

Guide for referrers to our General Befriending Service

Potential users of the service need to:

1. Be 55 years of age or over.
2. Be permanently resident in the borough of Barnet
3. Have agreed to the referral, and are happy to participate in our assessment process.
4. Understand our service guidelines and data protection statement.
5. Be able to form a mutually rewarding social relationship with a carefully matched and vetted AUKB volunteer.
6. Be able to commit to regular contact and be able to keep to appointments.
7. Have needs and expectations that meet the service's capacity

Purpose of the Service

The primary aim is to provide emotional support and companionship to the lonely and isolated residents of the Borough of Barnet who are over 55 years of age. Volunteers visit their clients in their homes for an hour or so each week. Those able to access the community are encouraged to join in activities rather than have a befriender. Occasionally the service can be provided by phone but usually, we refer onto a partner organisation for telephone support if that is the preferred option. The client's permission will be needed for this.

All activities that volunteers and clients engage in need to be risk assessed and agreed. Volunteers are not there to replace professional assistance but those who meet our criteria may benefit from the following;

- To be able to look forward to regular companionship and a chance to share some of their interests and feel valued.
- Volunteer assistance to help the isolated identify problems and issues that are worrying them and, with the assistance of Age UK Barnet, signpost them appropriately. This may involve our Home Support services such as the Handyperson to change a lightbulb, our Later Life Planning service or another organisation.
- Help accessing information that may be hard for those who are isolated and digitally challenged to access
- Assistance for the sensory impaired to make calls or sort their mail.
- Updating clients on safe options to pursue their interests and re-engage with society.
- Accompany clients on short outings.

Priority is given to those who:

- Are unable to leave their homes due to frailty, physical impairments or on occasion care duties. However, we are not a respite service.
- Have no alternative sources of regular companionship.
- Will most benefit from what are volunteers are able to offer.

Please check our website; <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/barnet/> to see if one of our other services may be more appropriate to the client's needs.

1. Dementia Befriending Service for those with a confirmed diagnosis of Dementia. Both services share the same referral form.
2. Dementia Day Opportunities Service – a day service with a large range of activities open to all those who are over 55 years of age and have a dementia diagnosis.
3. Our shopping service, subject to volunteer availability, will do a weekly shop for a small payment.
4. Finding your Feet service, which is a short-term service for clients wanting to regain confidence in their mobility.
5. Our activities listed in our What's On which is updated weekly

Please note that our service is not appropriate for those;

- Living in conditions that do not meet our health and safety standards.
- Those who are in crisis or experiencing a very unsettled period of their lives.
- We do not have the capacity or expertise to help those with very complex needs.

How do I refer someone for the service?

1. Request an information pack, by emailing befriending@ageukbarnet.org.uk or ring 0208432 1416.
2. Discuss the contents of our *Is this service right for you?*, with the person you wish to refer so, they know what to expect.
3. If you wish to proceed, it may be advisable to ring us, to check if we already know the person, in which case, a referral form may not be necessary.
4. Complete the referral form as fully as possible and return it by email or post. A copy can also be downloaded from our website. Password protection can be agreed in advance.

What happens next?

When our service is at full capacity will pause processing new referrals. We will inform you of this situation and consider your referral as soon as we can. Once the assessment process starts, the client will usually be contacted, within a fortnight. It is very helpful to know how and when to best communicate with new clients or if a third party is available to assist. Sometimes all we can do is send an information pack and if they do not contact us within a specified time, close the referral.

If the service seems to match the client's needs and our capacity, then an assessment visit will be arranged. During the visit, the service manager will take down any additional details we need, do a brief risk assessment, and get to know the client so they can find the right volunteer for that client, or their agreement to us forwarding their details to other services. The clients will also need to sign a GDPR and service agreement form. Verbal agreements are acceptable but we prefer to have a witness.



Waiting times for assessment and match vary from weeks to months, depending on our resources. We try our best to update you on progress but do feel free to contact us if an update is required.

If you have any further questions, complaints?

Please contact Sian Jones, Befriending Manager, 020 8432 1416 or 07505089129 or email befriending@ageukbarnet.org.uk

Her normal working days are Monday to Thursdays.

If you have a serious complaint about the service please ring Helen Newman Age UK Barnet, 020 8203 5040. Email: Info@ageukbarnet.org.uk or write to Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, East Finchley, N2 8LT, 02