Befriending Guidance-Covid and Interim

Thank you very much for volunteering to become an interim befriender in these challenging times. We hope you will enjoy your experience as a befriender. You will certainly be making a very big difference to someone else's life.

The information set out in this document is intended to help you when volunteering as an interim befriender to those in need of support, during the pandemic.

What is Befriending?

Befriending relationships are informal social relationships that are initiated, supported, and monitored by an agency.

What makes a good befriender?

- Friendliness and warmth
- Strong listening skills
- Honesty and trustworthiness
- Empathy and resilience
- A compassionate ear
- Respect for confidentiality
- Commitment and reliability

Ideas for building strong befriending relationships:

Establishing Trust

- People referred to befriending services are often vulnerable and need to build trust with their befriender to talk through their worries, concerns and any issues they are experiencing
- It can take time to build trust, particularly with distant befriending
- Enable the person you are matched with to chat, listen carefully and respect their opinions
- Respect and appreciate the person you are matched with, take a non-judgemental approach and see them as a whole person

Allow choice

- Decide together when you will call each other, for how long and at what time of day

Having fun

- Never underestimate the importance of having fun together and sharing a laugh with one other
- Find out about the person's hobbies and interests and discuss with them
- Do not put pressure on the person you are chatting with to start the conversation, have an idea of the things you could discuss before you call

Ideas for new opportunities:

- Read the same book in between calls and discuss on the phone
- Do crosswords/puzzles together online or by phone
- Listen to some music or singing together
- Listen to the same radio programme or watch the same TV programme and discuss
- Encourage them to sit in their garden if safe/able to do so

Tackling challenges

- These are challenging times and the person you chat with may feel lonely and/or fearful
- Remind them of what they have already overcome, remind them they are stronger than they think
- Be supportive and encouraging
- Use reassuring tones and a sensitive approach when discussing challenging themes
- Do not assure them that everything will be OK, be reassuring but enable them to talk about their worries

Covid-19 situation

In each call, try to:

- Check on the welfare of the person you are calling, do they have a supply of food and general household supplies?
- Are their medical needs being managed, e.g. prescriptions being collected and delivered?
- Do they have neighbours checking in on them?
- How are they feeling, are they lonely?
- Promote having a structure, regular mealtimes, sleep times etc.
- Only use information from reliable sources to inform them if required i.e. NHS website:
  https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/
  or the World Health Organisation's website:
  https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1

- Please only give information you are comfortable to share; it is OK to say you don't know the answer and will try to find out.
- Avid overwhelming people with information
- Ensure you share good news stories e.g. clapping for NHS staff

Good practice guidelines:

- Agree a good time to call and stick to that time as much as possible
- Try to relax and put the person you are calling at ease
- Resist distraction where possible, focus on the person you are calling
- Use open questions and good listening skills, enabling the person to talk comfortably and at their own pace
- Respect and care for your match, listening to their stories is a privilege
- Explore their current situation allowing them to tell their stories in their own way
- Try to avoid telling your match what to do, enable them to talk things through, offer guidance but encourage them to find their own ways
- Show empathy but not sympathy, this can make them feel more helpless
- Be encouraging and gentle in your approach, use statements such as 'perhaps you can tell me more about that…'
- Allow for moments of silence, avoid rushing the conversation, give them time to express themselves
- At the end of your call, agree the date and time for your next call

Boundaries:

It is always important to remember that you are representing your group/organisation when befriending and must behave appropriately

- Do not make any promises to the person you call
- Always use appropriate language
- Stick to agreed times and duration of calls where possible
- If you are unsure about something you are asked to do, check with your co-ordinator
- Explain this is an interim service whilst we are in lockdown and will come to an end at some point

Confidentiality

You can respect someone's confidentiality by:

- Not disclosing any identifying or personal information about the person you are matched with, or their personal circumstances to anyone.
- Respecting their privacy

We cannot however, agree to keep secrets for people if we believe they are unsafe or putting other people at risk. When we are concerned about someone's welfare, we must report this, we have a duty of care around safeguarding.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is an action that organisations take, to promote the welfare of vulnerable people from harm.

Organisations and individuals have a responsibility to report any concerns about an individual through the appropriate channels.

It is important to share any concerns you have with the co-ordinator of your group/project.

If you are unable to speak with your Co-ordinator, and immediate attention is required, please refer to:

In an emergency always call 999

If you think that you, or someone you know, is being abused or neglected you can raise a safeguarding concern by calling Care Direct on 0345 1551 007 or emailing csc.caredirect@devon.gov.uk

Care Direct is open Monday-Friday 8am-8pm and Saturday 9am-1pm

Outside of these hours or on bank holidays call the Emergency Duty Service on 0845 6000 388 or email the address above

Anybody can raise a safeguarding concern by contacting Care Direct

If you are concerned about a child or young person in Devon and want to speak to someone contact our Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on 0345 155 1071 or email mashsecure@devon.gov.uk and give as much information as you can.

For more information about safeguarding:

https://www.devonsafeguardingadultspartnership.org.uk/

Support and guidance

Please speak with your co-ordinator if you have any concerns about the person you are befriending. Also, if you need to talk through any concerns or worries of your own. It is important to look after your own wellbeing and discuss how you are feeling. Always check in with your co-ordinator if you have any questions or are unclear about any issues.

Should you enjoy the experience of Interim Befriending, perhaps you could consider befriending more than one person? Thank you once again and good luck.