

# Befriending Manual August 2024

For staff and volunteers



**Making Norfolk a great place to grow older**

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## Introduction

Age UK Norfolk was established in 1947. Today our mission is to make Norfolk a great place to grow older. We recognise that service standards are necessary to ensure consistent and quality services to the people to whom we provide help and support. This Manual lays out the standards and processes that staff and volunteers within the Befriending service should follow in their everyday practice. It provides a comprehensive set of guidelines and procedures and is to be used as a tool for induction, training and as a reference document. This manual is an extension of the volunteer and staff handbooks.

Staff and Volunteers are required to adhere to this manual; however, they are also encouraged to commit to continuous quality improvement and therefore questions, comments and suggestions are welcomed at any time. The service needs to remain responsive to changing demands and the manual is therefore subject to revision.

This manual will focus on the core befriending service, which is Telephone Befriending, the same principles will apply to the new Care Home Befriending pilot we are running. Specific guidelines for this pilot are in a dedicated section within this manual.

## Our Vision, Mission, Objectives and Strategic Priorities

Befriending forms part of the Supporting and Enabling Strategic Priority. A copy of the organisational strategic priorities, along with our vision, mission and objectives can be found on our website [Vision, mission and objectives | Age UK Norfolk](#)

## Principles and Objectives of the Befriending Service

Our Befriending Service operates between 9am and 7pm every day of the year. The staff team work varying hours within 9am and 5pm Mon – Fri. An On-call service is operated outside of these hours.

The Befriending Service is for people:

- Aged 65 or over who live in Norfolk
- Who can hear and communicate clearly on the telephone.
- With mental health wellness; not receiving treatment or clinical support.
- Who can manage any mood and personality changes well enough to receive a call.
- Who have no history of aggression, inappropriate conversation, or threatening behaviour.
- Who do not have high level dementia needs or issues with memory loss and may become distressed by a call.
- Who are free from drug or alcohol problems and are not currently receiving treatment.
- Are available to take a telephone call on a regular weekly basis.

Our members have varying reasons they want to be part of the service, some reasons are below:

- Feelings of loneliness
- Socially isolated e.g. Family and friends do not live nearby.
- Not in touch with/difficult relationships with family or friends
- Housebound / high level of care need
- Living in a care home
- Recently bereaved
- Lacking confidence
- Mobility barriers
- They experience low mood.
- Difficulty making friends, shy or nervous.

The service recognises that all people are individuals with diverse and different needs. We respect individual's rights to independence and promote person centred conversations.

The service is committed to equality, fairness and justice whilst valuing the diversity of the individual. The service will ensure that everyone will be treated equally, in line with Age UK Norfolk's Policies.

The service supports an individual's choice to receive a call on a weekly basis, for whatever reason they require one. Later life should be a fulfilling and enjoyable experience and older people should be enabled to lead independent, happy and healthy lives.

The service recognises that all people are individuals with diverse and different needs. We respect the individual's rights to independence, self-determination, and dignity.

The service is committed to reducing feelings of loneliness and isolation by offering a friendly and positive weekly telephone call.

## **Expectations and Limitations of the Service**

Most relationships (be it marriage, friendships, or work) have boundaries – lines not to cross, actions unable to be taken. These boundaries help to keep the relationship safe and comfortable. Boundaries are very important in a befriending relationship to ensure there are clear expectations in the befriending relationship.

### **Number of calls per week**

Members matched to a volunteer will receive 1 call per week. The staff team will occasionally authorise more calls per week for a short period, an example of this could be if the member has experienced a recent bereavement or come home from hospital and needs extra emotional support at that time. We limit the calls to weekly to allow us to call as many people as possible as the service is always in high demand often operating a waiting list. Those waiting to be matched to a volunteer will receive a fortnightly check in call.

## Mental Capacity

We must presume mental capacity. If there is any suspicion that the member may not have the capacity to enjoy their call or consent to the service, then please speak to the staff team, who will consider if provision of the service is still appropriate.

The MCA says:

- assume a person has the capacity to make a decision themselves unless it is proved otherwise.
- wherever possible, help people to make their own decisions.
- do not treat a person as lacking the capacity to make a decision just because they make an unwise decision.

The MCA says a person is unable to make a decision if they cannot:

- understand the information relevant to the decision.
- retain that information.
- use or weigh up that information as part of the process of making the decision.

Also remember that some people can have fluctuating capacity or seem not to have capacity due to a UTI.

## Responsibilities of a Befriender (Staff and Volunteers)

- Undertaking person centred conversations with their member.
- Working to the agreed guidelines within this manual and Age UK Norfolk policies and procedures.
- Ensuring that Age UK Norfolk have your up-to-date personal information and emergency contact details.
- Recognising the importance of the service they offer and committing themselves to initial induction, training and periodic updates.
- Attending at least 1 volunteer catch up a year and engage in the Age UK Norfolk volunteer community.
- Informing the member if they are unable to make a call, and the Befriending Team if they are unable to call for more than 2 weeks.
- Taking care to notice any changes in the member and to inform the Befriending Team.
- Follow the recording and monitoring procedures.

