

Befriender Volunteer Handbook

Welcome

Welcome to the W3RT Wellbeing Befriending programme.

Befriending offers supportive, reliable relationships through volunteer befrienders to individuals who would otherwise be socially isolated.

The results of befriending can be very significant. Befriending often provides individuals with a new direction in life, opens a range of activities and leads to increased self-esteem and self-confidence. Befriending can also reduce the burden on services such as the NHS, which individuals may use inappropriately to seek social contact.

The befriending programme aims to work with volunteers and to help individuals, overcome social isolation and gain independence, within Watford and Three Rivers area.

Without volunteers, we simply couldn't run this service. We know people volunteer for many different reasons, but we know it's mostly because you care. With your support we are able to offer a befriending programme to individuals. For many of our individuals you are a lifeline, and we can't thank you enough.

How it works

Individuals contact our Wellbeing Hub to request a befriender volunteer. The Wellbeing Hub will check that the individuals are eligible to use the programme before proceeding.

Once the volunteer has been confirmed as a suitable match, the Wellbeing Hub will call the volunteer and will do an introduction call. The Wellbeing Hub will agree a 1st call/visit/meeting date that the volunteer will call the individual. The details of the individual will be sent via the Volunteering App. If the volunteer has any queries, then they can call the Wellbeing Hub.

The Wellbeing Hub will also update the individual on the match and will do an introduction call and will advise when the volunteer will be making the 1st call/visit/meeting.

Any visit/meeting location is subject to current Government COVID guidelines, To see the latest guidance please follow this [LINK](#)

For the current programme the visits/meetings will be in an outside space

- Public space where you might want to go for a walk.
- A meeting in a park to sit at a bench and talk.
- A meeting to have a drink, like a coffee shop with outdoor seating area.
- A private garden which has an access route which does not involve going through the house ie front garden or a rear garden with side access.

This is all subject to weather conditions on the day.

Volunteer Conduct

Volunteer befrienders should act in a professional manner at all times. Please read the guidelines below carefully and contact the Hub if you have any queries.

Volunteers shall perform the following minimum levels of service:

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Volunteer befriender shall:

- Be polite and courteous to individuals and treat them with respect.
- Expect to be spoken to politely and with respect by all.
- Agree a regular time for the weekly call/visit/meeting with the befriender.
- Keep the call/visit/meeting to a maximum of 1 hour.
- Call/visit/meet when you say they will – it may cause distress to the befriender if the volunteer does not call/visit/meet at the agreed time.
- Only use the telephone as the method of communication.
- For your own safety, please inform a family member or friend where and when you are meeting your befriender and ensure they know how to contact us if they have any concerns. Please be aware however that our telephone lines are open Monday - Friday 9am - 6pm so although it is fine to meet your befriender outside of these hours, we would not be able to pick up any messages until 9am the following working day. If they have a serious concern, they would need to call the police number 101 or in 999 if an emergency.
- Ask the individual if they are well and if they or anyone in their household are showing coronavirus symptoms and are self-isolating or awaiting the results of a test.
- When visiting/meeting keep to government guidance on social distancing ie stand 2m apart and wear masks. To see the latest guidance please follow this [LINK](#).
- Listen to any concerns or questions your befriender may have – no concern is too small, and it can be helpful to share something even if there is no immediate solution.
- Respect individual's rights to confidentiality.
- Notify the Wellbeing Hub if there were any incidents or accidents (either to themselves or the individual) while meeting with an individual.
- Notify the Wellbeing Hub if there were any issues or if they have any concerns about their health and wellbeing of an individual.
- Notify the Wellbeing Hub immediately of any changes in their health or personal circumstances which might affecting their ability to deliver the befriending role.
- Use the Referral Requested feature of the App to tell us that you've been unable to establish contact or have concerns about a person's physical or mental wellbeing, about poverty, about their living environment, or about safeguarding- please let us know and we will investigate.
- If you make a Referral Request, we will follow up on the request – usually by speaking to the person to confirm their needs, and then making a referral to a specialist agency.
- If you think there is a medical or life-threatening emergency, always call 999.

Wellbeing Hub Hrs Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm. email : volunteering@w3rt.org, phone : 01923 216962).

A volunteer befriender can, and only if the befriender wants to and is happy to:

- Sharing activities and materials such as books, puzzles, crosswords, games, knitting patterns etc to the individual (subject to latest [COVID guidelines](#)). This must be highlighted in the volunteering app notes of the visit.
- Share telephone details with the individual in order to help facilitate a visit/meeting. This must be highlighted in the volunteering app notes of the visit/meeting.
- Highlight other activities the individual could attend, and the ["What's On" guide](#) is great tool for this.

