

Coronavirus information

Proactive Wellbeing Calls & Telephone Scams

During the current COVID-19 crisis it's essential that we contact older people who need our help. The local Age UK network and the Call in Time team are doing a fantastic job supporting those most in need including proactively calling vulnerable older people to check in on their wellbeing. As days centres close and the weeks of self-isolation continue, receiving a phone call could make the world of difference to the older people we support.

Unfortunately, as people are forced to stay at home, criminals are preying on those in vulnerable situations who are isolated and living alone. Criminals are using the crisis as an opportunity to devise new telephone scams to target the public. For example, we've already received reports of

scammers pretending to be Age UK staff asking for payments or offering to do shopping in return for bank details.

Receiving a nuisance or scam phone call is unsettling for any of us but can be even more harmful for vulnerable older people, particularly those living alone, and can lead to a decline in wellbeing and cause anxiety.

Therefore, it is vital that all Age UK staff and volunteers clearly identify themselves and take that time to build trust with the older person. By answering the following five questions that older people may have, we can safeguard the older people we support.

Who is calling me?

- Clearly identify yourself including your local Age UK and job role.

How did Age UK get my phone number?

- Briefly explain how you, or your local Age UK, knows the older person and explain that they consented to sharing their telephone number with you.
- Where necessary, provide specific details for the older person so they feel assured. For example, detail any classes they have attended over the last couple of months, or any notable information and advice sessions you may have had. This is crucial to build trust over the telephone.

How can I be sure?

- If the older person is still concerned, offer to speak to another member of the household or suggest they call a friend or relative to double check before progressing with the call.
- You could also suggest that they ring your local Age UK general reception number to confirm that the call made by the staff member or volunteer had been arranged (this would require a central register of clients who are going to be called). Where possible, offer a specific date and time that the older person can call back.
- Clarify that they can hang up at any time and that there is no requirement to take the call. If they do not wish to take the call, describe how they can access further information via other channels such

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as your local Age UK website and ensure they have access to a contact number.

Why is Age UK is calling me?

- Explain if you are calling proactively or if you were asked to call the older person, for example, by their friend or relative. This should help appease the older person's worries.
- Explain your reason for calling, for example, to ask how the older person is doing and if they require any support during this time.
- Provide a few examples of support that is available, for example a food delivery service or a weekly befriending call.

What should I do if I have another question following the call?

- Explain who the older person can contact if they have any support requests or concerns once the telephone call has finished.
- Detail whether it will be you personally picking up the phone, or if it's the generic local Age UK support number or Age UK National Advice Line so the older person knows what to expect.

Important: Telephone scammers often provide victims with bogus phone numbers to verify the caller, so where possible the older person should look the local Age UK's reception number up for themselves and not be given it via the caller.

If you know or suspect someone has fallen victim to a scam then get them to contact their bank immediately and report it to Action Fraud online or by calling 0300 123 2040.

If you are concerned that an older person has been targeted and they are unable to keep themselves safe due to age, injury or illness then contact your local authority, local police force, local Age UK or Age UK's Safeguarding Team.