## What makes a good Befriender?

- Utilising your support network within and outside the organisation.
- Having an understanding nature and showing empathy - listening to their health concerns (mental and physical) but encouraging the member to focus on more positive conversation.
- Having excellent communication skills such as active listening, a calm voice, giving your whole attention, being understanding and warm, openness, respect and being patient.
- Identifying any extra help or support you or your member may need and reporting this to the staff team.
- Giving members the opportunity to freely discuss matters that are important to them and being aware of any safeguarding concerns.
- Accepting the limitations of their own knowledge and abilities and recognise the circumstances when it is appropriate to refer back to the staff team.
- To actively listen to the member and engage in positive conversation without letting personal opinions or attitudes affect the service provided.

## What a Befrienders should NOT do.

- Visit or meet the member. (Care home pilot exception)
- Provide the members personal information to other organisations or individuals that are confidential unless it is a safeguarding issue and has been approved by Age UK Norfolk.
- Disclose their own personal information to the member e.g. address, phone number.
- Ask the member for any personal information in addition to the information they hold as part of the service or record any if provided by the member.
- Accept or provide gifts (Review gift policy).
- Continue contact with the member after the case has been closed.
- Be negative about any services the member is receiving or being provided.
- Offer counselling or provide intense emotional support (contact the team if you are concerned about your member or struggling to cope with their current situation).
- Provide medical advice – any concerns, direct them to their doctor or NHS on 111.
- Not to enquire or probe a member about their personal situation, such as finances, bereavements, sensitive issues etc.

## Staff Role

				
Jo Asbury Assistant Manager – Supporting and Enabling	Fran Thorne Supporting and Enabling Officer	Saran Cotes Supporting and Enabling Officer	Isabelle Weeks Supporting and Enabling Officer	Lucy Toplis Supporting and Enabling Officer   Charitable Services Administrator
Team email address – befriending@ageuknorfolk.org.uk				
<b>Team phone number and out of hours number/on call</b> - 01603 785 223 - When calling out of hours there are 2 options: If your call is not urgent please leave a voicemail OR press the option to speak with someone.				

## Volunteer Role

### Volunteer Role Description

Volunteer's role description can be found on our website – [Age UK Norfolk Telephone Befriending Volunteering opportunities](#)

### Volunteer Induction

Volunteer's induction will be booked as per the instructions in the volunteer handbook procedure. Once a volunteer has been fully vetted and inducted, they can start to support the service.

**Note to staff** A volunteer cannot be made active on CLOG until they have completed all the sections in the recruitment procedure and returned all relevant documents.

When the staff member is making the volunteer active on CLOG you will need to ensure you are completing the following for befriending volunteers:

- Add the volunteer to the 'Groups and Skills' section.
- Ensure the 'Preferred method of contact' box on CLOG has been completed.

- Ensure the volunteer skills box in CLOG has been completed.
- Set an action for TBVol Actions for annual review date in one years' time: Record a contact.
- Send welcome email to volunteer with member's details (Encrypted!).

While the volunteer is active it is the responsibility of the staff team to keep the volunteer's record up to date.

- Ensure at the Annual Review, details are checked and updated if necessary.
- Staff team to update CLOG.
- Update CLOG with training events attended in the Clubs and Clinics section.

If group emails are being sent, the volunteers email address must always be hidden by using the BCC function.

## Number of members

The number of members each volunteer calls every week is dependent on the time they have available. The volunteer's experience and capabilities must also be taken into consideration. The maximum number of members a volunteer can have is 6.

## Volunteers – On hold

Sometimes volunteers need to take some time out of volunteering but do not want to leave. If a volunteer is on hold for over 6 months, the staff team will ensure they have been given any relevant updated information about the organisation and service before they are matched with a new member.

**Note to staff** - *If a volunteer is on hold, this needs to be clearly marked on CLOG and the volunteer coordinator needs to be updated. If it is not suitable for the volunteer to be contacted while they are 'on hold' please remove their email address and make this clear on CLOG*

## Volunteer Support and Supervision

### Support

All volunteers can expect support from the whole of the Befriending Team.

Staff and volunteers may need one-to-one support after a particular call to help deal with any difficult emotions that have been aroused.

Volunteers may request a face-to-face supervision session at any time and the staff team/volunteer coordinator will also complete an annual review with the volunteer.



## Volunteer catch ups/ Group supervision

Group Supervision (3 times a year) will be provided via Volunteer catch up meetings.

All training will be added to the volunteer's record on CLOG by the staff team

## Volunteers – Leaver

If a volunteer wishes to end their volunteering with Age UK Norfolk, it is important that the volunteer tells the staff team as soon as possible so any members can be informed, and we can ensure continuity of all their calls.

The volunteer must remember that they are unable to continue to support any Age UK Norfolk members once they have left and they must:

- Delete/destroy all contact information they hold. Delete any stored numbers
- Return all AUKN property including the badge if applicable (Care home pilot)

**In all cases the volunteer needs to end all contact with the service user and both parties need to be advised that if they continue a relationship, this is outside of AUKN, and there will be no support or insurance cover in place.**

***Note to staff*** remember to update CLOG (including groups and skills)

## Service Users / Client / Members

Our preference is the term Member, however, service users may also be referred to as clients or service users.

