

Staff briefing - Friend in Need programme

1. What is the Friend in Need programme?

The Friend in Need programme is funded by Welsh Government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and is being led by Age Cymru.

During this time home isolation is a real prospect for many older people, and others shielding at home, so mobilising a Wales wide network of befrienders and supporters is essential if we are to ensure that people are able to continue to access food, medicines and fuel supplies.

In addition, as many day care and voluntary sector services experience reduced hours due to staff sickness or temporarily close during Coronavirus peak, regular social contact through telephone/face-time/skype/internet or face to face will be significantly reduced for many older people. There is a significant need for regular social and emotional support for those who are lonely and isolated.

There are two parts to the programme:

- 1) Support hub on the Age Cymru website for 'Friends' informally helping people they know in their local community
- 2) Telephone befriending service

2. Who is the programme for?

- 1) **'Friends' support hub** - The tools and resources for the 'Friends' will be accessible on the Age Cymru website and so can be used to **support anybody who is socially distancing, self-isolating or shielding at home** as a result of the coronavirus, not only older people,
- 2) **'Telephone befriending service** – This is aimed at people over 70 who are lonely and isolated. The scheme can be accessed by people who are social distancing, self-isolating or who are in the shielded group.

People who are just under the age of 70 and need this support can also access the scheme. The scheme is funded for 12 months so will carry on beyond the end of the time people may have to shield, socially distance or be self-isolating to continue to support older people who may be lonely or isolated at home.

The programme will launch on Tuesday 2 June 2020 – Volunteering week

'Friends' support

1) What are 'Friends'?

'Friends' are informal helpers in local communities supporting people already known to them. 'Friends' will access the information resource hub on the Age Cymru website and support from Age Cymru Advice.

1) Who can be a 'Friend'?

- Potentially anyone in Wales who is not self-isolating can be a 'Friend' if they know someone who needs support.
- They may already be a 'Friend'

2) Why is a 'Friend' necessary?

- Many people in Wales have family nearby who are their support during this time, but others, individuals or couples, who are social distancing, self-isolating or shielding and don't have this support may need other people they know to help them.

3) What would be the alternative without a 'Friend'?

- People could become lonely and increasingly fearful, which could potentially have an adverse effect on their mental health.
- People could possibly be at greater risk of unscrupulous people they don't know offering to 'help'
- People may go against advice to socially distance, self-isolate or shield – for example going to their pharmacist or having to use public transport to go shopping, potentially putting themselves at risk
- There could be further unnecessary strain on the NHS and/or social services

4) How can they become a 'Friend'?

- They need to be already known to the person they're supporting (Neighbour, friend etc)
- The person who needs support identifies the people they would like to help them. Ideally, this is at least two 'Friends' in separate households.
- Once nominated as a 'Friend' they can:
 - access support on the 'Friends' information hub
 - Register for updates.
 - Access information and support by calling Age Cymru Advice on 08000 223 444.

5) What could a 'Friend' do to help?

Whilst following the social distancing rules and information in this guide, they could:

- Pick up groceries and shopping
- Pick up prescriptions
- Walk pets
- Provide regular telephone contact and/or via online methods such as Skype or FaceTime
- Assist people to get online, or to access services online – whilst socially distancing
- Provide ideas of things that people can do that don't involve going out, to keep them emotionally and physically well
- Put people in touch with support groups, and other useful local services
- Help people prepare for any eventualities that may arise
- Provide reassurance with accurate and up to date information from Welsh Government and Public Health Wales

Telephone befriending scheme

1) How can you register for a friendship call

If someone wants to receive a friendship call they can either complete an online application form on the Age Cymru website, download an application form from the Age Cymru website, and return it via email or phone Age Cymru Advice on 08000 223 444.

2) Referrals

We can accept referrals to the telephone befriending service on someone's behalf. They need to have permission from the person who will receive the friendship call. A referral for the scheme can be made using the same methods as above.

a) Volunteering as a telephone befriender

If someone wants to volunteer as a befriender they need to register with Volunteering Wales where the role is being advertised. The website address is [here](#)

b) Volunteer commitment

This is a flexible volunteer scheme. Following induction and training volunteers will be asked to make at least one regular weekly call of 30 minutes as part of the scheme, so the commitment will range from 30 minutes per week.

The scheme is funded to March 2021 so will continue to run beyond the end of official restrictions. For those with other commitments calls are flexible including the potential for them to be made at lunchtimes, evenings and weekends.

c) Support for volunteers

All volunteers will receive an induction and training, and ongoing support from the Volunteer Officer to be able to make the Friendship calls.

All call costs will be covered through the scheme.

Telephone befriending service

1) How will they be matched?

We will ask them about their interests and background and match them with someone who would be suitable for them to chat with.

2) Can they receive a call in Welsh?

Yes, we will ask them whether they would prefer a call in Welsh on registration and will match them accordingly.

3) Can someone with a sensory loss receive support?

Yes, we will ask them about accessibility support needs on the follow up call and will match support for them accordingly.

4) Is it safe?

We want to make sure everything's safe and secure, so before they receive a call from their telephone friend we will have:

- Asked the volunteer to provide two references.
- Required them to complete a DBS check
- Checked their name and date of birth matches at their address, and that they are who they say they are.
- Asked the volunteer to agree with our terms and conditions.

In addition;

- They will not be matched with someone in their local area
- All calls will be recorded

5) What about their personal details?

We will only use their email address and telephone number to contact them about their weekly call.

We ask that them that they don't share personal details including their address with their telephone friend.

6) Can they request a different caller?

Sometimes it may take time to build a relationship with their telephone friend so we recommend having a few calls before making a judgment. If they're really struggling, then they should let us know and we'll talk them through the options available.

7) Is there anyone who the service may not be suitable for?

The telephone befriending service may not be suitable for people with memory loss, dementia or mental health issues who require higher level support. These conditions may affect the person's ability to build a telephone friendship with a volunteer. In some instances, people with these conditions may actually find the calls more distressing.

8) Can the befriender help them with practical support, such as shopping, taking them out and household chores or come to visit them at home.

No, the befriending service is providing only over the telephone or video support.