

BARNSLEY COMMUNITY RESPONDERS



TELEPHONE BEFRIENDER



YOUR ROLE AS A TELEPHONE BEFRIENDER

This document is intended to give you all the information you need about the role of Telephone Befriender and provide guidance and information to enable you to volunteer safely and effectively.

Where can this be done: From home

Time commitment: Flexible

Reason: Loneliness at this time is heightened and the current social distancing measures are particularly difficult for some people. This role is for someone who loves a good chat but is also good listener. You will spend 30 minutes once or twice a week chatting to someone who would benefit from a telephone friend. Your calls can make a massive difference to a person's happiness and wellbeing.

Requirements:

- Be able to make time, once or twice a week, to contact your new 'phone friend', up to a period of three months.
- Good listener and empathetic
- Honest and reliable
- Friendly and calm
- Enjoy phone calls and be confident speaking to new people
- Can maintain confidentiality
- You'll need to let your Volunteer Coordinator know if there are any concerns or if the person you are calling needs support

Training:

Mandatory -

- Safeguarding (Seven minute video)
- Mental Health Support

Checks: An ID check will be done, but a DBS check is not needed.



HOW YOUR ROLE WILL WORK

- Your Volunteer Coordinator will let the person you are calling know the day and time you will be calling for the first time, as well as giving them your name.
- The recipient will know to expect your initial call, so please try to stick to this schedule. When you've had your first phone conversation, you can arrange the next phone call at a time and date that is convenient for you both.
- Once a schedule has been arranged, please make sure you follow this. If you cannot make a call, please let your Volunteer Coordinator know, so the recipient can be informed.
- To make the service safe for everyone, we insist that you do not arrange to visit your telephone friend or exchange any personal contact details with them, including social media accounts.
- You must put 141 in front of the number you are calling. (eg 141 01226 123456) This conceals your personal telephone number so personal details are not shared. This also works when calling on mobile phones.
- We recommend calling from a landline number if you have one, unless you have free minutes available on a mobile phone and are happy to use these.
- If you do not have free minutes, but would like to undertake this role, please speak to your Volunteer Coordinator, to discuss other options.
- Community Responders must be aware of specific boundaries and don't confuse a befriending role with a friendship.
- Do not offer advice or counsel the person you are speaking to, please refer them to other services or speak to your Volunteer Coordinator if you are unsure about where to signpost the person to.
- Always maintain the person's confidentiality, unless you are concerned about a safeguarding issue.
- Think about how you safely store the contact details you are given. Do not leave these in a place that other people can access. If you are able to lock these away in a safe place, please do so. If you need to destroy this information please ensure it is shredded in a confidential manner.



TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS

How to start a conversation

It's difficult to pre-empt what types of calls or queries you are likely to get from an individual, they may need some factual information or just some reassurance during these challenging times.

If you are faced with a query that raises concerns, please let your Volunteer Coordinator know straight away.

Below is a guide on how you can start your first telephone conversation.

Opening -

- Hello, (Recipients Name), it's (Your Name).
- Have you had a call from (Volunteer Coordinator name) to let you know that I was going to ring today, are you ok with having a quick chat now?
- Would you like to tell me a bit about yourself, and then I can do the same so that we can get to know each other a bit.

As your conversation develops, you could also chat about the following things

• **How are you feeling/doing today?**

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.

• **Are you managing to stay active whilst at home?**

• **Have you been keeping in touch with friends/family/other groups?**

Encouraging them to keep in touch with people over the phone and digitally if they can. The coming months could be quite isolating, so its good to chat to friends and keep up moral at times like these. Recommending listening to a chatty radio station or tv channel.

• **Do you have all the medication you need?**

• **Are you able to prepare meals?**

• **Are you clear on what to do if you or anyone at home starts to feel unwell?**

Isolate for seven days if you live alone, 14 days if you live with other people. If symptoms worsen or don't improve for seven days call 111 and follow NHS guidance.

Do not go to your GP or Hospital. Ask for support to deliver shopping, collect prescriptions etc.. from family/friends/neighbours. Follow Government guidance.



TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS

- **Do you have a garden to get some fresh air in?**

Remind them that they can still go out and enjoy their garden and do some gardening if they are able to.

- **What is the area like where you live?**
- **What is a typical day like for you? Do you enjoy reading or watching TV?**
- **What hobbies / interests do you have?**

This is just a guide, please use your intuition based on the conversation to keep it flowing.

Closing a Conversation

- It's been really lovely to speak to you.
- I'm going to speak to (Volunteer Coordinators name) and let them know how our chat went.
- Then they will give you a call to see if you feel like we are a good match and hopefully we will speak again soon.
- Take Care, Bye

Ensure to arrange with them before ending the call when you are next going to call them.

This guide has been put together with the help of Age UK Leeds.