### Members Rights

- To receive a service in line with this manual and Age UK Norfolk's policies and procedures.
- To be treated as individuals, according to the service principles.
- Receive a service which offers:
  - An introductory call by the staff team
  - Regular contact from Age UK Norfolk until a suitable volunteer is found.
  - Regular and reliable support within the remit of the service and at a time that suits them.

### Responsibilities of the Organisation to Volunteers and Service Users

- Develop and monitor the service ensuring that the service remains relevant and responsive to the needs of older people in Norfolk.
- Provide training and support to volunteers, recognising that the service requires specific and general skills and knowledge, which continually needs updating.
- Address complaints from both service users and volunteers. To learn from complaints, and to carry out any changes of practice, if necessary. To ensure compliments and complaints are given equal recognition.

## Keeping Safe

### Safeguarding

Age UK Norfolk is a co-signatory to the Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Joint Policy and Procedures, and as such is committed to protecting vulnerable adults at all times. To this end the following process details the actions to be taken should a volunteer become aware of a safeguarding concern.

If you uncover or have any suspicions regarding any type of abuse, please contact a member of the Befriending team immediately. If necessary, the team will then file an internal safeguarding report and make a safeguarding report in line with our policy, which may include notifying Social Services or if known, the members GP. The volunteer will be advised if they need to take any further action. We do not always get updates from Norfolk County Council/GP on safeguarding reports as it is not always in our interest to know. This does not mean relevant action is not being taken. [Updated: Raising a safeguarding adults concern checklist | Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board](#) is a helpful checklist for safeguarding.

- If in doubt, always share your concerns with the Befriending Service.
- Do not promise confidentiality when you are talking to the member involved.
- Try and remain calm while talking to the member and listen very carefully to them.

### Sharing personal information

**Never** give members your personal contact details unless approved by the staff team. This is so that you will not be harassed by people calling you and asking you to speak at unarranged times. If a member needs to contact you they will call the office. **When you call the member withhold your number by using 141.**

### Identified Risks / challenges

Prior to accepting a new member, the volunteer will be informed of any identified risks, along with any restrictions that have been put in place. The volunteer will need to confirm that they understand the risk and are happy to support the service user. An example could be not discussing a certain topic that could be a trigger for the member.

If we are made aware of or identify any additional concerns after the volunteer has taken on the member, the staff team will discuss with the volunteer at the earliest opportunity.

If anyone becomes angry or makes you feel uncomfortable **then end the call immediately**, and inform the staff team

<b>Note to staff</b> – All risks must be noted on the risk assessment tab on CLOG
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## Information, Advice, Signposting and Referring

### Information

Information is providing facts in response to a question. Information is not person specific and would be the same for every service user/member.

If you are asked for any information to be given, please pass on our I&A teams contact details or contact our I&A team directly who will contact the member. ([advice@ageuknorfolk.org.uk](mailto:advice@ageuknorfolk.org.uk) / 0300 500 1217)

### Advice

Advice is to guide or recommend options in relation to a problem unique to a person.

**Advice at all times should be provided by our I&A team and not the befriender.**

### Signposting

Signposting is when a service user is given information of other organisation(s) that would be able to assist them. The service user then contacts the organisation themselves.

### Referral

This is when the volunteer contacts the organisation on behalf of the service user and makes an appointment for them, with the service user's consent. If the need arises for this, please contact the staff team before taking any action.

## Referral and Active Cases

### Referrals into the service

Referrals come in from 2 places

1. via the Referral form (for use by self, professionals or relatives) which is downloadable from the Age UK Norfolk website [Age UK Norfolk | Our Services](#) within the befriending Service Information. (the form can be emailed or posted to us, professionals who have access, can upload the referral onto the NCAN referral system)
2. Via our Information and Advice team, anyone can contact the I&A service to request support from the befriending service, it could be the service user, a family member or a professional. I&A will call the service user to obtain consent to make a referral and confirm suitability for the service before they make the referral to Befriending.

## Allocation

Once a referral has been received, we will review for suitability, if we reject the referral we will go back to the person who made the referral to explain why and offer any alternative services that may be more suitable to their needs. The staff team/befriending assistants may call the member for a limited period to ascertain suitability.

We will then contact the member to;

- Give an overview of the service, including the support provided by volunteers.
- Explain that all volunteers are referenced and have been DBS Enhanced checked.
- Explain that all discussions remain confidential, unless a potential Safeguarding issue is identified, which would have to be reported.
- Recap the details on the referral and fill in any missing information.
- Ask if they have any questions.
- Explain that we will be sending them information on the service, along with contact details of the staff team, should they have any problems.

The staff team will then consider who has availability and who would be a good match for the member. Until the member can be matched, they will receive fortnightly check in calls from our befriending assistant team.

**Note to staff** - You can share with the volunteer, any risks and the service user's contact number. The coordinator will now assign the volunteer a job card on CLOG and make them the usual volunteer.

