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. A Galway Contact staff member will accompany you on your first visit with the older person. Please note that it can take a little while 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 (Introduction)

A staff representative will go with you to your first visit. The older person will receive a reminder phone-call from Galway Contact near the day of the visit. A staff representative will again explain the role of the Befriending 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. It is recommended that you arrange a set day and time for the weekly visit upfront rather than arranging from week to week as it is easier for the visits to fall by the wayside due to difficulty in contacting by phone, misinterpretation etc. 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 information with your name and the contact details of the Galway Contact office should they wish to contact Galway Contact. Your personal contact details will NOT be given out.

Visiting in Pairs

Currently volunteers do not visit in pairs. However, in certain instances if Galway Contact deems it appropriate for two volunteers to support each other in carrying out a particular visit volunteers will be assigned to visit in pairs.

Next Steps

- A Galway Contact staff representative will not accompany you on your second visit unless otherwise requested or agreed.
- Galway Contact 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 Galway Contact should be contacted.

From time to time the Office Administrator or Area Leader may contact the older person to get feedback on how they feel the visits are going. Galway Contact endeavours to consistently provide support to older people who avail of the befriending service and ensures the service's effectiveness through the befriending check-in calls. Also, it may be difficult for the older person to tell the volunteer that they would like the visit to cease and this could be for any number of reasons (see section "Helpful Hints") and not be a reflection on the volunteer. As I'm sure you

would understand this safeguards the older person from a volunteer who doesn't follow our policies and procedures.

A phone call to the older person can also be a great way for Galway Contact to hear positive feedback and praise from the older person about their volunteer.

Other Support Needs

If staff are ever 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.

Helpful Hints

- It is natural to feel nervous before your first visit.
- You may not feel totally relaxed having a Galway Contact 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. Galway Contact 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 Galway Contact 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 Galway Contact 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 Galway Contact informed of such changes to your visit.

Financial Matters and Insurance Expenses

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

Gifts and Money

Galway Contact understands 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 minimum 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 Galway Contact 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 Galway Contact. Galway Contact volunteers should not offer or lend money to the person they visit. Please contact Galway Contact if the person has financial difficulties. If gifts are being given on a regular basis, please contact Galway Contact 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 Galway Contact 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 Galway Contact 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 Galway Contact office.

Wills

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

Next of Kin

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

Insurance, Public Liability and Personal Accident Insurance

Volunteers are protected by Galway Contact's public liability and personal accident insurance. In regard to 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 Galway Contact stating that you use your car for volunteering purposes to provide to your insurance company

Volunteer Support

Your welfare as a volunteer is very important to us at Galway Contact. It is essential that there is good ongoing communication between Galway Contact and our volunteers. It is of great importance to Galway Contact that the volunteer voice remains strong within the organisation. Communication with volunteers will take place at Galway Contact volunteer meetings, through Galway Contact emails, the Galway Contact website, and through regular communication with Area Leaders and staff. If you have any concerns, please contact the Galway Contact office on 091-867892.

The Galway Contact Office Administrator is involved in the recruitment, induction, matching and engagement with our Befriending Volunteers. This is to ensure you are supported in your volunteering role. Please contact the Galway Contact office directly if you would like to speak to the Office Administrator regarding any issues relating to your volunteering role.

Area Leaders

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

Volunteer Check In Calls

As an additional support Galway Contact 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

From time to time you may be invited to attend a Volunteer meeting. 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 Area Leader and Galway Contact Staff
- To gain information on relevant plans and services

Volunteer Learning & Development

As an additional support Galway Contact may from time to time offer a range of additional learning and development sessions. 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 Galway Contact, are welcome 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 Galway Contact.

Additional learning and development modules on particular topics can include First Aid, Dementia, Mental Health and Additional Supports for Older People.

Volunteer Care and Recognition

Research has found that volunteering can have a positive impact on those involved and in particular on volunteers' mental health and well-being. 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 Galway Contact. 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.

Recognition

Galway Contact recognises the contribution volunteers make to the organisation. The main way we recognise our volunteers is through our annual volunteer social event. Without the support, time and skills of the volunteers we wouldn't be able to help older people.

Volunteers on Holidays

Galway Contact 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 Galway Contact know if they are going to be away for any time and need the office to check in with

the older person they visit. It is essential that volunteers inform us by contacting the office if they are going on extended holidays.

Volunteer Leave of Absence

Galway Contact 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. Galway Contact 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 the office before recommencing volunteering with Galway Contact. Volunteers may also be required to re-attend volunteer training or certain additional training.

