

LAUNCHING A NEW BEFRIENDING SERVICE - PRELIMINARY STAGES

AIM

1. The aim of this leaflet is to provide a basic guideline to the questions that need to be considered prior to launching a new befriending service. Volunteers Now: Good Practice in Setting Up a Befriending Service¹, and Starting a Befriending Service: An Introductory Guide², were the publications used to compile these questions.

INTRODUCTION

2. Befriending offers supportive, reliable relationships through volunteer befrienders to people who would otherwise be socially isolated³. But is there a need for a new befriending service? A quote from an email sent by Catherine Thomson (Cornwall Gateway Community Link Officer) on 10th December 2020, suggests that there is: “At yesterday’s Cornwall Gateway community response hub meeting, it was again highlighted that there seems to be a need for a befriending scheme in Torpoint, but no clear way for this to happen.”
3. On Monday 21st June 2021, the CH&LDM joined the Town Clerk & RFO for a virtual meeting with Julie Zessimedes (Head of Cornwall Library Service), Catherine Thomson, and Stephen Foster (Catherine Thomson’s line manager). The meeting was arranged to discuss options for spending the £13K devolution funding on offer from Cornwall Council. One of the options discussed was using some or all of this funding to launch a new befriending service.

OPERATING MODEL QUESTIONS

4. What will the service be called?
5. Who will manage the service? Will the service be set up under the umbrella of Torpoint Town Council, or set up as a separate unincorporated organisation⁴? If the service is stand alone, would Cornwall Council still agree to some or all of the devolved funding being targeted towards it?
6. What are the aims and objectives, mission, vision, and core values of the service?
7. Who will the service target?

¹ <https://www.befriending.co.uk/resources/24693-volunteer-now-good-practice-in-setting-up-a-befriending-service>

² <https://www.befriending.co.uk/resources/25066-starting-a-befriending-service-an-introductory-guide>

³ <https://www.befriending.co.uk/about/what-is-befriending/>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/unincorporated-associations>

8. What will the service offer/deliver? This could include one or more of the following; face-to-face one-to-one befriending, distance befriending via telephone or Zoom, group befriending e.g. meeting at the health and wellbeing café in the library on Wednesday afternoons.
9. What area will the service cover?
10. How many volunteers will be needed to provide the services offered/delivered?
11. Who will coordinate the service, and will this person be paid?
12. What will the frequency of contact be between clients and volunteers?
13. Will volunteers be entitled to out of pocket expenses such as mileage rates or fuel allowances?
14. What controls will be put in place to minimise risk and its impact as far as possible?
15. How will clients be referred to the service, and how will these referrals be processed?
16. How will clients and volunteers be matched?

VOLUNTEER QUESTIONS

17. How will volunteers be recruited, selected, and inducted?
18. What should the service coordinator and volunteer role descriptions include?
19. What minimum time will volunteers be expected to commit per week?
20. How will volunteers be supported and supervised (managed)?
21. What skills, experience and training, do volunteers require to provide the type of services offered/delivered?
22. Who will provide and deliver this training?

INSURANCE QUESTION

23. Will there be insurance in place that covers both clients, volunteers, and the service?

COSTING THE SERVICE QUESTIONS

24. Will there be paid staff who have the specific role of coordinating the service?
25. How many DBS checks will need to be funded?
26. If the operating model entitles volunteers to receive mileage rates or fuel allowances, how often will volunteers be using their private vehicles to meet with clients?
27. Will the service operate from the library to minimise any office costs?

28. What resources will be required and what will they cost e.g. mobile workstations and phones?
29. Will the service be a paid member of Befriending Networks⁵?
30. Will volunteers who have been charged additional motor vehicle insurance, due to them having to use their own transport to meet clients, be reimbursed?

MONITORING AND EVALUATION QUESTIONS

31. What data will be monitored to provide information about the service and what it delivers?
32. How will this monitored data be evaluated to see how the service is performing against its objectives and targets?

NEXT STEPS

33. Once all questions have been considered, a written proposal summarising the underlying principles of the service, and the means by which it will operate, should be produced. A timetable or action plan will also be required, detailing the major milestones to be achieved before the service can be implemented.

⁵ <https://www.befriending.co.uk/about/about-befriending-networks/>