- o Add the case to the waiting list until a suitable volunteer can be allocated.
- o 'Add 'send welcome pack (TB18MemLetter and an Age UK Norfolk Services booklet) action – assign to TBMem Actions.
- o Add 'Annual review due' action for one year later - assigned to TBMem Actions.
- o Add 'Send birthday card' action – assigned to TBMem Actions, 7 days before birthday.
- o Upload Referral form.
- o Add to office log so regular calls can be made by staff members until a volunteer has been allocated.

*If the member is returning to the service within 6 months you can reopen the old referral.*

## Tips and tools for making friendly befriending calls

The language we use in the Service is important. We use the term 'older people' instead of elderly, pensioners, OAPs etc. We refer to the people using our Service as 'members'.

### Weekly Quiz

The Befriending Service aims to not only provide social contact and interaction, it also aims to stimulate the mind and entertain. Volunteers receive a weekly fun quiz (either by post or email) to undertake with their members if desired. Not all members are interested in this, so it's important to always ask. The quiz can be used as a talking point. There is no competition or prizes with the quiz but adding the score up for the member may offer them a sense of personal achievement (if they have done well!). If it is not going so well and they find the answers difficult, hints may help, or just abandon the quiz so not to cause any distress.

### Helpful conversation starters

Sometimes direct questions can cause confusion; open questions are sometimes easier to answer whilst trust is established.

- “We haven't spoken before so would you like to tell me a bit about yourself?”
- “How long have you lived in Norfolk?”
- Have the weekly quiz available so that if conversation is not flowing you can offer to go through the quiz with them instead.
- Referring to their interests, “I see that you like...” or “Have you seen (or read) ...”.
- If you have a shared interest, create a question like “I see that you are interested in Strictly Come Dancing, what did you think of ....”.
- If there is a notable news story, ask their thoughts on it, strong opinions can also generate interesting conversation. (Remember however to be impartial, especially on topics such as politics.)

### General tips for making a call to an older person

- Introduce yourself to the member and while you are building your befriending relationship with them, remind them this is their weekly call. If they do not understand or are confused, ask if they are just happy to have a chat.
- Keep it simple; do not worry if they do not want to talk for long. Sometimes it can be very tiring for our members. Volunteers may need to remind members part way through the conversation if they forget who they are talking to.

- Be mindful and sensitive that some members are housebound and unable to get out and about, they may be in a care home, they may not have any family they are in touch with, or they may not have any other calls or visitors during the week. These things may restrict the types of appropriate conversations.
- Remember the call focuses on the member. Only share your own personal information that you feel comfortable with (within the Service boundaries – i.e., no identifiable information apart from first name).
- Asking “how are you?” may invite a member to talk about their aches and pains. Acknowledge how they are feeling, offer listening skills and gentle support without giving advice, then attempt positive conversation.
- If a member does not understand what is said, attempt to rephrase the sentence. They may have difficulty expressing themselves.
- If a member asks the same question over and over again, offer patience and answer as though you haven’t heard it before. It can sometimes take a while to register an answer.
- Always end the call on a positive note; perhaps something like “I’ll look forward to having a chat with you next week” or “I’ve really enjoyed talking with you today”. This makes the member feel valued along with the promise of another positive conversation in the future.

### How can you bring a conversation to a close

- Ideally set a boundary at the start of a call.
- Say something like ‘I can’t believe how the time has flown by, before we end should we make a date and time to talk again’.

### After the call

**Concerns** - If the call has raised any concerns to you about the member, please note it and discuss it with staff at the earliest possible opportunity. If this is outside of normal office hours and urgent (can’t wait until the next working day) please contact the on-call number as soon as you can.

**Debrief** – if you have had a challenging call and would like to discuss this, please contact the staff team who will be happy to chat with you.

### Tips for making a call to an older person with Dementia or memory loss

Occasionally we sign up members who have a new diagnosis of dementia or already have mild dementia. This can be a lonely journey. It can affect their ability to communicate as they can’t find the right words or follow a conversation well, it may also mean they take longer to respond or switch topics quickly. We aim to offer our service for as long as we can while someone is still able to communicate and does not become distressed or anxious about our calls.

**Some people who live with dementia also may make comments that you feel are inappropriate for the situation. If this happens please speak to the staff team for support and guidance.**

To understand more about someone living with dementia more information can be found in the Age UK leaflet on Dementia [Dementia information guides | Age UK / ID204957 Age UK Living with dementia 06 23](#) We also encourage all our staff and volunteers to become Dementia Friends, you can find out more about this in your Volunteer handbook.