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, Galway Contact requests that volunteers:

- Give a minimum of one month's notice so that a replacement volunteer can be selected to cover the visit
- Complete a volunteer exit form and/or exit interview and/or send exit email.
- If requested, participate in an exit interview so that Galway Contact can get feedback on your volunteering experience, both the positive and negative elements, and your reason for leaving where possible

Code of Conduct

We work to ensure that everyone's involvement with Galway Contact is a positive and pleasant experience. Galway Contact therefore asks 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
- Non-adherence to good practice in regard to reliability and commitment
- Misuse of telephone, email, internet and other facilities on Galway Contact office premises
- Viewing or downloading of pornography on Galway Contact office computers
- Gross negligence

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

Dispute Resolution

For serious incidents or allegations involving a volunteer, the volunteer will immediately be asked to step back from volunteering duties. Galway Contact 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 contact the Galway Contact office who will determine the appropriate action following due process procedures. Our Complaints Procedure is available upon request.

Asking a Volunteer to Leave

Volunteers who do not adhere to the policies and procedures of Galway Contact 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 office. Where appropriate a volunteer may be moved to a more suitable volunteering role. In situations where a volunteer must be asked to leave, the office staff member will discuss the situation with the Chairperson and, where necessary, will consult with the Board.

Frequently Asked Questions & Scenarios

This section deals with FAQs from volunteers and scenarios that may arise for volunteers in their role with Galway Contact. Please note that this list is not exhaustive – please contact Galway Contact 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 Galway Contact. The single most important aspect for Galway Contact 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. Galway Contact 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?

Galway Contact 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 Galway Contact 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 091-867892 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 your Galway Contact Area Leader if you are concerned about the older person. If contact cannot be made, contact 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.

What should I do if the person I visit is frequently not at home when I arrive for the visit and this appears to be an ongoing problem?

In most instances the older person is not doing this intentionally. As some older people have some memory loss or symptoms of dementia they can easily forget what day it is or that a visit is due that day. One suggestion is to ring them either a few hours or the day before your visit to remind them and doublecheck they are still available. If you have a regular day and time for visiting suggest to them that they mark it in their calendar or put a note on their fridge, whatever is the most visible for them. Also carers and family who visit will see the note and remind them about the upcoming visit. Also this will let family members know to inform you if they are taking the person out for the day or to a medical appointment, etc. so that you don't turn up unawares that they have gone out.

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 Galway Contact that a volunteer should take on more than one visit. Galway Contact 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 Galway Contact, 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.

Is it ok to bring the person I visit to my home for a visit?

In general, it is advisable not to complicate things by bringing the person to your home as this is straying into the bounds of your personal space. Visits should generally take place in their home or on neutral territory. It is not forbidden but strongly advised not to make a habit of.

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. Galway Contact 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 Galway Contact. A record will be kept that you reported this issue and an incident report form filled out. Galway Contact 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?

Galway Contact 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.

Is it ok to bring the person I visit out of their home eg. for a walk?

It is advisable to check with whatever sources you have to determine their suitability in relation to health and mobility before deciding to bring the person out. Checking with Galway Contact office staff or a family member you have met is advisable and inputs from public health nurses and carers who visit is useful also. If the person you visit is the decision maker in this process then you may come to a decision together that is suitable. No volunteer should ever feel pressurised to do this.

Is it ok to go out for eg. coffee with the person I visit where paying for a bill is involved?

We do not expect volunteers to be out-of-pocket on a continuous basis as a result of their visits. If the volunteer and the older person wish to go out sometimes they should reach a fair decision with regard to payment of bills and outings like this should be done only where both parties are willing to go out and neither feel any pressure to do so.

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 Galway Contact. 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 Galway Contact. 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 and private homecare company professionals. If you have concerns relating to incontinence issues for the person you visit, please contact Galway Contact. 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. Galway Contact 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, Galway Contact 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 Galway Contact works with, this is an issue that may arise during your time volunteering with Galway Contact. You will be contacted by Galway Contact if the older person you visit passes away (where Galway Contact are informed). If you are aware of the death of an older person please contact Galway Contact immediately. Staff will be there to act as a support. Where appropriate a card may be sent by Galway Contact to the family of 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 Galway Contact 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 a Galway Contact volunteer. This is something that will have been explained to the older person who is visited. Galway Contact 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 a Galway Contact 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 Galway Contact or visiting in the capacity of a Galway Contact volunteer.

Reference Documents:

- Code of Conduct for Volunteers (replaces Volunteer Agreement previously used)
- Volunteer Application Form