



**Northamptonshire**  
Befriending Service



# **BEFRIENDING SERVICE REVIEW 2021/22**

# INTRODUCTION

Over the past 12 months, the Countywide Befriending Service has come together drawing on the strengths, place-based knowledge, and quality of service across the partners.

SERVE is working with Northamptonshire Health and Care Partnership (NHCP) to lead and deliver Befriending Support to Vulnerable Adults across the whole county. We are working in partnership with Daventry Volunteer Centre, Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire, and Northamptonshire Carers to upscale befriending as part of Integrated Care Across Northamptonshire.

Taking on the role of Countywide Befriending Manager at the end of May 2021, I was tasked to deliver the business plan to upscale befriending services countywide.

This first annual review I hope will help capture key outputs and outcomes that show the journey of challenge, change and celebrate achievements.

Jonathan Cook  
Befriending Manager, SERVE



# OVERVIEW

The befriending service countywide functions as a key service to support locality-based services, forming a service model that tackles isolation for older people.

The aims of the service are to significantly **reduce** social isolation, **improve** the mental wellbeing of people who are an **older person 65+, frail, lonely and isolated**. We deliver this through **trained** volunteer supporters to reduce the need for more intensive, costly interventions.

Research shows that older people living on their own risk loneliness, social isolation and need more emotional support, companionship and timely support to sustain their mental and physical wellbeing.

— “ —  
“Befriending offers supportive, reliable relationships through volunteer befrienders to people who would otherwise be socially isolated”

Befriending Networks



Introduction visit with befriender/befriended

# OUTPUTS

The reflect figures across the Partners year end March 2022.

The key performance indicators for outputs year end 2021/22 are **75 Befriendees** and **75 Befrienders** in each of the four localities.



## East Northants and Wellingborough

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

**80**

VOLUNTEERS



ACTIVE

**44**

VOLUNTEERS

REFERRALS

**158**

BEFRIENDEES

ACTIVE

**100**

BEFRIENDEES

CONTACTS

**60**

VOLUNTEERS

## Kettering and Corby

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

**80**

VOLUNTEERS



ACTIVE

**10**

VOLUNTEERS

REFERRALS

**91**

BEFRIENDEES

ACTIVE

**68**

BEFRIENDEES

CONTACTS

**17**

VOLUNTEERS



# OUTPUTS



Volunteer Centre  
Daventry



## Northampton (NN1 - NN5)

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

67

VOLUNTEERS

REFERRALS

162

BEFRIENDEES

CONTACTS

115

VOLUNTEERS

ACTIVE

85

VOLUNTEERS

ACTIVE

115

BEFRIENDEES

## Daventry and South Northants

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

59

VOLUNTEERS

ACTIVE

97

VOLUNTEERS

REFERRALS

125

BEFRIENDEES

ACTIVE

87

BEFRIENDEES

CONTACTS

87

VOLUNTEERS



# OUTPUTS

SERVE were without a Coordinator for Kettering and Corby which reflects in their figures across both areas.

However, across the county it shows incredible effort and highlights particular need.

Across the partners, the call for volunteers is high on the agenda and we are using social media, local press, presentations, business networks, health and social care services to raise awareness and promote the benefits and importance of volunteering and appropriateness of referrals.

Identified reasons why volunteers do not remain are:

- change in health conditions
- returning to work following pandemic restrictions being lifted
- process of DBS checks taking too long
- gaining full time employment while waiting
- change in personal circumstances

Learning is taking place around these key areas. Understanding the footprint, challenges and needs will help to increase capacity, capturing more interest and retaining volunteers where possible.

## CASE STUDY

This 89 year old lady was referred to the Befriender Project as she was feeling extremely isolated and lonely. Her husband passed away 12 years ago, and their 2 sons do not live locally.

She suffers with anxiety and has called Paramedics on numerous occasions as this has affected her breathing.

Has only just moved to this area just before COVID lockdown restrictions were enforced and therefore not had the opportunity to build up a friendship/support network.

A Volunteer Befriender was introduced in August 2021 (2 months after the initial referral). Both had similar interests in TV programs and liked the same author of books.



*By receiving a weekly visit by the Volunteer Befriender, this has helped with the loneliness and feeling of isolation during COVID restrictions.*

*Since the ease of lockdown restrictions, this lady has decided that she does not need support in her own home and therefore a Volunteer Befriender is not required. She thanked SERVE for providing a befriending service and support in 'getting back out into the community.' She also informed me that she has not been calling on the Paramedic service as her anxiety issues have improved.*

# SILVER STORIES



Silver Stories was introduced by one of our Partners , Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire. SERVE have now registered as a Partner to support this service that links readers to older people by telephone.

The aim is to combat loneliness and isolation that can be felt by older people, to create intergenerational relationships and to offer children a richer reading experience.

Interaction between children and older people brings so many unique benefits to everyone involved. Communicating across the generations is about social engagement and having a common purpose.

This is a simple way of having a positive impact for both Silver Listeners and Silver Readers.

