

## **BENEFITS OF TELEPHONE BEFRIENDING**

- More clients per volunteer
- Cover wider geographical area
- Cost effective – low expenses
- Helps with waiting lists (if one to one befriending is in place)

## **BASIC CONSIDERATIONS WHEN SETTING UP A SCHEME**

- Is there evidence that the service is needed?
- How would it fit into your organisation?
- Where will the calls be made from? Home or office?  
Consider confidentiality, quiet environment etc.
- Where will the referrals come from?
- Assessments – essential matching – who will do these?  
Face to face or over the phone/skype?
- Guidelines and boundaries eg weekly/fortnightly calls/record keeping
- Training – can current volunteer training and recruitment procedures be adapted?
- Additional training on listening skills for volunteers

*When we hold our tongues and listen*

*We communicate our care*

*For an open ear speaks volumes*

*To a heart that's in despair*

*Listening may be the most loving and helpful thing you  
do today - keep up the good work*

## **The Volunteers Experiences:**

### **“WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT TELEPHONE BEFRIENDING?”**

- When I ring someone and they sound a little down by the end of the call they are laughing. That gives me a boost.
- I enjoy getting to know the carer, although some are more difficult to get to know than others.
- Being helpful and find I can cheer people up after a chat and often a laugh.
- I enjoy contacting the carers who need someone outside the family circle to talk to about their situation.
- Feeling that sometimes one has been of some help.
- The exchange of views/opinions on a wide range of subjects.
- I enjoy listening to people and enabling them to talk about their concerns and fears without feeling they are burdening anybody.
- Having been a carer myself I know how self esteem can evaporate so I like to think I can empathise and really understand.
- It gets me out of the house! (two befrienders said this)
- Being housebound I thought I could never do any voluntary work so it has really helped my confidence and self esteem

### **“ARE THERE ANY CHALLENGES TO TELEPHONE BEFRIENDING?”**

- The first couple of times you speak to a new carer it can be hard, but slowly you can build up their confidence.
- I occasionally find it difficult to end a conversation when the carer is very talkative.
- A surprising amount of time is taken ringing back and leaving messages.
- Can take a while to build up a trusting relationship where they can be totally honest, they are so used to ‘pretending ‘ to be okay.

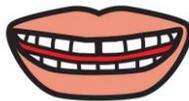
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# *Listening and Responding Skills for Telephone Befrienders*



**SUPPORT  
FOR CARERS  
LEICESTERSHIRE**

**JUNE 2015**

## **What is Good Listening?**

- Not interrupting
- Paying attention
- Not giving advice
- Not judging

- Empathy - putting yourself in their place - see below
- Hearing between the lines
- Being aware of own body language
- Assurance of confidentiality\*
- Open questions
- Using instincts
- Recognising one's own agenda
- Focussing on the other persons agenda

\*Excluding certain situations - see Confidentiality in main handbook

By creating an empathic relationship it enables the person to

- Feel valued and understood
- Develop trust and openness towards the listener
- Open up about what is on their mind
- Focus on what they are trying to express
- Express themselves without pressure
- Feel supported

## Guidelines for Effective Listening

1. Listen with undivided attention, without interrupting
2. Remember what has been said, including any small details, this shows you have been listening
3. Listen to the undertones of what is not openly being said, but the person may be feeling. Identify key experiences.
4. Listen for non-verbal clues (weeping, sighing, silences)
5. Listen to yourself - are you talking too much about your experiences rather than theirs
6. Tolerate silences a little longer than you normally would, the person may be collecting their thoughts
7. Try to remain calm even if the person you are talking to is not

8. Don't ask too many questions, the person may feel they are being interrogated.

## The Art of Listening



There is an art to listening, it involves really wanting to hear what another person is saying.

There is an art to listening between the lines and 'hearing' what is *not* being said.

Listening means more than just saying "yes" and "no" in the right places. Listening shows you really care.

Body language (even when you are using the phone) can say a lot about how well you are listening - do you doodle when on the phone?

We are usually so busy working out what we want to say or how we will respond to what is being said, that we get impatient waiting for someone to finish what they are saying.

Reflecting back is a good way of showing you have been listening to someone. When they are in full flow, listen for one or two key words (particularly to do with emotions) and repeat them back, eg "You mentioned just now that you get 'angry' when your father keeps repeating himself, tell me a bit more about that"

## Open/Closed Questions

### *Open Questions:*

- Begin with Who, What, When, Why and How
- Require more than a "yes" or "no" answer
- Encourage people to open up and share information

### *Closed Questions:*

- Begin with Did, Can, Will, Would or Are
- Can be answered by "Yes" or "No"
- Easier therefore less uncomfortable to answer
- Can be useful in bringing a conversation to an end  
eg "would you like me to call you again next week?"

### *Probing (prompting) Questions:*

- "It sounds like ...."
- "Tell me about ...."
- "It seems that ...."

