
COVID-19 SUPPORT

GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER

SUPPORTERS



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ABOUT THE CENTRE

Daventry Volunteer Centre has been at the heart of volunteering in the district since 1990. Our work includes

- Recruiting and training volunteers for local charities and our projects
- Acting as the voice for local community groups, and keeping them up-to-date with developments that affect them
- Delivering projects that directly improve the health, wellbeing and prospects for people in Daventry district.

One of those projects is Happy@Home, which offers befriending support across West Northamptonshire. This has been operating in one way or another for the last 8 years and we have lots of volunteers who have been visiting our most isolated and lonely elderly residents in their own homes.

These guidelines have been put together for our existing befrienders, potential new volunteers and other organisations that may find them useful.



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THINKING OF TELEPHONE BEFRIENDING?

It is humbling the number of people who are thinking of others - often strangers - at a time like this.

In reality, much of the local response will be informal with people checking on their immediate neighbours or vulnerable family members. This is great and builds upon existing relationships you have or grows them as we meet our neighbours for the first time. This should continue.

There are however many things that still need to be considered when efforts scale-up, or you want to be there for people you have never met before.

At a time when all non-essential face-to-face contact should be stopped - and a time where sadly scams may increase - it's recommended that anyone who wishes to volunteer more generally, and with people they have no prior relationship with, to get in touch with an existing befriending service.

For those in West Northamptonshire, our Happy@Home befriending service has switched to telephone calls. They will be able to support you in finding a suitable person to befriend over the telephone. This is not only helpful in terms of us being able to broker a relationship, but also for everyone involved to know that there is support, advice and checks in place.



Tips & Ideas

If you want to help out, think about your immediate friends, families, networks and neighbours first.

After this, there are a number of befriending services, such as Happy@Home who can offer supported befriending.



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TELEPHONE BEFRIENDING

IN THESE DIFFICULT TIMES

As the COVID-19 situation continues to develop and change our day-to-day lives, many people are looking to get involved in befriending services, or to switch their befriending from home visits to telephone calls. For people already befriending this is quite a change, and there are different things to consider with telephone befriending when compared to face-to-face visits. For others this may be the first time they have volunteered as a befriendee and would like to find out more about how it works and what support is out there.

WHAT IS BEFRIENDING?

Befriending is more than just having a chat with someone. Befriending aims to build relationships between people, particularly where one of them is at risk of isolation or loneliness.

Befriending means building relationships that are supported by local charities and groups (such as Happy@Home) to help vulnerable people feel connected, informed and involved within their community.

CURRENT BEFRIENDERS

In keeping with Government guidance all home visits have been paused.

However, it may be that you live very close, or that you wish to help by delivering essential shopping or run small errands, like post letters or walk their dog.



Tips & Ideas

For the latest information about COVID-19 and what to do to keep you and your family safe go to: www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response

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FACE-TO-FACE CONTACT

We would strongly advise that any befrienders do not enter the homes of the people they visit **unless in a life-critical emergency**. Social distancing and isolation is the best way to combat the spread of the virus.

SHOPPING FOR ESSENTIALS

Where possible, it would be best for family members or close friends of befriendees to be the people shopping for them as this helps avoid issues that can arise when money is being handled.

However not everyone has a support network around them, so you might want to help them by delivering food. Although supermarkets will not close there may be restrictions placed upon items being bought. Please do keep this in mind.

If you are thinking of helping deliver shopping to 'at-risk', isolating groups then excellent hygiene practices to stop the transmission of the virus are of the upmost importance.

This means:

- Strictly adhering to social distancing guidelines.
- Washing your hands thoroughly and often.
- Avoid touching your face.

This must be carried on at all times, not just when you are volunteering

STOP If for any reason you feel unwell, or are developing symptoms

STOP If anyone you live with is developing symptoms and self-isolate



Tips & Ideas

There are a number of tips and tricks floating around about how to pass shopping, money and receipts without contact.

*Nothing can be perfect, but **the foundation of any technique is clean hands, elimination of all unnecessary contact with items and social distancing. The befriendee should also practice good hygiene, especially with items being dropped off. Oh, and try not to touch your face!***

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TELEPHONE BEFRIENDING TIPS

THINGS TO REMEMBER

For people who currently befriend, visit, or help out someone at risk of isolation in our community, the most important thing is checking they are OK, and they know what support is out there for them.

Much like home visits, agreeing and sticking to a schedule for phone calls (such as a certain day/time/length of call) works best, as it helps keep routine and can give someone in isolation something to look forward to.

It is OK – and perhaps easier at a time like this – to share your number with your befriendee and vice-versa. If however either you or your befriendee would prefer to keep your numbers private, we can offer a service that does this. Please get in touch with the Daventry Volunteer Centre to arrange this before you make your first call. Most smart phones also have the ability to hide your 'Caller ID'.



Tips & Ideas

*It's natural that current events may dominate a conversation but it's very important to talk about other things, such as family, friends and to focus on **positive news** as befriending aims to reduce feelings of anxiety.*

When calling, it would be good to check in on their health, making sure they have enough food, have access to medication and are generally coping OK with any sustained periods of isolation.

Calling regularly will improve the wellbeing of your befriendee.





TOP TIPS FOR EMERGENCY BEFRIENDING

1 Many things go into creating a good befriending relationship. Establishing trust is a key factor. The befriender should feel able to talk openly about problems and issues with you. Building trust can take time and should not be rushed.

2 Both befriender & befriended are equal participants in this relationship by choice and you must allow for an element of choice in any discussions or decisions you make together. Ask them questions, but also let them ask and learn about the community and what is happening in the World. After all, you are their connection to what is happening outside their home.

3 Remember that a befriending relationship is about benefiting the befriended. We want you to focus on their needs and give them a compassionate ear. Make sure not to offload on to the befriended. Get to know them, learn about them and be clear about what you can and cannot support them with.

4 It is important that we understand the whole person that we are matched with. See the befriended in a complete way, rather than only identifying the problems or difficulties they live with. It is about viewing the befriended in context, in all different aspects of their life.

5 Equality is key. Your befriending match must involve respect, appreciation and acceptance. Your relationship can focus on the "being there for" and not "doing for".

6 Know your motives for volunteering. It is important that you have a professional approach to your role while also having fun and enjoying the communication and relationship with your match.

7 Make sure you are calling at an appropriate time. There should be an agreed time in advance and at the end of each call, confirm when the next phone call will be.

Try to ensure you are in a quiet place with limited if not no distractions so that you can fully focus on talking and listening to the befriended.

8 Befriending can be beneficial in a mixture of ways, you are doing a great thing for someone. You can help lower rates of depression, reduce vulnerability and risk as well as social isolation.

It can also be beneficial for you, the befriender. It can improve your social skills, give your structure, improve your self-esteem and confidence

9 If you have any questions at any point you should contact Happy@Home. One of our project workers can help you if you are concerned about someone's welfare or safety. It is also a good idea to check in with your local project worker to let them know how you are getting on in your role. Open communication is important.

10 Good communication skills make all the difference. They will help build your relationship and even just with one phone call a week you can improve someone's welfare and make a positive difference in their lives.

