Befriending services – promoting community connection and reducing social isolation

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www.befriending.co.uk

Befriending Networks

Inclusion & Building Collaboration

Shared Learning & Reflection

Supporting Creativity & Innovation

Influencing the Future

Support befriending organisations to deliver well through providing information and support, encouraging organisational development and capacity building, promoting good practice within the befriending sector

Increase **communication and networking**: to provide a network for communication and sharing, develop an evidence base for befriending

Provide a **platform for member voices**, raising awareness, representing them, and influencing national and local policy

Befriending Networks

383 Current Members
We have over 380 befriending projects currently in our membership

4 Training Toolkits Available
Dementia and Befriending; Bereavement in Befriending; CYP Online Safety; and Volunteer Training Toolkit

3 Good Practice Guides
Starting a Befriending Service; Being a Befriender; Running a Befriending Service

869 Current Support
We communicate with 869 different members of staff - getting to know them, their projects and needs

13 Countries
We support befriending projects in 13 different countries, including Malaysia and Australia

47 Events in 2023 so far
Between January and June, we have hosted 47 different events online

7 Intensive staff training
Our Vital Skills for Staff are a great staff induction, refresher or means for continued professional development

12 Short Courses
From measuring Impact to Supporting Mental Wellbeing, we have lots of short courses to support your operations

All stats accurate June 2023

Befriending for Community Connection

Discussions:

1. What is Befriending?

2. What is Loneliness?

3. What is Social Isolation?

Befriending for Community Connection

What is befriending?

"A social relationship between a volunteer and a service user which is initiated, supported and monitored by a voluntary or statutory agency."

What makes a befriending relationship?
There are many factors and responsibilities in a befriending relationship. The relationship may be characterised by:
- Equality
- Trust
- Understanding
- Encouragement
- Confidence
- Fun
- Empowerment

Understanding Social Isolation and Loneliness

Loneliness:
This is a psychological state, an emotional response to a perceived gap between the amount of personal contact an individual wants and the amount they have.

Social Isolation:
This is the absence of social interactions, contacts and relationships with family and friends, with neighbours on an individual level, and with society on a broader level. It is often associated to the level and frequency of social interaction.

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The two terms are often confused.
The befriending response may differ e.g. loneliness may require support to develop, maintain or extend social relationships; or the socially isolated may need practical support such as transport

REMEMBER

- *People can be lonely even with frequent social contact and not all socially isolated people are 'lonely'*

- *Reducing social isolation does not necessarily reduce loneliness*

- *Solutions to loneliness are different for each individual and can only be effective if developed in collaboration with that individual*

- *It is vital to remember that lonely people are not an identical group*

Member Spotlight >
The Welcoming Association: Edinburgh

Welcoming Friendship connects people who are new to Edinburgh with friendly local volunteers.

Befriending for Community Connection

What we know…

Women, younger people, people with a disability or long-term condition and those who did not live with a partner were significantly more likely to be chronically lonely. (DCMS, 2023)

19% of school-aged children reported feeling lonely all or most of the time in the last year. (The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children Study, 2023)

84% of Older Adult Unpaid Carers felt lonely some or most of the time. (Carers Trust Scotland, 2023)

Community connections allow a stronger bond between individuals and communities. It allows everyone to have the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships regardless of age, status, circumstance or identity.

Community connections can build: *trust, resilience, confidence, self-esteem, improved mental health and wellbeing, a sense of belonging amongst other positive boosts.*

Befrienders can help achieve all these benefits and open doors for the befriendee.

Befriending for Community Connection

Discussions:

1. How do the statistics and the work of the Welcoming Association resonate with experiences in your community?

2. Are you aware of befriending services?

3. Is there a befriending need/gap?

Reported loneliness is higher for people who:

•are 16-24 years old
•are female
•are single or widowed
•live with a limiting mental health condition
•are renting
•have lower neighbourhood belonging
•have lower local social trust

(Campaign to End Loneliness)

How Befriending Networks could help...

Our members can access the following benefits:
- Your organisation will be featured in our online directory.
- 1:1 telephone and email support with our membership officers
- Access to members only resources including "*Starting a Befriending Service*" and "*Running a Befriending Service.*"
- Eligibility for the Quality in Befriending process
- Access to consultancy and evaluation services
- Free access to our online volunteer training toolkit
- Ability to attend member networking events.
- Advertise staff vacancies through Befriending Networks
- Utilise membership discounts on training courses.
- Discount on Bespoke and Consultancy services
- Access to our Annual Conference and AGM
- Use of Membership Logo to use on internal and external resources.
- Participation in our Membership survey and future direction of the organisation

For more information on the above benefits of membership, please see our website

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