



Befriender: Linked Minds

Location:

Ealing and Hounslow.

Terms:

Voluntary, 1-2 hours per week, expenses reimbursed.

About the role:

Our Linked Minds Befriending Project supports people in Ealing and Hounslow who are socially isolated because of a diagnosed mental health problem.

On completion of specialist mental health training, Befrienders are matched with someone suitable, by a Coordinator who then acts as a (non-clinical) supervisor for the befriending period, which is limited to a year.

Befriender, client and Coordinator devise a plan together with a goal to work towards, such as getting a job, joining a club, or meeting other people.

Befrienders make a weekly 1-2 hour visit, sometimes to the client's home, where they might chat over a cup of tea or go out for a walk together, sometimes at a cafe or other location. They might undertake a local activity connected with a goal.

The aim is that, by the end of the year, clients feel better about themselves, more valued, resilient, empowered, more linked to their community and better equipped for their journeys in recovery.

These visits make such a difference for the client and, as a Befriender, you'll get to know inspirational people with fascinating stories, develop new skills and be part of a supportive team that values compassion and connection.

Becoming a Befriender:

You'll have an informal interview with a Coordinator, who will help with any further details required, including two character references, and arrange your training and an enhanced DBS check.

The training is split into convenient courses:

- Part 1: A short online course that can be completed in your own time.
- Part 2: A 3 hour facilitated session, either in-person or on Zoom, where you'll be able to meet other volunteers.
- Part 3: An online Safeguarding Adults course.
- Part 4: An online Mental Health Awareness course.

Responsible to:

Befriending Coordinator.

Responsibilities:

- Visit your client for 1-2 hours each week, usually for a year.
- Inform your client and the BEfriend office if you can't make your meeting with a client.
- Provide companionship for your client, encourage them to pick up old interests and discover new ones by accessing and engaging with activities in the local community.
- Help to empower your client to make positive choices about what they want to do and to stand with your client on their journey to recovery.
- Provide written feedback to the Coordinator monthly and raise any concerns or queries with the Coordinator as soon as they occur.
- Each month, as part of your monthly monitoring report, to either claim expenses, donate expenses back to BEfriend or declare that you have not incurred expenses.
- Attend 6 monthly reviews with the Coordinator, and optionally attend 4 volunteer meetings annually.
- The enhanced DBS check (cost covered and organised by BEfriend) is carried out as part of our Safeguarding policy to protect our clients who are 'vulnerable people'. After three years the check needs to be done again.

Candidate requirements

The abilities, qualities and skills we seek from a volunteer are:

- To have good listening and communication skills.
- To be passionate about supporting individuals affected by mental health problems to achieve life-changing goals.
- To be non-judgmental in your attitude towards your client.
- To see beyond the diagnosis to the person.
- To help your client feel valued and to have hope in the future.
- To be available once a week for up to two hours to visit your client.
- To be reliable and punctual when visiting your client, when returning your monthly monitoring forms and with any follow up required for your client.
- Understanding of and willingness to work within the BEfriend framework, including following policies and procedures.

Additional criteria

We welcome applications from people with lived experience, many of our volunteers will have this and helping others can be a great part of someone's own recovery journey, as well as giving them a unique insight and empathy with others.

If someone applying to be a Befriender is still under the care of psychiatric services, we would ask them to disclose this at the application stage either on the application form or in person to the Coordinator, who would seek a reference from a professional who's been involved in the applicants' care, asking about their suitability and readiness for the role of Befriender.

This will help us to ensure the safety and support of both the Befriender and anyone they are matched with.

Additionally, we would speak to applicant about how we could best support them in their befriending role, including identifying triggers and signs of their mental ill-health.

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