



Befriending

Tel: 01273 775888

Frequently Asked Questions

What is befriending?

The aim of Together Co Befriending is to offer supportive, reliable relationships through volunteer befrienders to people who are extremely socially isolated and alone to alleviate this isolation.

Who should be referred to befriending?

Individuals who: are extremely socially isolated; are over 50 years old or are over 18 years old with a physical and or sensory disability or long term physically disabling condition, or are carers of any of these groups. **Please note we do not cover Woodingdean or anywhere east of East Brighton.**

Who are our befriending volunteers?

All our volunteers are selected against a strict set of criteria and go through a rigorous recruitment process. Volunteers can be of any age and skillset. All volunteers are monitored and supported by a Befriending Coordinator.

What do our befriending volunteers do?

Volunteers are matched with an individual with whom they develop a relationship through regular befriending visits or phone calls. This could involve visiting for tea and a chat, reading aloud, playing games, or helping someone with their paperwork. Or regular phone calls. Or they might go out for walks or do some shopping together. **An important role of all our volunteers is to look out for the scheme member they visit and to highlight any concerns that may arise.**

What don't our befriending volunteers do?

Our volunteers cannot offer domestic support or personal care, or any essential support on which the scheme member is dependent, e.g. washing, cooking, cleaning, and personal care. Befriending volunteers can only assist people to the shops and do not shop for people. In addition volunteers cannot support with the administration of prescription medication or the collection of pension/ other regular financial payments.

Who cannot be referred to Befriending?

A person who is unlikely to engage effectively or appropriately with a volunteer. Including people:

- Known to have a severe memory/cognitive impairment or an advanced dementia diagnosis
- Known to have an Autistic Spectrum Condition diagnosis
- Known to have a Learning Disability
- Unable to engage in verbal communication
- Living with severe anxiety or depression or experiencing suicidal thoughts
- Supported by another befriending agency
- In need of care coordination



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Who else may not be suitable for Befriending?

If any of the following applies to the person you wish to refer please call us on 01273 775888 to discuss first.

- Living with mild/moderate anxiety or depression or experiencing suicidal thoughts
- In drug or alcohol recovery
- Living in a challenging environment and unable to leave the home
- A heavy smoker and unable to leave the home
- Seeing a probation officer or has unspent criminal convictions/ cautions
- In need of personal or domestic care/shopping
- Living with more than one other family member
- Wants to be taken out in a volunteer's car

Other important factors to consider before making a referral

Please consider whether the person will engage in befriending. Please also think about whether the needs of the person you are referring can be adequately addressed by a volunteer. In addition, please think how much satisfaction the volunteer will gain from the relationship, which needs to be two ways to be sustainable. Please note that referrals must be appropriate for volunteers who might/will be visiting alone in the person's home. **We may choose to provide telephone or group befriending services, if deemed to be more appropriate.**

Can individuals self-refer or family/ friends refer on their behalf?

Yes, by calling 01273 775888 or by completing our referral form. However, we advise people to ask a professional, such as their GP, to make the referral on their behalf to ensure they meet the criteria, and that the form contains sufficient information to process the referral.

Who can make a referral and how?

Any professional can refer to us using our referral form, but we ask that those wishing to make a referral do so in line with our criteria above. We are happy to discuss possible referrals via telephone if referrers are unsure whether our service is suitable for a client. Alternatively, you may wish to refer to Together Co Social Prescribing so the person can be assessed for befriending as well as further linking in [Please see the Together Co Social Prescribing information pack for further information www.togetherco.org.uk/what-we-do/social-prescribing](#)

External agencies can request a referral form by emailing befriending@togetherco.org.uk. It is also available on our website: <https://www.togetherco.org.uk/befriending>

How does befriending help?

We match people with people to create friendships that make life better. We've been doing so for over 20 years. In that time, we've seen loneliness eased and lives changed through the simple power of human connection. Using a range of questions and indicators, we demonstrate that befriending can:

- **Create valuable relationships**
- **Improve confidence & self-esteem**
- **Enable people to live happier & healthier lives**

