

10 TOP TIPS FOR EMERGENCY BEFRIENDERS

We are aware that there have been a lot of new volunteer enquiries during the COVID-19 Pandemic. This is fantastic and a great sense of community so thank you for registering your interest with a local organisation. As a new volunteer, you may have never been a befriender before and, with the current situation, unable to attend volunteer training. We have created these top tips for you to help introduce you to befriending. If you have any questions, please contact your organisation and ask to speak to your coordinator.

1	Many factors and responsibilities help build a befriending relationship. Establishing trust is a key factor. The service user should feel able to talk openly about problems and issues with you. Building trust can take time and should not be rushed.	6	Befriending can be beneficial in a mixture of ways, you are doing a great thing for someone. You can help lower rates of depression, reduce vulnerability and risk as well as social isolation for someone. It can also be beneficial for you, the befriender. It can improve your social skills, give your structure, improve your self-esteem and confidence
2	Both you and the service user are engaged in this befriending relationship by choice and you must allow for an element of choice in any discussions or decisions you make together. Ask them questions, but also let them ask and learn about the community and what is happening in the World. You are their connection to what is happening outside their home.	7	Make sure you are calling at an appropriate time. There should be an agreed time in advance and at the end of each call, confirm when the next phone call will be. Try to ensure you are in a quiet place with limited if not no distractions so that you can fully focus on talking and listening to the service user.
3	Remember that this befriending relationship is about benefiting the service user. We want you to focus on their needs and give them a compassionate ear. Make sure not to offload on to the service user. Get to know them, learn about them and be clear about what you can and cannot support them with.	8	Know your motives for volunteering. It is important that you have a professional approach to your role while also having fun and enjoying the communication and relationship with your match.
4	It is important that we understand the whole person that we are matched with. See the service user in a complete way, rather than only identifying the problems or difficulties they live with. It is about viewing the befriender in context, in all different aspects of their life.	9	If you have any questions at any point you should contact the organisation. Your coordinator can help you if you are concerned about someone's welfare or safety. You can also check in with your coordinator to let them know how you are getting in on your role. Open communication is important.
5	Equality is key. Your befriending match must involve respect, appreciation and acceptance. Your relationship can focus on the "being there for" and not "doing for".	10	Good communication skills make all the difference. They will help build your relationship and even just with one phone call a week you can improve someone's welfare and make a positive difference in their lives.