

Is the Befriending Service Right for you?



What is this service?

Carefully vetted volunteers are matched with older Barnet residents.

Home Visiting (currently the extent and availability is dependent on government guidelines)
Vetted volunteers will visit you in your home for regular companionship and emotional support for a period of six months or more. Normally visits are weekly for 1-2 hours.

Telephone Pal Service

Vetted volunteers will ring you for one long or 2-3 shorter calls per week to:

- Share interests
- Help you access information that may be hard if you have no internet access.
- Help you identify problems and issues and get the help you need to rectify them. This may involve getting our digital volunteers to help you with those annoying techie problems, Handyperson to change a lightbulb, researching information or talking through how you feel about the options available to you.
- Keep you up to date with safe options to pursue your interests and re-engage with society.
- If you both wish and Covid guidelines allow meet occasionally to get to know each other better.

Am I eligible?

- Are you over 55 years of age and live in the borough of Barnet?
- Are you on your own for long periods of time and miss having someone to talk normally or due to Covid 19?
- Do you have disabilities that make it hard for you to contact others?
- Do you think you could form a rewarding relationship with a volunteer and be able to make and keep regular appointments?

Who do I contact if I want to learn more about the service?

Sian Jones Befriending Manager Ann Owens Centre Oak Lane East Finchley, N2 8LT	Hours Monday to Thursday
Tel No: 020 8432 1416 Mobile: 07505 089 129	Email: befriending@ageukbarnet.org.uk

Alternatively, a referral form can be downloaded from www.ageukbarnet.org.uk and emailed back to Sian by you or by someone on your behalf.

What happens next?

- Sian Jones will ring you to check that your needs match what the service can provide and if not, suggest alternatives such as activities, or a referral to one of our partner organisations.
- If the service **is** required an assessment will be arranged.
- This will enable Sian to get to know you better so she can start looking for the right volunteer and take details of who to contact if you are ill or have an accident.
- She will discuss with you what will be safe and possible for you and a volunteer to do together.
- She will discuss how long you might have to wait until a volunteer is found.
- At the end of the meeting, you will need to understand and agree to how we store and use the information you have given us.
- You will receive a call when a suitable volunteer is found and if possible arrange an introductory meeting in person or by phone.
- If you are happy with the chosen volunteer, they will start to visit/phone you at an agreed time.
- During the early weeks, especially, your match will be closely monitored in case either you or the volunteer feel something needs to be changed.
- Waiting times for assessment and matching can vary according to demand and the availability of suitable volunteers.

What can I ask my visitor to do?

- Provide companionship. This means exchanging stories, a joke and if you wish it, discussing your feelings and opinions on many subjects from the weather to life changing events.
- Ring you each week to confirm the next visit or confirm the next call at the end of the current one. .
- If risk assessed and agreed in advance, volunteers may;
 - Go with you to the shops, park, or appointments and in some cases take you there in their own cars.
 - Play games or go through old photos and paper work.
 - Write a letter, access the internet and many other mutually agreed tasks

What can I not expect my volunteer to do?

- Replace a service you would normally pay for, e.g. regular cleaning or personal care. This also includes jobs that require professional qualifications such as electrical repairs and plumbing.
- Provide an essential service such as regular food shopping. We currently have a separate service for this.
- Take on any task the volunteer may be unable to do because they have other commitments.
- Carry out any task that could put either of you at risk.
- Give you their personal contact details as you will be able to contact them via a 24 hour mobile number serviced by Age UK Barnet **07505089129**.
- Accept money and gifts from you unless it is repayment for an agreed outlay like occasional shopping or parking.

What might you hope to gain from Befriending?

- Feel less lonely knowing there is someone you can talk to about your concerns and interests. Provide a new audience for your stories and help you feel you have something of value to offer others.
- Many say their volunteer is a “window to the world” and helps them feel less isolated. They feel more confident chatting to others as they have something new to talk about and there is

something to look forward to and break up the tedium of the week.

- Some volunteers may be able to help you safely venture outside your home.
- Someone to help look up information using their mobiles or assist you with modern technology. As they come regularly, it does not matter if they have to repeat instructions and you may make more progress and can surprise family and friends with your new abilities.
- Assist you find help and services before issues become major problems. Volunteers are emailed relevant events and news to pass onto you.
- There is someone to help sort paperwork and read mail or other small tasks.

What does the volunteer gain from their visits to you?

Our volunteers vary in age from 16 to 80+ years and have widely different backgrounds. Volunteers frequently feel they benefit as much as you from these visits. For instance: they

- Enjoy hearing about your life experiences
- Miss having contact with older relatives.
- Enjoy making a new friend who is out of their usual circle of acquaintances.
- Feel they are helping someone, so it is important you give them positive feedback. If the feedback is less than positive you should tell Sian.
- Enjoy learning new skills
- Experience may help them apply for training in medicine or social care.

Do I pay for this service?

No the service is free but donations to Age UK Barnet are very welcome and are used to reimburse the volunteers for their expenses and other service expenses. Sealed donation envelopes are available and can be collected or send a cheque to Age UK Barnet.

When you receive the service you can also help by;

- Answering telephone or written questionnaires about the service when contacted by one of our team. Feedback helps us to improve the service and retain or increase our funding to help others.
- Keep us informed of any changes to your circumstances such as new phone numbers, email addresses, illness, hospital stays, holidays or if you plan to move home.

If you have any further questions or complaints, please contact Sian Jones, Befriending Manager or Helen Newman, Chief Executive, Age UK Barnet on **020 8203 5040**.