



BARROW UPON SOAR GOOD NEIGHBOUR SCHEME

Befriending Guidance

G005

1. What is Befriending?

Befriending is a one-to-one, non-judgemental relationship in which a volunteer offers time, conversation and encouragement to a member who may be experiencing loneliness, isolation, illness or a period of change in their life.

Befriending focuses on **listening, companionship and social contact**, either face-to-face or by telephone. It is based on acceptance and choice and aims to reduce loneliness, not to create dependence.

Befriending **is not**:

- A replacement for social or health care services
- Problem-solving or crisis intervention
- Friendship in the traditional sense

Most visits are enjoyable and straightforward. These guidelines exist to support volunteers, set clear expectations, and ensure the safety and wellbeing of both members and volunteers.

If you are asked to provide support beyond what has been agreed, **do not offer this yourself**. Ask the member to contact the Telephone Coordinator.

2. Boundaries

A befriending relationship is supportive but not a friendship. Clear boundaries are essential to:

- Keep everyone safe
- Avoid misunderstandings
- Ensure appropriate expectations

Boundaries help define what a volunteer can and cannot do and protect both the member and the volunteer from over-dependence or risk.

3. Training and Support

- An **introductory visit** will take place with the Telephone Coordinator or an experienced volunteer.
- The agreed scope of support will be explained and confirmed at this meeting.
- Matches are reviewed:
 - Within 1 month of the first visit
 - Again at 3 months
 - Then at 9–12 months if the match is working well

Due to the confidential nature of befriending, **one-to-one support** is available from the Volunteer Coordinator or Safeguarding Officer.

Volunteers also have opportunities for **group support meetings**, held regularly either in person or via Zoom.

Each member has a dedicated **WhatsApp group** for volunteers and the Telephone Coordinator. Please provide a short update after each visit.

4. What to Do

Befriending is about developing trust and providing safe, supportive contact.

For your own safety, always follow **G002 Lone Worker and Personal Safety Guidance**.

Before your visit:

- Ensure you have the member's name, address, phone number and relevant information
- Carry your identity card and show it on arrival
- Phone ahead on the day to confirm the visit (withhold your number if preferred)
- Make sure your phone is charged and switched on
- Ensure the Telephone Coordinator know where you are

During visits:

- Explain clearly who you are and why you are there
- Encourage members to engage with community activities where possible
- Share any interests or opportunities with the Telephone Coordinator so they can explore options
- Keep conversations confidential unless permission is given

Safeguarding and concerns:

- Report immediately anything that raises safeguarding concerns
- If inappropriate behaviour occurs, make a written, dated note and inform the Telephone Coordinator
- If you feel uncomfortable for any reason, **leave immediately** and report this

For urgent concerns about a member's welfare, contact the Telephone Coordinator on **07771 625 591**, who will involve the Safeguarding Officer if required.

5. What Not to Do

Volunteers must not:

- Work with anyone under 18 or be left alone with a child
- Provide support beyond what has been agreed
- Share personal contact details unless they choose to
- Lift or move a member who has fallen – call **999** and keep them warm and comfortable
- Assist with medication or medical tasks
- Provide personal care (washing, dressing, feeding or toileting)
- Assist with moving and handling
- Physically feed members
- Feel obliged to prepare food or drinks (helping is optional)
- Provide financial advice – direct members to appropriate professional services such as Citizens Advice

6. Final Note

If you are ever unsure about a situation, **pause and ask for advice**. The Telephone Coordinator and Safeguarding Officer are there to support you.

Your role as a befriender is valued and appreciated. By offering time, empathy and consistency, you play a vital role in reducing loneliness and supporting wellbeing in the community.