

Top Tips for setting up a Telephone Befriending Project

In light of recent and continuing developments of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) many organisations are considering introducing the option of telephone befriending as a way of to continue to providing support to vulnerable clients. This guidance is aimed at supporting you to ensure that you have processes and procedures set up in advance to keep both befrienders and befriendees safe.

Guidance for Telephone Befriending

- Be clear that the befriending service is a 'time limited relationship'
- Ensure befriendees give consent for their befriender to have their contact number, if they don't routinely have this and that is kept securely and in confidence.
- Communicate to both befriendees and befrienders clear parameters regarding the length and frequency of phone calls.
- Establish prior to matching whether the befriendee requires any additional support such as practical support/shopping etc. If this is required, consider signposting or directly referring the befriendee to an organisation that can offer this support.
- Encourage befriendees and befrienders to set up a schedule (arranging phone calls for a certain day/time/duration)
- Put in place a policy surrounding privacy of numbers, if your organisation doesn't/isn't allowing both parties to have numbers. (To hide a number from a landline dial 141 and then the number; from an Android device go to the 'phone', press the vertical 3 dots for a drop down menu and select 'settings', select 'supplementary services', select 'showing caller ID', click 'hide my number'; from an Apple device go to 'settings', select 'phone', select 'show my caller ID', slide the circle to the left to hide number and back to right (green) to show number.)
- Consider limiting the amount of information befrienders are given about the befriendee. For example, if the organisation is providing telephone support only, advise both parties not to exchange surnames or addresses.
- Agree an escalation policy for if the befriendee fails to answer the telephone after several attempts in a certain time frame.

Information for Befrienders

- If appropriate, ask your befrienders to check in on their befriendees wellbeing. This could include asking if they are eating well and staying hydrated, have enough food, have a plan to get more delivered if necessary; asking if they are taking and have access to any medication which they might need; encouraging them to keep in touch with people over the phone or digitally if they can; recommending listening to a chatty radio station and if they are feeling lonely to put some extra pictures around of people they care about.
- Instruct befrienders how to be in touch with coordinators if they are concerned about befriendees wellbeing or if they are concerned about their own wellbeing.

- Ensure befrienders do not offer advice outside of their expertise and refer any questions or queries on to their Co-ordinator.

Ideas for helping to manage isolation – 5 Ways to Wellbeing

- 1) **Stay connected** – ask about friends/family. Have they got contact details? Can they text, email or phone calls to keep regularly connected?
- 2) **Stay Active** – have they got a garden, can they do something out there, do they like music, could they dance around; how about chair exercises, google chair exercises and lots of things come up the NHS has a web site with the details (offer to email it to them <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/sitting-exercises/>)
- 3) **Give**, do you have friends especially older friends or relatives, could you give them a call, or write to them, letters and postcards may really be appreciated
- 4) **Keep Learning**, have they always promised themselves to learn a new language or how to crochet – maybe this is the time! Is there a book they were meaning to read?
- 5) **Taking Notice** is the 5th way to wellbeing – encourage them to listen! Can they hear the birds singing? Can they see the flowers popping up outside? What about noticing how they are feeling? Are they staying hydrated and drinking enough for example?
- 6) Ask them what **three things** they will do to look after themselves before you talk again.

Thinking about New Matches

- If your waiting list is growing, consider if staff members whose workload allows to take on a weekly check in until and a befriender can be found.
- If your organisation is recruiting/taking on new volunteers for telephone befriending: - DBS checks are not required but continue to think about how you can recruit safely. (Current befrienders who are already trained and have had checks completed can transition from face-to-face to telephone befriending without additional external paperwork and could take on additional matches if they are willing).
- Consider how you will train new volunteers if you are unable to meet in person. Could you do this over the phone, create a video for example?

If you need any further support or have any questions please email us at: enquires@thvolunteering.org.uk or call 01462 689405.