Volunteer befriender shall not:

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- Share any photographs, recordings or materials with the individual.
- Share personal details other than those expressly required in order to carry out the role (eg no banking information, details of which school their children go to etc).
- Solicit or accept money or gifts from individuals.
- Make sexist, racist or sexually explicit comments.
- Engage in any type of personal relationship.
- Use alcohol or controlled substances.
- Have third parties involved with the befriending calls/visits/meetings.
- Pay for the individuals costs of any activities/events/travel.
- Enter the individuals' home or attend any indoor activities or events (at present).
- Visit if they are feeling unwell, or if they or anyone in their household, showing coronavirus symptoms, or are self-isolating or awaiting the results of a test.
- Accept any refreshments (tea, coffee, cake or biscuits) offered but you can bring your own.
- Undertake tasks outside of their role such as doing odd jobs or shopping. If they need additional support, please contact the Wellbeing Hub so they put other support in place
- Provide online support (digital banking, online shopping etc). The Wellbeing Hub can arrange trained Digital Inclusion volunteers to provide this support.

Reports of staff or volunteer befriender misconduct will be the cause for immediate suspension from the programme while the incident is investigated. This may result in measures such as training being put in place to support the staff member or volunteer or may result in their dismissal from the programme. W3RT will follow its standard disciplinary policies and procedures and therefore may be required to report incidents to the police. A copy of all of our policies and procedures are available.

General information for volunteer befrienders

Reference and ID check

All volunteers are required to complete a reference and ID check to confirm who they are and ensure they are of good character. We are referees if there are any reason why the individual would not be suitable for the role.

DBS Check

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) enables employers to check the criminal records of staff and volunteers in order to ascertain whether or not they are suitable to work with vulnerable adults and children. The requirements for DBS disclosures and the different levels vary from organisation to organisation, depending on the sector and the employees' individual job or volunteer role. The role of volunteer befriender is subject to a DBS check and all volunteer befrienders are required to undergo a check every three years - the cost of the check will be covered by W3RT. Safeguarding regulations place an obligation on employers, social services and professional regulators to notify the DBS of relevant information. This obligation ensures that individuals who pose a threat to vulnerable groups can be barred from working with them. It also makes it a criminal offence for barred individuals to apply to work with these groups and for employers to knowingly employ them.

Health of the Volunteer

If you feel tired or unwell on the day of a visit/call, then please inform the Wellbeing Hub. If you have ongoing health issues, then please keep the hub updated. Any information that you share with us will be treated in the strictest confidence and we will do everything that we

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can to support you. We will also update our records to ensure that you are not disturbed by the Wellbeing Hub while you are recovering.

Health Conditions

You must tell us if:

- you have a 'notifiable' medical condition or disability
- your medical condition or disability has got worse since you first start volunteering with us
- you develop a new medical condition or disability

'Notifiable' medical conditions and disabilities include epilepsy, strokes and other neurological conditions, mental health problems, physical disabilities and visual impairments.

Volunteer Expenses

Telephone befriending call will be made from the volunteers' home and so using their personal phone, so free minute plans are advisable

With Face to Face befriending visits/meetings we will try to match an individual close to where you live to reduce any expenditure, as expenses cannot be reclaimed at present.

All other expenses will not be covered at present by the programme.

Your Availability

You are offering your time to us freely and we appreciate that. We do need to be able to plan so ask you in advance whether you have any regular commitments and particular days and times that you will definitely not be available. We make a record of this so that our Wellbeing team can plan accordingly. Please notify us when you know your holiday dates so that we can add them to our diary.

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Health and Safety policy for Befriending programme

Commitment and intent

W3RT's policy is to protect the health and safety of our staff, volunteers and anyone accessing our services. We will provide relevant training and information and will continually assess and monitor our performance to ensure continuous improvement.

Responsibilities

The Board of Trustees has overall and final responsibility for health and safety at W3RT. The CEO is responsible for ensuring that:

- the trustees' policies are implemented
- everyone at W3RT receives appropriate information and guidance
- regular risk assessments are carried out
- appropriate actions are taken to mitigate risks

Day-to-day responsibility for these areas is delegated to the nominated Health and Safety Officer.

All employees, volunteers and visitors have a responsibility to protect their own health and safety and to take reasonable care of themselves and others.