Other pointers -

- **Chat normally, don't make it an interview.**
- **Use open, rather than closed questions to encourage conversation.** Closed questions are those that generally require a yes or no answer. An open question is one that requires a response other than a yes or no. Open questions often start with the following words: why, how, what, describe, tell me about, or what do you think about? However, be careful with the 'why' word, as sometimes it has an element of judgment- "Why did you do that?!"
- **It is about being realistic.** Don't promise them it will be over soon - it's easy to do this when we want to encourage them, but we just don't know.
- **It is about being positive.** Help them to see any positive aspects in their own lives during this crisis. Help them to celebrate any good things that are currently happening.



TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS

Boundaries are important in a telephone befriender role as it allows each person to know where they stand and keep safe. It is just as much about your safety as the safety of the recipient.

Scenarios

Whilst you are befriending someone you may get asked some difficult questions or come across some difficult situations. Below are some examples of what you may get asked and how you could respond.

Question / Query / Situation	Response
Why don't you come and visit me?	Sorry, due to Covid-19, I am not able to come visit you, but we can arrange between us to have a phone call regularly, at a time to suit us both.
I'm concerned that I'm not going to see anyone for a long time.	Recognise their concerns and let them that you are here to listen them. It's ok to go outside if they have a garden and get some fresh air and they can exercise outside as well, keeping the two metre minimum distance.
I haven't been able to go shopping, can you pick up some bread and milk for me?	I will speak to (Volunteer Coordinators name) after this call and they can arrange someone to do this for you.
I've not been able to pick up my prescription and I am running out of medicine, can you help?	I will speak to (Volunteer Coordinators name) after this call and they can arrange someone to do this for you.
I have been sent a letter and I don't understand it, can you help?	I will speak to (Volunteer Coordinators name) after this call and they can arrange someone to do this for you.



TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS

Question / Query / Situation

I've been told to stay at home but I always go to the community centre on a Wednesday, can I still go?

Response

Unfortunately, community centres are closed at this time. You can still go out in your garden if you have one and for exercise only, you must keep two metres away from any other people.

If you are able, you could make your regular call to coincide when this would have been for the person.

I like talking to you, can you call me again next week?

"That is lovely to hear, I've enjoyed talking with you too."

Set out a clear timetable with the person as to when you will next call. Only do what is convenient for you both.

Two calls a week is plenty. Ideally aim for around half an hour a time, but use your discretion on doing longer or shorter if you need to.

Some people may want to talk to you more than you are prepared for if the schedule is not clear or followed, so do bear this in mind.

Do not give them your number, as this breaks boundaries and you may get calls at inappropriate times.



TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS

Question / Query / Situation

Response

Can I take down your phone number, so I can call you if I need anything?

Do not give them your number or other personal details such as your address, as this breaks boundaries and you may get calls at inappropriate times.

Politely tell the individual that you are not permitted to give out your personal contact details, but can let the Volunteer Coordinator know if they need anything.

I'm worried about my neighbour, can you call them if I give you their number?

Again, do not give out your number, but say you will mention it to your Volunteer Coordinator who can follow that up separately. It maybe that person is already receiving support from another Community Responder.

I'm feeling very sad/depressed/hopeless, I think I need some help.

Talk to them to understand their needs, but do not offer advice unless you are trained to do so. Use your guide to suggest other services that they could use that support people feeling like this.

Can I buy you a present to say thank you?

Explain that this is a lovely thing to do, but you are unable to accept it.

Also do not buy gifts for the recipient, or offer to lend them money. If they are struggling financially, tell them you will refer it back to the Volunteer Coordinator.



TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS

Question / Query / Situation

Response

I'm feeling unsafe around my partner, what should I do?

Talk to them to understand the issue, but do not offer advice unless you are trained to do so. Use your guide to suggest other services that they could use that support this. If you have concerns on a safeguarding level, speak to your Volunteer Coordinator straight away, following safeguarding procedures at all times.

The recipient makes a passing remark that you think is offensive. Do you tell them that they are wrong and that you find the comment offensive?

It is ok to challenge inappropriate attitudes, but be cautious on how you do this, as to not get in a confrontation. If it is something that you feel uncomfortable with, speak to your Volunteer Coordinator about it. It may be you can be found someone else to befriend.

The other person tells you about their 'love life' and then asks you about yours. Should you tell them?

No, it is not relevant to the role you are doing and it is your personal business. You may tell them you are married or in a relationship or single but keep it brief.

We recommend avoiding talking about your own personal business where possible. Only talk about what you are comfortable in sharing, but be aware it is not the place to discuss your own personal problems. The role is about the recipient feeling connected

If you are unsure in any situation, please do speak to your Volunteer Coordinator for advice. Do not feel you have to take the issue on yourself. This can be an emotional role and it's important to keep boundaries clear to avoid any negative impacts on your mental health.



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