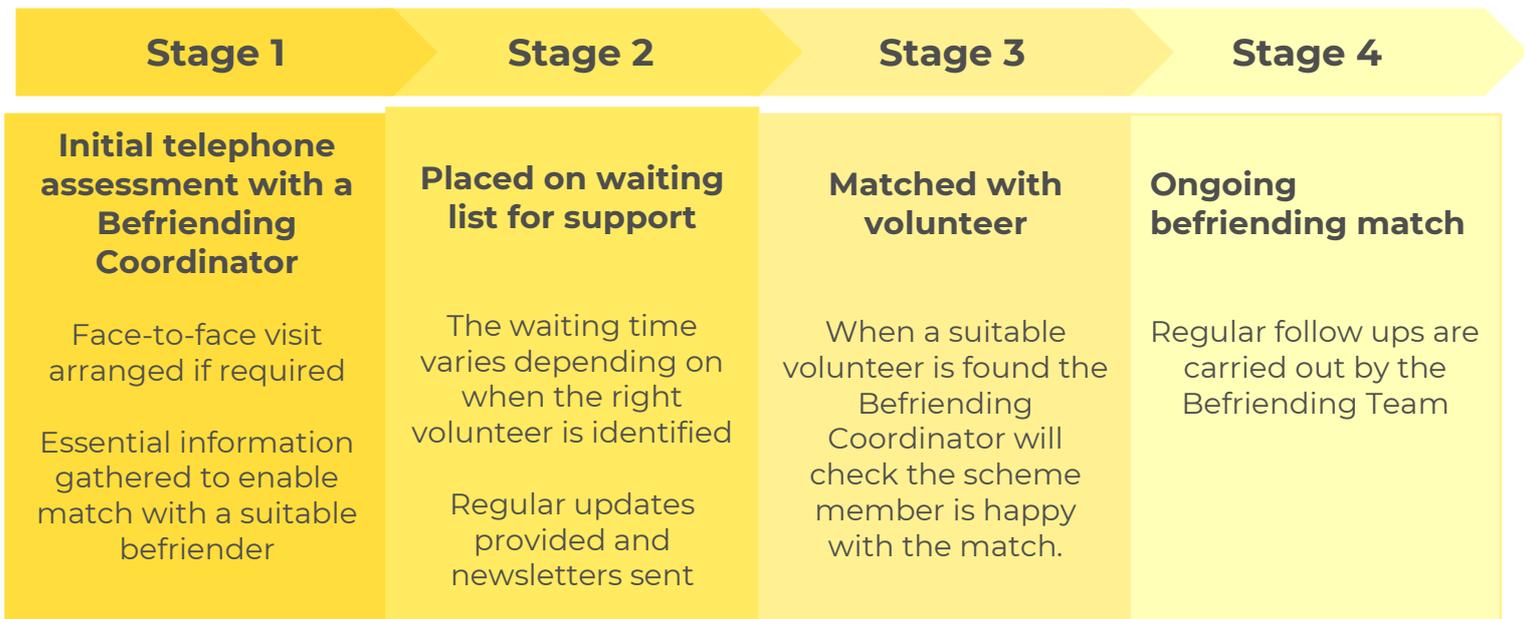


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You can read about our work in our impact report here:

<https://togetherco.org.uk/about-us>

How We Work & Scheme Member Case Studies



Scheme Member Pamela & Volunteer, Shapla

Pamela, 88, is a keen knitter, and frequently makes handmade items for babies who are being cared for at the local hospital. Pamela has health issues, and was referred by a friend to Together Co who thought it might help to have someone to keep her company. Pamela speaks regularly to her volunteer, Shapla, who is grateful and inspired by their wonderful chats.

Scheme member, Pamela. “I really enjoy having Shapla to speak to. We get on really well – Shapla tells me things about her family, and I tell her things about mine. We really enjoy talking and it’s amazing how much we learn from one another. “Shapla has been so thoughtful too. When I mentioned to her I have a lot of trouble with my breathing, she taught me some breathing exercises to help me over the phone. She’s a lovely girl.”

Volunteer, Shapla. “Pamela does so much for me, I don’t think people understand how volunteering is very much a two-way thing – I feel she helps me more than I help her. “Because of my [South Asian] family heritage, I love the older generation – hearing her stories and what she’s gone through really puts things into perspective for me, and helps me feel a little bit more grateful for what I have.



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Scheme Member Peter & Volunteer, Drew

Peter, 70, used to run a social club on the estate where he lives and would like to start it up again. He loves watching Westerns, but health problems mean he struggles to go out for a walk or to buy food, which has left him feeling isolated. University student Drew, 25, says talking to Peter doesn't feel like volunteering and it has also been of huge benefit to him.

Scheme member, Peter: "I chat to Drew once a week. He's a friendly person and we get on very well. We talk about everything, down to the films I like watching. Talking to Drew stops me from going completely mad when I am stuck between these four walls most of the time. It's been a god send. I look forward to talking to Drew because it keeps me sane and we have a good old natter. It benefits us both."

Volunteer, Drew: "Peter is a really friendly guy. We talk about films, Brighton and the community where he lives and how it has changed over the years. We also talk about where he grew up and his time in the Army. I come away from our conversations feeling very grounded. Talking to Peter gives me a different perspective on life."

Scheme Member Rob & Volunteer, Dan

As befriending volunteers in the 90's, Rob and his wife visited people who were experiencing isolation. Yet when Rob's wife died and his own health began to decline, he called on the service for himself. Rob is visited by Dan, a Together Co Befriending Volunteer, who Rob calls 'a breath of fresh air.'

Scheme member, Rob: "After I had a stroke I lost my mobility and was moved to supported accommodation. I hated it. Dan came to visit me. I like everything about Dan. He's so patient, gentle and kind. We play cards and dominoes and talk about books, records and art. When I see him come through the door, it's like a breath of fresh air. He's the best mate anyone could have."

Volunteer, Dan: "Visiting Rob, I get to see a different perspective on life. We talk about his family, his life and play dominoes. We have a great rapport. I don't visit him out of pity or obligation. We're great friends. When I first started volunteering I was unemployed, now I'm a support worker. In a way, I guess meeting Rob helped me find what I'm good at."