The Wellbeing Hub is responsible for:

- monitoring overall health and safety for the service
- providing volunteers with a Health and Safety Induction and updates as appropriate
- reviewing and implementing risk assessments
- identifying training and development needs to ensure that volunteer training records are up-to-date
- investigating all accidents and reporting them to the Health and Safety Officer

Befriender volunteers have a duty to protect their own health and safety and that of those who may be affected by their acts or omissions while volunteering. This includes:

- adhering to guidelines including the Befriending programme risk assessment
- co-operating with W3RT to enable compliance with the law on health and safety
- Informing the Wellbeing Hub, designated Health and Safety Officer without delay of any accidents or incidents or any concerns regarding unsafe or dangerous situations while volunteering

Legal requirements

W3RT has a legal responsibility to check that our volunteer befrienders have the following

All volunteer befrienders must:

Risk assessments

In accordance with Regulation 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992, W3RT must carry out risk assessments on all the work activities of its

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volunteers. The results of the risk assessments will be made available to all staff and volunteers together with the necessary controls to minimise those risks. Such risk assessments will be reviewed on an annual basis, when there is a new or significant change in working practices or after an accident or incident. Volunteers befrienders are encouraged to contribute to the continuous review of risk assessments and can contact the Wellbeing Hub, designated Health and Safety Officer without delay of any unsafe or dangerous situations while volunteering

Safeguarding

W3RT has a duty to ensure that it is vigilant in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. W3RT recognises its role, along with other local services, in facilitating the well-being of children, young people and vulnerable adults. Importantly, W3RT will also support the six principles which are:

- Empowerment
- Prevention
- Protection
- Proportionality
- Partnership
- Accountability

W3RT seeks to safeguard all children, young people, and vulnerable adults. This policy applies equally to the safeguarding of children, young people, and vulnerable adults at risk. To embrace all these groups, this policy will refer to 'children and young or vulnerable adult'. In line with the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board Procedures manual (March 2016) and the Safeguarding Adults from abuse procedure (HCS 666, Issue 9) guidance the term children, young people and vulnerable adults at risk describes an individual that has needs for care and support (whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs and is experiencing, or is at risk of abuse or neglect and as a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

W3RT is committed to:

- providing a safe environment for everyone visiting its premises, including children, young people and vulnerable adults
- identifying children and young or vulnerable adults who are suffering, or likely to suffer, harm
- taking appropriate action to help ensure that children and young or vulnerable adults are kept safe

All volunteers will have access to our safeguarding policy and training that is appropriate to their role. All volunteer befrienders will be asked to complete a safeguarding training as part of their induction training to enable them to feel more confident in highlighting safeguarding concerns they may encounter.

Occasionally volunteer befrienders may notice something that they are concerned about and this should be reported to the Sandra Clarke (W3RT's Designated Safeguarding lead), or Wellbeing Hub supervisors. W3RT will follow its safeguarding procedures and may report

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the incident to Hertfordshire Safeguarding Board to ensure that the service user is protected.

Below are examples of the type of observations that a volunteer befriender may come across as they carry out their role:

- Did you have concern about their welfare in any way?
- Did you notice a decline in their appearance, general health and wellbeing since you last saw them?
- Did they disclose something that has concerned you?
- Did they seem confused, agitated or disorientated?

All volunteers will have access to the full Safeguarding policy and relevant contact information.

Manual Handling

Manual handling refers to any activity that involves bending, twisting or lifting. Manual handling training is not compulsory but W3RT will notify befrienders of training opportunities that are available and that they may wish to attend.

Volunteer befrienders are not trained to assist individuals. When taking individual details, we always ask information about mobility and general health. We always ask individuals if they use mobility aids such as a walking frame or foldable chair and we advise them accordingly. We also advise individuals that volunteer befrienders are not trained to push wheelchairs and that they will need to be accompanied or make other suitable arrangements if they are unable to use their wheelchair unaided because we need to protect the health and safety of our volunteer befrienders as well as our individuals.

When contacting our volunteer befrienders with a match we always provide all the information we have about the individual. Volunteer befrienders are advised that they are under no pressure to accept a match. We also encourage volunteer befrienders to update us on their preferences or if they have any medical conditions that means that they cannot do the volunteering role, so that we can update their records accordingly. If volunteer befrienders have any queries about this or are faced with an individual passenger that has not disclosed mobility or other issues, then they must notify the Wellbeing Hub.

W3RT's policy that all staff and volunteers are made aware of general manual handling guidelines. Whilst befrienders are not required to complete any manual handling, some befrienders may choose to help individuals that utilise foldable wheelchairs. Whilst the individual should be able to use the wheelchair unaided. The befriender would need to move the foldable wheelchair, in these occasional instances:

- first ensure the proposed route is free of obstructions. You may need help regarding closed doors or steps
- place feet in line and slightly apart from the object and bend the knees
- keep the back straight
- ensure a firm comfortable grip allowing for the centre of gravity – The balance point is not always in the middle)
- use the legs to raise yourself and the object, which must be kept close to your body

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- ensure you can see where you are going
- do not turn the top part of your body whilst moving. Keep the trunk of your body in line with the legs
- bend the knees to lower the object
- if you need to re-adjust your hold then always lower the object first
- when folding wheelchairs for transportation beware of trapping fingers
- crouch down alongside the folded wheelchair and grasp with both hands in a position that allows for the centre of gravity. This may vary from wheelchair to wheelchair
- keep the wheelchair close to the body and stand up
- If you are moving foldable wheelchairs, we can provide manual handling training for you. Please let the Wellbeing Hub know and we can arrange this for you.

