

# Referrals

## Introduction

*Local Friends* works on the basis of a recognised named contact, someone working for a recognised partner organisation, making a referral to us; we then seek to provide pastoral support to the individual who has been referred.

We expect the pastoral support will primarily consist of visiting and talking – basic human contact. Once a relationship has been established, other things may happen, such as shared social activities; but the main focus is on care (that is, human contact with someone who cares about you), not on any service or activity.

## Details

### *Who can refer*

In the initial stages, we plan to receive referrals from specific partners: primarily people working within and attached to the NHS, and mainly people connected with GP surgeries. This may be extended at a later stage. The referral may come from a GP, a Social Prescribing Coordinator, or someone undertaking a similar role.

We do not plan to advertise our activity to the general public, or encourage people to self-refer. Instead, we are seeking referrals only from people and organisations we know and have established a working relationship with. This is required for a number of reasons.

- **Health and Safety.** Our volunteers will be going into the homes of strangers: we need to know that someone we trust, and who understands who we are and what we do, considers that this is a reasonable and responsible thing to do.
- **Capacity planning.** We cannot accept referrals from too many people and places without exceeding our ability to respond. We do not want to let people down by promising more than we can deliver.
- **Scheme development.** We need to know who we are working in partnership with, so that we can gather feedback and discuss possible changes and prioritise developments.
- **Data protection.** We need to provide referrers with feedback on the people they have referred, so they need to be clearly identified in order to ensure an appropriate level of data protection.

### *Who can be referred*

Anyone can be referred if they want to be and the partner thinks it is appropriate. However, we are primarily seeking referrals of people who need help because they are lonely.

Our expectation is that these people will primarily be elderly, but they may also be (for example) single parents, or off work due to stress or injury.

It would not be appropriate to refer people with extreme needs: that is, needs beyond what a volunteer should be expected to cope with, or which might place them in danger.

This is the current list of conditions we are not currently capable of responding to:

- severe mental health problems;
- alcohol misuse;
- substance misuse;
- bed-bound; and
- extreme frailty.

We anticipate that this list will be revised and clarified in time, and hope that as the volunteers gain experience and confidence, the range of people who can be helped will be extended.

We are:

- offering simple human contact, not solving problems;
- seeking to build a friendship which can then be shared and extended to others, aiming to draw people into the wider community;
- responding to what the person being visited wants to talk about, not aiming to talk about matters of faith, but not avoiding the subject either;
- not offering a commitment to weekly visits for the rest of your life, but open to the possibility of establishing a lifelong friendship.

### *How a referral is made*

A referral will only be made with the knowledge and consent of the individual being referred.

- The partner talks with the individual and explains the *Local Friends* scheme.
- If the individual is interested, they are given the local contact details, probably in the form of the business card. We hope to produce a short leaflet in the near future, which could be given at this point.
- The key practical question is: “Would you like someone from *Local Friends* to get in touch with you?”
- If the answer is yes, the name of the individual being referred will be passed to our local scheme coordinator, along with some contact details, and possibly with some very brief notes about the reason for the referral. Some specific request concerning feedback may also be noted at this point.

There is a Referral Form available for use in informing us about a referral, which can be downloaded from the web site; alternatively, the partner can send an email to the local scheme coordinator, with perhaps a short phone message as a backup.

We aim to get in touch with the individual being referred within three (normally within two) working days of the referral; at this point, an appointment will be made for some mutually convenient occasion. Where possible, this will be within a week of the contact being made.

For more details, please visit:

- <http://localfriends.org.uk>

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