

Volunteer Befrienders: role description

What we are looking for

Friendly volunteer befrienders (face to face and telephone) to help us address isolation and loneliness amongst older people in East London.

Why it matters

East London has some of the highest levels of loneliness across London's 33 local authorities: Tower Hamlets (3rd), Hackney (5th) and Newham (6th) (Public Health Outcomes Framework). They also have amongst the highest rates of pensioner poverty in the UK, and lowest of rates of healthy life expectancy.

Why these roles are needed

Befriending has the power to transform the lives of older people through regular interactions. Our new cross-borough 'Gift of Friendship' befriending programme will help older people build connections, independence, and confidence.

What you'll do

- Provide and develop trusting, meaningful, and mutually rewarding regular companionship (in person or by phone)
- Provide safe, caring support after big life changes (e.g. hospital stays or bereavement)
- Report any emerging issues or concerns that the befriender has agreed to share, such as a change in personal circumstance or health
- Maintain records of your befriender and send to the Volunteer Manager regularly
- Regularly meet with your befriending peers and Volunteer Manager to share experiences, get support and reflect
- Signpost other Age UK East London services that the befriender may benefit from
- Provide up to hour support per week for a minimum of six months but we would ideally prefer a more long-term commitment

You'll choose whether you'd like to volunteer face-to-face or by telephone, and we'll match you with someone who needs your support, at a time suitable to the befriender.

Skills and attributes needed

- An understanding of loneliness and social isolation
- An understanding of bereavement and loss, and the needs of older people
- An ability to build strong relationships with others
- A friendly, approachable manner and a desire to learn more about an individual and their interests and their past, and life history
- Comfortable working alone
- Patience and sensitivity
- Good communication and record keeping
- Consistency and reliability
- Some basic IT skills

Benefits

- Having a tangible impact on someone's life, particularly those who are vulnerable
- A strong sense of accomplishment and purpose
- Building intergenerational connections
- Enhancing career prospects
- Social and celebration events
- Access to an AGE UK Discount Portal

Befriending is often described as a reciprocal relationship: while you're offering support, you're also gaining insight, emotional depth, and practical wisdom.

Skills developed

- **Emotional and Social Intelligence:** empathy; active listening; emotional regulation
- **Communication Skills:** compassionate dialogue; non-verbal awareness; conflict resolution
- **Relationship Building:** trust development; boundaries and confidentiality; consistency and reliability
- **Problem-Solving and Creativity:** adaptability; encouraging new perspectives; resourcefulness
- **Personal Growth:** self-awareness; confidence and self-esteem; resilience

Support provided

- Full induction with other volunteers
- Full training including Safeguarding, Making Every Contact Count, Building a Positive Volunteering Experience and more
- Regular supervision by the Volunteer Manager
- Supervised peer-to-peer sessions with other befrienders: a safe place to share experiences, challenges, and successes, process emotion and learn from each other
- Reimbursement of agreed expenses

We also host an annual Volunteer Awards event where we celebrate and recognise the contribution of our volunteers.

How to apply / contact details

- **Online:** <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/eastlondon/get-involved/volunteer2/application-form/>
- **Email:** volunteering@ageukeastlondon.org.uk for more information
- **Tel:** 020 8981 7124 and ask for the Volunteer Team for more information

We will also require details of two referees and ask that you complete a DBS check (which we will arrange for you).