Every person's experience of dementia is unique, so not every tip may be helpful

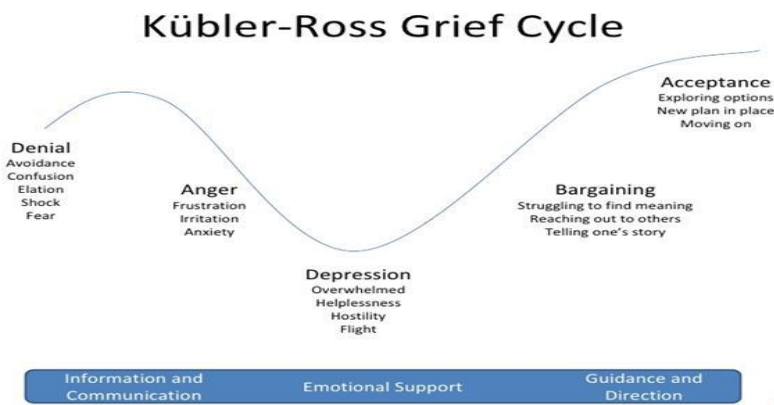
- Make sure you're in a good place to communicate. Ideally it will be quiet and calm. Turn off any background noise distractions such as the radio or TV.
- Plan enough time to talk with the person so the call is not rushed.
- If there is a time of day where the person is able to communicate more clearly, try to use this time to make the call.
- If the person becomes tired easily, then short conversations may be better.
- Communicate clearly and calmly. Use short, simple sentences. Avoid speaking sharply or raising your voice.
- Allow time between sentences for the person to process the information and respond. These pauses might feel uncomfortable if they become quite long, but it is important to give the person time to respond.
- Try to avoid asking too many questions or asking complicated questions. The person may become frustrated or withdrawn if they can't find the answer.
- Phrase questions in a way that allows for a simple answer. Questions with a 'yes' or 'no' answer are easier to answer.
- If you haven't fully understood what the person has said, ask them to repeat it. If you are still unclear, rephrase their answer to check your understanding of what they meant.
- If they don't understand you, consider breaking down what you're saying into smaller chunks so that it is more manageable.
- Try to let the person complete their own sentences, try not to interrupt or help them find a word as it can break the pattern of communication.
- If the person with dementia has difficulty finding the right word or finishing a sentence, ask them to explain it in a different way. If they cannot find the word for a particular object, ask them to describe it instead.
- If the person is upset, let them express their feelings. Allow them the time that they need and try not to dismiss their worries –sometimes the best thing to do is just listen and show that you are there.

## Tips on calling someone who has been recently bereaved.

### What Does It Mean to Grieve?

Grief is exhausting. Grief is a natural process but is an individual experience. Grief can incorporate many different emotions such as guilt, anger, numbness, loneliness, anxiety, hopelessness, fear, regret, depression.

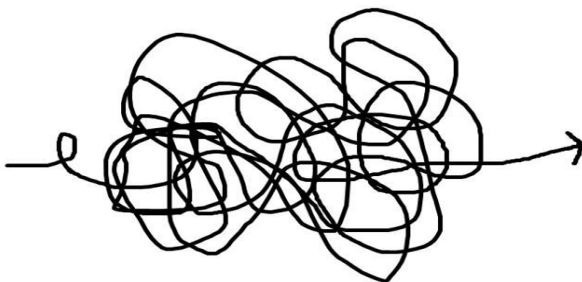
Consider that someone could be grieving for the person who has passed away as well as the loss of any roles they may have played e.g a full time caring role. Grief can also show irrational displays of emotion, a small item in everyday life, such as a lightbulb going, could trigger the service user.



How we would like grief to be



What grief is really like





## Tips to help someone who is grieving.

Listen actively, let them talk and share the relationship they had with the deceased. Invite the person to talk about their loved one. Be prepared for some silences. Refer back to things they have said, it shows that you have been actively listening. Realising you may not always be the best person to support them.

Remember that effective communication can be broken up like this.

Words: 7% | Nonverbal: 55% | Tone Volume and inflection 38%

Empathy v Sympathy - [Brené Brown on Empathy - YouTube](#)

Ensure that the person is not harbouring guilt when they had no options i.e., not being with that person when they died.

## How can we protect ourselves?

- Realising it is not your grief.
- Observe and listen but do not carry that person's grief or take it on
- If this is a trigger for you, speak to the staff team.
- Knowing your own constraints (time, hours, capabilities etc)
- Keep a check on how you are.
- Can you help others? We all have a certain capacity - know yours

## Useful literature

[https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/information-guides/ageukig03\\_when\\_someone\\_dies.inf.pdf](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/information-guides/ageukig03_when_someone_dies.inf.pdf)

<https://www.gov.uk/when-someone-dies>

## Cards for members

The staff team send a greeting card by post to members when:

- It's their birthday.
- It's Christmas.
- We are made aware they are in hospital unexpectedly.
- There has been a close bereavement.

## Cards and presents between befrienders and members

Unfortunately, the staff team are unable to forward any cards or letters on from volunteers to members because our staff are all home workers. We must also act within Age UK Norfolk's policies and procedures.

## Closing a case

A member can leave the Befriending Service, for a variety of reasons, for example.

- Losing mental capacity
- Acting unlawfully
- Verbal abuse or threatening behaviour
- Circumstances of the member are beyond the remit of the Service
- They don't feel they need calls any longer
- Moved into residential care
- Hearing or speech issues
- Drug or alcohol problems
- Does not answer their phone on a consistent basis
- Health has deteriorated
- They have passed away
- Any other situation that becomes untenable for Age UK Norfolk's reputation, staff or volunteers

If any of the above occur, after giving the situation due consideration, a letter will be sent from Age UK Norfolk explaining the situation and giving comprehensive reasons for the termination. Depending on the circumstances it may be appropriate to offer the member our Complaints Procedure.