Children (known as Silver Readers) telephone a Silver Listener every week and then read a short story or poem to them. This not only helps the children to become more confident in their reading skills but also links our children to the older members of our communities feel less isolated.

Our aim as a service is to refer directly into Silver Stories in the first instance with children waiting to be matched. We hope to link in with place-based primary schools who would like to support the initiative locally for the foreseeable future.

## CASE STUDY

Resident T was referred to us as he lost his wife recently and now lives alone. He has COPD which makes it really difficult for him to move very quickly around the house and almost impossible for him to go out. He was feeling very lonely during the long days with nobody to talk to.

Happy at Home recruited a volunteer for him, she lives locally and now visits him each week. Happy at Home also put him in touch with Silver Stories and he now has a phone call each week from a school child who reads to him.

Comments from 'T' about our signposting him for Silver Stories:

*" I am thrilled with the phone calls through Silver Stories, I have a little girl from Suffolk who rings me every week. She is reading me 'The Railway Children' It is absolutely smashing "*

Comments from 'T' about his volunteer:

*" I am really happy with the visits from my volunteer, she is a lovely lady and it absolutely makes my week when she visits. I am very grateful "*

# LIFE STORIES

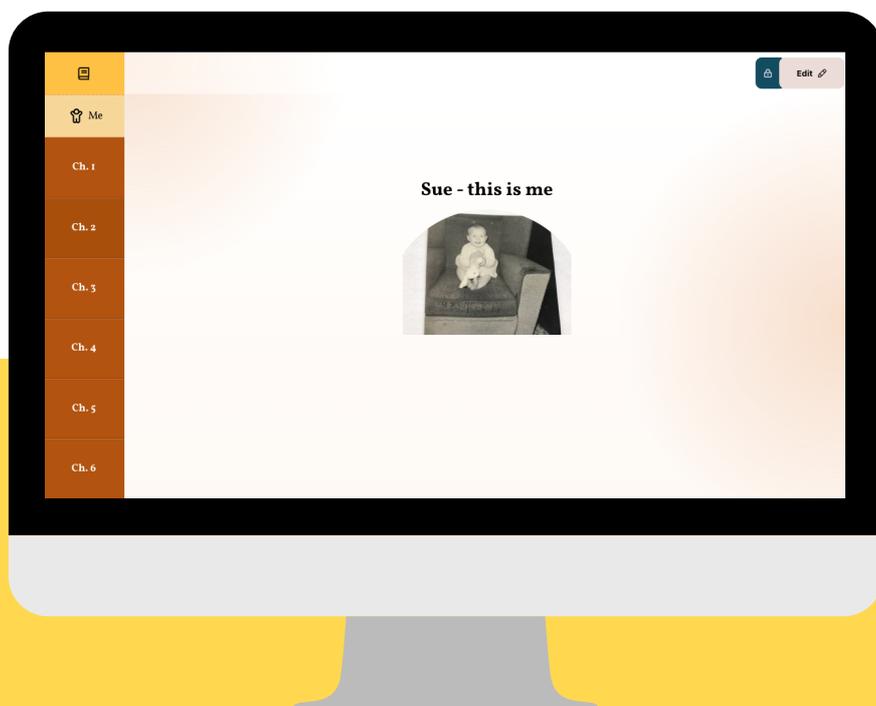
Life Stories is a project led by SERVE in partnership with VerseOne and Northamptonshire Health & Care Partnership (NHCP).

It is powering the Life Stories experience through digital inclusion, promoting wellbeing and inclusion, especially for older people and people living with dementia.

It is an innovative, secure, and personalised online platform to allow people to create and share their Life Story.

The key functionalities are a secure sign-up process, online digital life story with a personal profile, adding images, pre-configured curated Life Packs to support therapeutic activities, secure and selective sharing of the Life Story and exporting the Life Story as an online Viewer, slideshow video, or PDF for printing.

Funding from NHCP includes the purchasing of licences, iPads and providing the URL platform for the project to be placed.



## TRAINING AND DELIVERY

The plan is for VerseOne to deliver the training to Befriending Coordinators across the Partners and to invite identified volunteer befrienders that are interested to provide this support and help in its delivery

As the project develops, the identify of any known risks and issues that could impact project success will be recorded and reviewed.

In the first instance Befriending and Dementia services are two key areas to deliver this tool with the aim of skilling up volunteers to help people produce the life books.

Additional services will onboard following the soft launch and period of testing and learning



## CASE STUDY

Service User G, was referred to the Befriender Project as a 95-year-old lady who was sitting on her own day in day out, feeling lonely and isolated.

A Volunteer Befriender, was introduced 4 weeks after the referral. From the onset both “hit it” off instantly by talking about their knowledge of the local area.

On a recent visit in October 2021, the Volunteer told me that G wanted some new clothes, so she offered to help by going on the internet so that G could choose in the comfort of her own home. The Volunteer placed an order on behalf of her Befriendee and explained to the on-line company that G doesn't have on-line banking and was unable to pay at the time of ordering. Therefore, the Volunteer arranged for the new clothes to be delivered and a cheque to be sent from the Befriendee's son.