Accident and emergency procedures

In an event of an accident or emergency we ask that all volunteer befrienders adhere to the following guidelines:

- do not move injured individuals unless they are in immediate danger of further injury from other vehicles or from fire or explosion
- if your or individual is injured and requires emergency support call an ambulance
- phone the Wellbeing Hub to tell them what has happened and seek advice

Violence

The safety and wellbeing of volunteers is of paramount importance including protection against abuse and violence. Whilst the incidents of serious assaults are rare, we have to recognise that the stress of volunteers who experience even minor assaults or aggressive behaviour may be significant.

No volunteer is expected to suffer or endure any form of abuse or violence. In extreme cases W3RT may ban or take out an injunction against an aggressor. Violence or abuse by one staff member or volunteer to another will result in disciplinary action.

Violence is the exercise of purposeful or reactive behaviour or the extremes of verbal abuse, causing or intending to cause physical or emotional injury to other persons. This can extend beyond the volunteer to threats against his or her colleagues, property or family.

Abuse is as perceived by a volunteer or identified by the Wellbeing Hub. It may take the form of physical violence, threats of violence, verbal abuse or prolonged or unpleasant assault. It may include racism or sexism irrespective of whether the perpetrator intended it or not.

At work is defined as the period during which the volunteer is undertaking the functions for which they have volunteered for. Volunteers who are not carrying out voluntary work are still covered by this policy if the violence is attributable to their volunteer role.

Volunteers have a responsibility to minimise potentially explosive situations. This requires an understanding of the circumstances in which abuse can occur. It should be recognised that people may use the befriending programme in times of stress and their manner may be short because of such stress. Some individuals may have a very restricted vocabulary. Although

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unlikely, volunteers may experience verbal abuse which is directed at the befriending programme and the world in general rather than the volunteer.

Volunteers should ensure that they are in easy reach of a form of communication and should always carry their Befriending identification as proof of working for the service. Be aware of the potential dangers of disclosing the address or phone number of staff, volunteers or individuals no matter what the nature of the request.

In the unlikely event of an incident the following guidelines should be adhered to:

- employees and volunteers have the right to withdraw from any contact if they feel they are being abused. It is not weak to walk away from violence. Warn the person that unless they stop their unacceptable behaviour they will leave or, if on the telephone, the conversation will cease. A suitable form of words may be - "I do not feel it is helpful for us to continue this conversation at this time and I will ask the office team to contact you"
- always ensure you have a safe exit route and keep between it and the abuser
- try not to shout, wave arms, wag fingers, place hands on hips or stand with the arms folded as these actions are known to provoke aggression. Do not stand too close to the aggressor
- never touch them. Give them and yourself space
- do not return abuse – try and remain calm at all times
- do not turn your back. To leave, move back gradually keeping between your exit and the aggressor.
- during a physical attack, you should get away as fast as you can by moving towards a place of safety where there will be people. If you cannot get away shout or scream
- if someone is trying to snatch your bag or personal belongings, let it go. You may get hurt holding on to it

Reporting any accidents and incidents

All accidents and incidents are to be reported to the Wellbeing Hub and must be recorded on an accident or incident report form. An incident is defined as a near miss that could have resulted in damage to person or equipment. Volunteers must assist with any investigations into an accident or incident that they are directly involved in or witness.

Record as much of the incident as possible. If it is not possible to do so at the time, then as soon as possible after the incident. Include the following information:

- time and place
- name, address or description of the perpetrator
- the words used
- a description of any violence that took place
- name and addresses of any witnesses
- description of any injuries
- description of any treatment needed

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- note whether the police were involved

A volunteer is entitled to report the matter to the police irrespective of any action by W3RT. W3RT will give every support to a victim of abuse or violence. This includes first aid, any necessary transport, notification of family and follow up support if required.

First aid

Volunteer befrienders do not need to be first aid trained but W3RT will always inform them when training opportunities are available for them to attend.

Handling cash

The volunteer should not accept cash from an individual.

Pregnancy

All staff and volunteers are expected to notify W3RT as soon as they have confirmation that they are pregnant. They can notify the Wellbeing Hub supervisors, or HR team who will then arrange for the appropriate risk assessment to be carried out to ensure that they and the baby are not put at risk from the activities that they carry out.

Acts and Regulations

- Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992
- The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992
- The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1992
- The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992
- The Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992
- The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1994(COSHH)
- Electricity at Work Regulations 1989

Links to helpful resources

Volunteer befrienders may find the following resources useful.

- The Health and Safety Executive have produced guidelines for manual handling and W3RT have incorporated these into the general guidelines it provides for volunteer

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befrienders in the health and safety policy. More information can be found at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/manualhandling.htm>

- More information on the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service/about>