### *Hypothetical Questions*

- Use this technique if you would like to encourage someone to adopt a new way of dealing with situations e.g. "What would happen if ...."

### *Reflective Questions*

- These can act as a prompt for deciding what to do next eg "we've talked a lot about what is happening with the carers today, do you think you will be able to call the agency and tell them now"

## Barriers to Listening

- External noises - at either end
- Strong accents or dialects

- Stereotyping/culture differences
- Being interrupted
- Identifying too closely with other people's experiences may trigger emotions within the caller "Too close to home"
- You are out of your depth or range of experience
- You hear some bad news and are not sure how to respond
- Being preoccupied with your own problems

## Distressed or Angry Callers

- Remember YOU are not the cause of their distress
- Mentally distance yourself from them
- The caller may displace their anger on to you.
- Keep silent until the caller has had their first outpouring
- When you do speak be aware of your own and the organisations boundaries (ie not making promises)
- Allow silences
- Try to clarify the cause of the distress in order to provide correct information - however do not give advice
  - just discuss options
- If the caller is crying give them time and reassure them that you are still there and listening - do not rush them
- Seek support for yourself after the call

REMEMBER ... you don't have to come up with wise words or advice

Just listen - have respect - empathise - be genuine

**"how sad"      "I am sorry to hear that"**

**“that sounds very difficult for you”**

## **Ending Calls or Visits**

- Reflect back and summarise on what you have been talking about (this shows you have been listening)
- Try to end on a positive note eg something they have to look forward to in the next week
- Use a closed question - “will the same time next week be convenient?”
- If it's still difficult, tell them *politely* you have other carers to call!

## **Guidelines for Home Based Volunteers**

- Always enter 141 before dialling the number to ensure your own number is not given out
- Make contact with the Befriending Co-ordinator at the end of your calling sessions by phone or email
- When making notes or emailing your report in to the office only use carers initials to ensure confidentiality
- Always make the calls during office hours (9.00am to 4.30pm Mon - Fri) to ensure there is back up if you have a problem

### **Common Problems Areas of Telephone Befriending**

PROBLEM	SOLUTION
Creating dependence or becoming too involved.	Be as clear as possible about the time you can give. Keep to a routine that suits both parties. Never give out your home telephone number to carers.
Requests to meet or asking for home visits	If both parties are in agreement, a one-off arrangement can be made for a home visit with the telephone befriending co-ordinator
Physical and sensory disabilities affecting the quality of the communication	Suggest aids and adaptations which may help. It may be something simple like new batteries for hearing aids.
Some people who are more isolated may be unused to having a conversation which flows naturally	Be prepared with topics which may be of mutual interest. Read the assessment for information about family etc. Read your own notes from the previous call. If all else fails there's always the weather!
Carers who talk too much!	Befriending is a two way relationship. Be diplomatic but do not let the calls go on for more than 15-20 mins. Let them know you have other calls to make.
Carers who ask too many questions.	Only disclose what you feel comfortable telling them. They may just be interested in your experiences of caring.
Being unable to answer their questions about caring issues.	Tell them you will get one of the Support for Carers team to call them.

## VOLUNTEER ROLE DESCRIPTION

Organisation name:

**Voluntary Action South Leicestershire**

Volunteer Role Title:

**Carers Telephone Befriender**

Tasks/Responsibilities:

- **Take responsibility for own caseload (approx 3-6 carers)**
- **Make weekly or fortnightly phone calls to offer a listening ear and social contact**
- **Keep log of phone calls and brief details of conversation**
- **Liaise with and feedback to project worker.**
- **Attend short training session**
- **Agree to take up of references and DBS check**

Skills required:

**Good telephone manner**  
**Ability to listen as well as talk**  
**Empathy**  
**Communication skills**  
**Calm manner**

Responsible to:

**Carers Telephone Befriending Project Worker at VASL**

Hours/time commitment:

**Volunteers are asked to commit to a regular shift of approximately 2 hours every week or fortnight between 10am and 4pm Monday – Friday**

Location:

**The Settling Rooms, St. Mary's Place, Market Harborough or  
Volunteer's home by arrangement**

Training and Induction:

**Volunteers will be required to attend an initial training day (approx. 2 hours at the office, or at home on a one to one basis)  
Volunteers will need to provide references before commencing**

Supervision and Support:

**The Project Co-ordinator is normally available for support at the time of the calls. Otherwise Support for Carers Team will be available during office hours**

Benefits to the volunteer:

**Belonging to an organisation  
To give some structure to your life  
Using spare time constructively  
Making a difference to someone's life  
Build confidence  
Feel useful  
Sense of achievement  
Exploring a new type of work  
Something to add to CV or job applications  
Personal satisfaction  
To give something back to the community  
To use existing skills and learn new ones**

Expenses:

**45p per mile between volunteers home and Settling Rooms and car park fee  
Cost of telephone calls will be re-imbursed where applicable**

***If you are interested in this volunteering opportunity please contact:***

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