

Guidance: from Face-to-Face to Telephone Befriending

In light of recent and continuing developments of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) your befriending organisation should consider the option of telephone befriending as a way of being able to continue to provide support to your vulnerable befriendees.

We are also encouraging organisations to think about how they could perhaps support people on their waiting list or their wider community if current volunteers are willing to take on additional people via telephone delivery for the time being. This guidance provides suggestions to help current face-to-face matches switch to telephone befriending.

We are currently working on additional resources and hope to have these live within the next day or so.

Ensure your organisation stays up to date with the latest guidance and has plans in place to adapt and continue to support befriendees.

1) Decide on a Policy

- Consult the latest guidance from the Government and NHS.
- Have a team meeting among staff to create a plan.
- Consider if telephone befriending is a viable option for your service and how you can quickly put this in place to maintain support to people at this time.
- Ensure staff members are clear on procedures and are able to work remotely (this includes providing telephone or digital support and supervision to befrienders).

2) Communicate your Plan

If you have not already been in touch with your befriendees and befrienders, you should keep them informed regarding current NHS guidance and remind them about handwashing and isolation guidance

- wash our hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- always wash our hands when we get home or into work
- use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- cover our mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve (not our hands) when we cough or sneeze
- put used tissues in the bin straight away and wash our hands afterwards

- avoid close contact with people who are unwell

- Inform befriendees and befrienders about your organisation's plans (i.e. how to deliver telephone befriending, what it is and what support you will be offering).

3) Switching to Telephone Befriending

- Ensure both befriendees and befrienders are comfortable moving from face-to-face to telephone befriending for the time being. Ask your befrienders if they are willing to take on additional people to support those on your waiting list or to cover for other befrienders who are not available.
- Ensure befriendees give consent (verbal would suffice) for their befriender to have their contact number, if they don't routinely have this.
- Communicate to befriendees and befrienders parameters regarding the length and frequency of phone calls.
- Encourage befriendees and befrienders to set up a new schedule (arranging phone calls for a certain day/time/duration as they would a face-to-face visit)
- 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.)

4) 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 coordinators have work mobiles ensure befrienders have these numbers, in case your office is closed) if they are concerned about befriendees wellbeing or if they are concerned about their own wellbeing.

5) Thinking about New Matches

- If your waiting list is growing, consider if staff members whose work load 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:
 - In Scotland this is regulated work and current advice from Disclosure is a PVG is required (please phone or email us and we can discuss this in further detail),
 - In England 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.