**In all cases the volunteer needs to end all contact with the service user and both parties need to be advised that if they continue a relationship, this is outside of AUKN, and there will be no insurance cover in place.**

**Note to staff** – Don't forget to update CLOG - Complete all open actions, add in the referral closed date in the summary tab, complete the job card. (Be careful not to close a job card for another service)

### **Deceased service users**

Check the history on CLOG and ensure you email anyone with a relevant outstanding action that the member is deceased so they can take any action for their service.

Make the member deceased on CLOG this will end all projects and close all actions, so it is important that you let anyone know who has an open case with the service user. E.g. advocacy if they have an open case on CLOG or any active workers on a case that you are aware of e.g. a social worker.

## Volunteer Reporting

### Volunteer Reporting

Volunteers are required to report to AUKN call details for their members each month. The information we need to know is

- Date of each call
- Type of call – (Answered or not answered/Message left)
- Length of call to the nearest minute

The staff team will email out a link to a form for the volunteer to complete with their call details. This form will be sent at the start of each month for calls that month. The volunteer can add each call as they go or wait until the end of the month and add them all at once. When the form link is emailed out, the staff team will let the volunteers know the deadline for all calls to be submitted by.

If the volunteer would like to update staff on any other aspect of the call, they should contact the team directly via phone or email.

## What to do if things go wrong/ Dealing with challenges

### The Befriending Relationship is not working. ‘We don’t click’

The Befriending Service encourages a cheerful, friendly and easy-going environment for everyone involved: members, volunteers and staff. However, human nature dictates that not everyone automatically gets on with everyone else. We hope to match members with volunteers who they enjoy talking to and vice versa. To this end, if a volunteer or member decides they are not enjoying talking to their match, we will try and find them someone more compatible to chat with. You need to remember here that this is not the fault of anyone, some people just don’t get on.

### Member has high emotional needs

Whilst we understand that low mood can be a frequent feature for our members who feel isolated and lonely, we do not provide intense emotional support or counselling and need to be clear on these boundaries. When we identify a member’s, needs are greater than the Service can meet, we may need to cease membership. There must be a discussion with a staff member and a conversation with the member regarding this. The staff member could then refer on to a suitable alternative befriending organisation or support service, such as:

- Their GP for a referral into the Wellbeing Service.
- Social Services (if we feel they may not have mental capacity).
- Samaritans (they also have a befriending Service alongside a national helpline).
- Face to face befriending (where risks may be more easily assessed).
- Counselling or mental health support in their area e.g. Mind.

## Difficult members

Be prepared for members to present with differing emotions, including anger and frustration, which could show itself as rudeness, impatience and/or unreasonable demands. Try to diffuse the situation by being calm and reassuring, understanding the underlying reasons for this attitude. However, Age UK Norfolk does not condone unacceptable behaviour and if the situation is such that you feel out of your depth and/or intimidated, terminate the call and subsequently discuss the incident with the staff team.

## Members who are distressed

You may be presented with a member who is distressed and/or tearful; these calls can be equally upsetting to staff and volunteers. Try to remain calm and reassuring, understanding the underlying reasons for these feelings. Be empathetic whilst at the same time try to keep a professional attitude. It is perfectly acceptable to gently terminate the call and subsequently discuss the incident with the staff team.

If the call is difficult or more challenging just before bringing to a conclusion, query something that has made the member smile that day/week - it could be their pet, a TV programme or even the call. It helps to lift the mood if they have been upset or tearful.

## When things do not go to plan

Things may go wrong for many reasons, for example:

- Misunderstanding what a member has said
- The member misunderstands the Service
- The member is not receiving calls
- The member is under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- The member talks about harming themselves or someone else

If you discover that you have inaccurate information or are not up to date with a current situation, please ensure this is raised with a staff member.

## Change in member behaviour

If you notice a change in behaviour with your member always discuss this with the staff team

This could be due to:

- Feeling considerably of low mood.
- They have become particularly vulnerable.
- They have had a recent bereavement.
- They have become challenging to talk to.
- They have needs the team are still assessing.

- They have developed mild dementia/confusion, hearing loss, language issues.
- May talk of suicide but without any known intent.
- In end-of-life care.
- Difficult to get hold of.
- Safeguarding concerns.
- Monitoring member for any other reason.

It is usually the Befriending Team's policy not to accept a member who does not fit the Service remit; however, life circumstances can change, and the member require short-term support. There are also occasions when it is deemed necessary to end the Befriending Service with a member, so if the member changes and becomes a concern for the volunteer, staff may call and monitor the calls before deciding if we should reallocate or end the service.

## Face to Face Befriending pilot

This guidance is in addition to the rest of the manual. We are piloting 2 face to face befriending services

- At a care home in Swaffham starting Aug 2024. The service will offer a fortnightly visit for those residents who are unable to join in with the home's social activities. This will typically be a resident who is bedbound and has no regular visitors.
- In and around the Reepham area between September 2024 and April 2025.

## Personal Safety

Age UK Norfolk have a responsibility under the 'Lone Workers Policy' to provide you with support should you ever feel unsafe or in danger whilst out on a visit.

