

Emergency Guidelines for Befriending & Home Visitor

Prior to the Visit

- Ensure you have any contact details relating to the older person you have been provided with you when you visit.
- Always phone the older person on the day of the planned visit to finalise the arrangement. Even if they are housebound, it is important to get into this habit. This provides an opportunity for them to let you know about hospital or other appointments that may alter your plans.

Arriving for the Visit

- Remember that some people can take time to get to the door due to mobility etc. *(as you get to know the person, you will have more of an understanding of their habits and abilities)*

Issue: You turn up at the agreed time, and it appears that the older person is not at home: what do you do?

1. Try phoning them. They may not have heard the doorbell. If still no answer, refer to the emergency contact list.
2. If there is a Sheltered Housing Officer or member of staff on site, speak to them.
3. If you are unsure what to do and it is during working hours, please contact your Key Person for advice.
4. Try to see inside the house/flat. Perhaps the older person had a fall. If so, call Emergency Services.
5. Otherwise call a family member if there are any. If the older person is unable to provide you with the family member or emergency contact details, If your visit is within working hours, please contact your Key Person to obtain this information. The Key Person will then be able to contact the family member or next of kin.

If there are no family members available, or you are unable to reach them, you may try contacting a neighbour, as they may be aware of the older person's movements.

Do not disclose who you are or where you are from unless it is unavoidable. You may say that you are a friend of the family. This should discourage further questions and helps to protect the client's confidentiality.

6. If they are a member of Careline – call them 020 7974 1491 and press option 2.

Careline is an emergency response service that supports older people in urgent situations, such as falls.

If a volunteer needs to contact Careline, they should clearly identify themselves as an Age UK Camden Group volunteer, provide the name and address of the older person, describe the nature of the concern or incident, and follow the instructions given by the Careline operator.

Volunteers should be aware that, due to confidentiality, Careline may not be able to share detailed personal information. Careline will assess the situation and take appropriate action, which may include contacting emergency services or a nominated contact person.

7. Call the Emergency Social Services number during daytime on 0207 9744000.

For out of office hours (evenings and weekends) Emergency Social Services, ring **020 7974 4444** (Camden Council's switchboard, and ask to be put through to the EDT team (Emergency Duty team). Social Care Team.

If all other options have been exhausted call Emergency Services on 999.

8. If you are unsure what to do and it is during working hours, please contact your Key Person for advice.
9. Before leaving the situation, the volunteer must leave the situation in the hands of another responsible person or people (i.e. ambulance, Supported Housing Officer etc)

Issues that might arise while you are visiting:

Falls

If the person has had a fall, do not attempt to sit them up or lift them. Call the emergency service on 999 and keep them warm and comfortable where they are and do not try to lift them up. The ambulance staff will be able to pick the person up, check no bones are broken and will take them to hospital if the injury seems serious.

Sickness

If the person becomes unwell, the Key Person must be informed immediately. During working hours, the Key Person will contact the individual's GP.

If the situation occurs outside of working hours, and the GP's contact details have been provided by the client, these may be used to make contact. And if the person appears to be acutely ill, call the emergency service on 999 straight away.

Unconscious

If the person is unconscious, you must call the ambulance by dialling 999 straight away. While waiting, DO NOT move the person or try to give them anything to eat or drink. Make sure that nothing is obstructing their breathing and cover them lightly with a blanket.

Other Circumstances

The role of a befriender is to provide regular social contact and companionship to the older person. While this role is not intended to offer emotional or therapeutic support, befrienders are often well placed to notice changes in circumstances or potential concerns relating to an older person's wellbeing and should report these to the Key Person in line with organisational procedures.

If a befriender has concerns during working hours, they should contact their Key Person to seek advice and guidance.

In an exceptional or one-off situation, a befriender may respond as any concerned and caring member of the public would (for example, by seeking emergency assistance). However, befrienders must not provide ongoing practical support outside their role and must always inform their Key Person as soon as possible, so that the situation can be monitored and appropriate support arranged for both the volunteer and the older person.

Many older persons are frail and their health and living situation is likely to change over time. It is important to report any concerns or issues to the Key Person at the earliest opportunity.