

Is the Befriending Service Right for you?



Who do I contact if I have a question?

Sian Jones
Befriending Manager
Ann Owens Centre
Oak Lane
East Finchley, N2 8LT
Tel No: 020 8432 1416
Mobile: 07505 089 129

Working Days:
Monday to Thursday

Email:
befriending@ageukbarnet.org.uk

What is this service?

- The primary aim of our Befriending service is to provide companionship and emotional support to those who feel lonely and isolated.
- Carefully vetted volunteers are matched with older Barnet residents, to provide regular companionship and emotional support for a period of six months or more. This normally means your assigned volunteer will visit you in your home each week at a pre- arranged time for about an hour. They will call you to confirm or rearrange visits. Meetings outside the home may also be possible
- If you are still physically active and able to leave your home, we talk you through other options for companionship that may better suit your immediate needs.
- We can also link you to alternative sources of befriending such as our Dementia Befriending service and those offered by partner organisations such as telephone or more niche befriending services.
- We can discuss there are any other services are more suitable for your immediate needs;

Am I eligible for the service?

- **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 to?**

- **Do you have disabilities that make it hard for you to contact others or access community activities?**
- **Do you think you could form a rewarding relationship with a volunteer and be able to make and keep regular appointments?**

What might you hope to gain from Befriending?

- Have something to look forward to, a shared joke and a friendly cuppa.
- Feel less lonely knowing there is someone you can talk to about your concerns and interests.
- Help you identify problems and issues and get the help you need to rectify them. For example, getting our digital volunteers to help you with an annoying techie problem, our Handyperson to change a lightbulb, a volunteer specializing in benefits to help with form filling.
- Many of clients say their volunteer is a “window to the world”. They help them feel less isolated, providing new topics to talk about with loved ones, someone to listen and help you feel you have something of value to offer others
- 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.
- An extra hand to help sort paperwork, read mail, or help you make a phone call if you are hard of hearing.
- Keep you up to date with safe options to pursue your interests and re-engage with society. Volunteers are emailed relevant events and news to pass onto you.

What can I expect of my volunteer?

- You will not have their phone numbers but they will ring you to confirm each visit and inform you when they can't come. If you need to rearrange a scheduled visit just inform the Befriending team and they will arrange for your volunteer to contact you.
- If risk assessed and agreed in advance, volunteers may;
 - Occasionally go with you to the shops or somewhere local of interest and in some cases give you a lift in their car.
 - Play games or go through old photos and paper work.
 - Help you 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.
- Accept money and gifts from you unless it is repayment for an agreed outlay like occasional shopping or parking.

What happens next?

1. Our Befriending team will ring you to check that your needs match what the service can provide and, if not, suggest alternatives, or make a referral to one of our partner services. This will need your permission.
2. If the service is required, a home assessment will be booked with you and, if you prefer, a relative or carer can be present.
3. This will enable us to get to know you better so we can start looking for the right volunteer.
4. We will discuss with you what will be safe and possible for you and a volunteer to do together and how long you might have to wait until a volunteer is found.
5. 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.
6. You will receive a call when a suitable volunteer is found and to arrange an introductory meeting in person or by phone.
7. If you are happy with the chosen volunteer, they will start to visit you at an agreed time.
8. During the early weeks, especially, your match will be closely monitored in case either you or the volunteer feel something needs to be changed.
9. Waiting times for assessment and matching can vary according to demand, funding and the availability of suitable volunteers.

Volunteers frequently feel they benefit as much as you from these visit.

For instance they;

- Enjoy hearing about your life experiences.
- Enjoy making a new friend who is out of their usual circle of acquaintances. Our volunteers vary in age from 16 to 80+ years and have widely different backgrounds.
- Feel they are helping someone so do let them know how that you value their support.

- Enjoy learning new skills, practice another language or gain experience to aid applications for 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 ensure others continue to receive the service in the future. There are many ways to safely donate. Do contact us to discuss the best option for you.

You can help us 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 we have not already received a referral form for you it can be accessed from <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/barnet/our-services/befriending/> It can be completed by you or by someone on your behalf and emailed back to the above address. We may also be able to complete it over the phone.

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.**