Unlike the Telephone Befriending service, visits should only be completed in office hours (10am-4pm) this is so that you have support available from Age UK Norfolk staff. All visits must be logged as per the procedure in the Volunteer Handbook using CLOG or the Microsoft Form link which can be found in the Volunteer Handbook.

Every effort will be made to assess risks associated with individual cases; however, volunteers always need to remain vigilant for their own personal safety. Any issues that arise should be discussed with their coordinator at the earliest opportunity.

To mitigate any risks the volunteer should:

- Ensure you follow the buddy system (details can be found in the lone working policy)
- Ensure you are aware of the **red file procedure**. As mentioned in the Lone Working policy the number for the **RED FILE** procedure is **01603 785200**

- Park in a well-lit area if possible, so that the vehicle is safe, and you will not be at risk when you leave or return to it.
- Be alert when negotiating difficult access routes. If it is dark carry a torch if possible.
- Ensure the exit route is clear, always place yourself between the member and exit. Consider leaving their room door ajar.
- If anyone becomes angry or makes you feel uncomfortable **then leave immediately**.
- If someone falls, **do not attempt to lift them**, but call for assistance.

- **Note to staff** – *Once an appointment has been arranged, it is the responsibility of the person visiting to update CLOG of the date and time on CLOG marking the appointment as **very high priority** on the Action Priority Rating field showing the time and date of the visit, so this is clearly visible in your action list. All volunteers without CLOG access will log their visit on the Microsoft form mentioned above.*

## COVID 19

The latest government guidance in full can be found here:

[Living safely with respiratory infections, including COVID-19 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/living-safely-with-respiratory-infections-including-covid-19)

We are following the latest government guidance and have no additional restrictions in place. Due to working with vulnerable people, we should mitigate any infection risk where possible and respect the wishes of anyone we see face to face e.g. if they would like us to wear a mask and you are happy to do so. Care homes may have their own rules around visits and our guidance is in addition to any guidance the care home has. All guidance provided by a care home should be respected and followed. If you wish to test prior to a visit and are unable to obtain a free test please speak to your coordinator **before** you incur a cost to do this. You do not have to let us know if you have been vaccinated, taken a test or the result.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**My member has told me they have moved or their personal information has changed. Do I need to do anything?**

Yes, let the staff team know who will follow up with the member.

**Do you have an alternative contact / Next of Kin details for my member?**

We keep records of people who staff can contact in an emergency or if we have a concern. These may be a next of kin, relative, friend, neighbour etc. Sometimes we may contact the Alternative Contact (AC) when we have been unable to get hold of a member and we have concerns for their wellbeing. Often they are in hospital, however we have to be aware that some of our members live by themselves and do not speak to or see anyone for many days at a time. We do have a duty of care as a professional service of a registered charity.

It is a members choice to give details of an AC and consent for us to contact them, when they join the service, and some may not have anyone who could act in this role.

### **I can't get hold of my member, what do I do?**

If your member doesn't answer the phone, leave them a message if possible. They may appreciate knowing they have been thought of. If possible, try them again at another time instead. If it is not possible to get hold of the member which brings concern, they may be in hospital or have moved into care. Contact the Befriending Team who will contact their alternative Contact, a doctor or send them a letter, depending on the circumstances.

Please do not leave multiple voicemails, this is to avoid filling a member's voicemail.

### **I am unable to call my member this week/for a few weeks, what do I do?**

If it is just 1 or 2 week you are unable to call for, e.g. you are on holiday, just let your member know. If however you are unable to call for more than 2 week, you need to inform both the Befriending staff team and your member of this. The staff team will then discuss with you and the member if a temporary solution is required until you return.

### **My member has passed away, can I go to the funeral?**

Usually, the member's next of Kin will make us aware that the member has passed away and we will pass on the sad news to you. If however you are made aware you should inform the staff team as soon as possible. If you wish to attend the funeral (there is no obligation or expectation to) the staff team will seek approval from the member's next of kin.

### **My member is interested in a will, how can AUKN support them?**

If a member has no valid Will in place and would like one, we would always recommend that a solicitor or reputable Will writer be used. The best solution here would be to give the member the I&A contact information or ask them if they would like you to have the I&A team call them. If this is the case, let the staff team know.

It is recognised that when a member has received a service over a long period of time their appreciation may be shown in the form of a bequest to an individual member of staff or volunteer. The member should be informed that individual staff or volunteers, where the contact and relationship relate to Age UK Norfolk business, should **not** be named in that person's Will.

A member should be made aware that as a charity Age UK Norfolk (charity number 1077097) welcomes legacies to support our charitable work.

### **Volunteers cannot act as a witness to a Will.**

## Useful Information

<p><b>Ideas for Ears</b></p>	<p>We have been given access to this 45-minute training video in collaboration with Age UK National and Hearing link, as charity supporting hearing loss.</p> <p>They have produced a video resource to support people who are using phone and video calls to deliver services to older people, a high proportion of whom have hearing loss. The video by <u>Ideas for Ears</u> is highly practical and looks at problems caused for those not easily able to hear and follow what's said on phone or video calls, and how to fix them. Phone and video calls are being used far more than ever before due to COVID-19. The video will help managers, staff and volunteers to make their phone and video calls easier for people to hear and follow. The video is split into 3</p> <p><b>Part 1</b> – why it matters  <b>Part 2</b> – the challenges experienced by older people when using phone and video services  <b>Part 3</b> – how service providers can reduce or remove the challenge</p>	<p><a href="#">Video resources   Ideas For Ears</a></p>
<p><b>REST</b></p>	<p>REST is a partnership project that brings together mental health support, local services and a place where everyone can feel welcome. REST stands for <b>Recover, Eat, Support, and Talk</b>, reflecting the different ways we can be more connected in our community. At the moment we are offering a range of virtual and online support, and our central Norwich REST hub will open in 2021.</p>	<p><a href="#">Homepage - REST - Norwich</a></p>
<p><b>At a Loss</b></p>	<p>At a loss is a comprehensive hub of bereavement support and information for anyone bereaved and those supporting bereaved people in the UK. You can search using filters according to age, location, relationship to the deceased and circumstances of death and find support from the many hundreds of services listed,</p>	<p><a href="#">AtaLoss.org</a></p>



	<p>confident that the details are accurate and up to date, cover the whole of the UK and offer choices from a wide range of support available. Useful things to read, helplines and a free live-chat counselling service are also available on the website to help anyone deal with their loss, whatever the circumstances.</p> <p>At a Loss is committed to ensuring that older people access the support they need as easily as possible and there are many services listed and information provided that are dedicated to the over 65's. We are also collaborating with others to improve access through voice recognition technology, so that those who find accessing the internet a challenge, can find support using a landline phone and in their own language.</p>	
Over 65 West Norfolk West Norfolk Befriending	<p>We generally work with older people, over the age of 65, who have a physical reason for being isolated – this could be hearing loss, physical disability, poor mobility or caring responsibilities.</p> <p>We cover West Norfolk, following the boundaries of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council.</p> <p>We offer face to face befriending (currently on hold due to the pandemic) and have started a new telephone befriending service.</p>	<p>www.wnbefriending.org.uk Tel 01553 763500 Email info@wnbefriending.org.uk</p>
Age Concern Swaffham & District Befriending Service	Age Concern Swaffham & District Befriending Service	Age Concern Swaffham & District Befriending Service
Omega – Letter from Louise and Chatterbox Action Against Loneliness Programme	<p>A Letter from Louise Pen Pal Service is our safeguarded befriending service connecting clients with volunteer pen pals for a regular exchange of letters, photographs, art work and stories. The service can offer those who are extremely isolated a way to gently connect with another person; for others, it provides a creative outlet and something to look forward to receiving in the post.</p>	<p>For more information, please contact the Chatterbox team on 01743 245 088 or email us at aletterfromlouise@omega.uk.net.</p> <p><a href="mailto:info@omega.uk.net">info@omega.uk.net</a></p>

	<p>Chatterbox Action Against Loneliness Programme</p> <p>A free, short-term telephone befriending programme designed to support those who are lonely and isolated due to their caring role, bereavement, age, or life-limiting and end of life challenges.</p>	
Vision Norfolk	<p>Volunteer, all of whom have direct experience of sight loss – provides weekly telefriends calls to visually-impaired people</p>	<p><a href="#">Key facts – Vision Norfolk</a></p>
DeafBlind	<p>Our Volunteer Telephone or Email Befrienders make regular phone calls or emails to our members and to chat about mutual interests and give them some support and friendship. This greatly helps to reduce feelings of isolation, which are all too common with deafblindness.</p>	<p><a href="#">Telephone or email befriender   Deafblind UK</a></p>

## Document Control

Last Updated date	Updated by	Changes made	Date shared with staff and volunteers
Date finished	Jen Field	New document	18/05/2021
28/09/2021	Jen Field	Changed Title to Befriending	29/09/2021
28/09/2021	Jen Field	Changed age limit from 60 to 50 to align with other services	29/09/2021
28/09/2021	Jen Field	Updated staff CLOG Action information (We combined TB mem and TB vol actions to 'befriending')	29/09/2021
28/09/2021	Jen Field	Updated useful information – At a Loss	29/09/2021

28/09/2021	Jen Field	Updated useful information – West Norfolk Befriending Service	29/09/2021
28/09/2021	Jen Field	Updated useful information – Age Concern Swaffham & District Befriending Service	29/09/2021
28/09/2021	Jen Field	Updated useful information – Vision Norfolk	29/09/2021
28/09/2021	Jen Field	Updated useful information – Omega – Letter from Louise and Chatterbox Action Against Loneliness Programme	29/09/2021
28/09/2021	Jen Field	Updated useful information – DeafBlind	29/09/2021
28/09/2021	Jen Field	Expenses – Insert as an object	29/09/2021
28/09/2021	Jen Field	Tips for making a call to an older person with Dementia or memory loss	29/09/2021
28/09/2021	Jen Field	The following policies have been updated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gifts Tips Legacies and Anti-Bribery Policy</li> <li>• Health and Safety Policy and Handbook</li> <li>• IT Policy</li> <li>• Safeguarding and Capacity Policy</li> </ul>	29/09/2021
01/08/2024	Jen Field	Reviewed and updated entire manual	01/08/2024