The Volunteer has also arranged for a mobile hairdresser to visit G who is unable to visit a local salon due to poor mobility. This shows us how our Befriender goes above and beyond her volunteering role, as she not only visits every week but ensures that G receives help and support where needed to improve her health and wellbeing.

On G's 97th birthday, the Volunteer baked a birthday cake and arranged to take this with her on the weekly visit.

## HAS THIS MADE A DIFFERENCE?

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Since G has been receiving a Volunteer Befriender each week, she doesn't feel as lonely and looks forward to her visit. The weekly visits normally consist of chatting and “putting the world to rights” over a cup of tea.

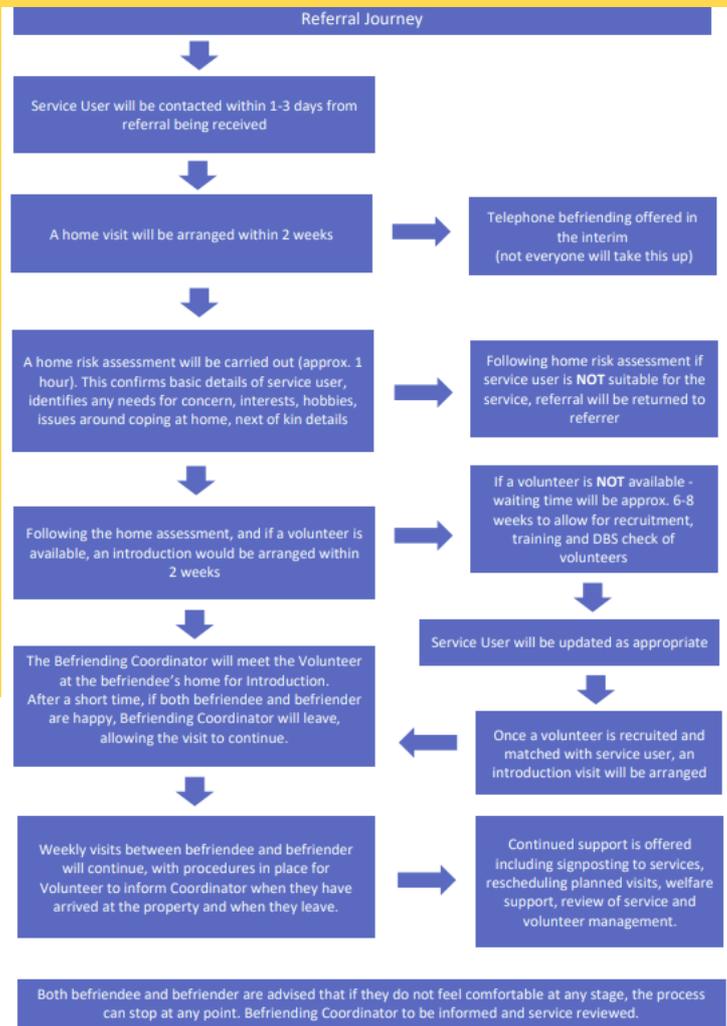
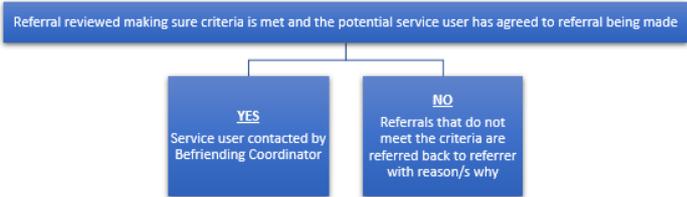
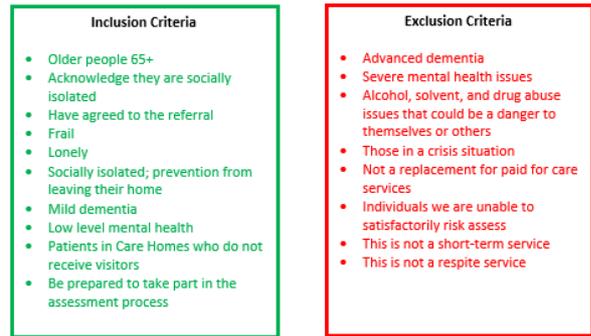
National lockdowns did not stop the Volunteer keeping in contact as she took on the role of telephone befriending. The Volunteer is an asset to our Befriending Service.



# INTEGRATED BEFRIENDING PATHWAY

It was identified at the start of the service to clarify and produce an integrated befriending pathway. This would optimise the collaboration of services, bringing together best practice, a clear referral journey process and clarity around inclusion and exclusion criteria.

These two documents were shaped, formalised and agreed by the Partners and shared with referral services.



Developing this pathway enables us to respond quickly to a referral and support the individual on their journey to establishing companionship and broadening social connections to include interactive activities and events.

This stems from a unique understanding of both the root causes and impacts of loneliness and isolation to how we meet those challenges in the local area. Our expertise is based on years of experience and collaboration, along with learning from other statutory and voluntary sector services locally and nationally.

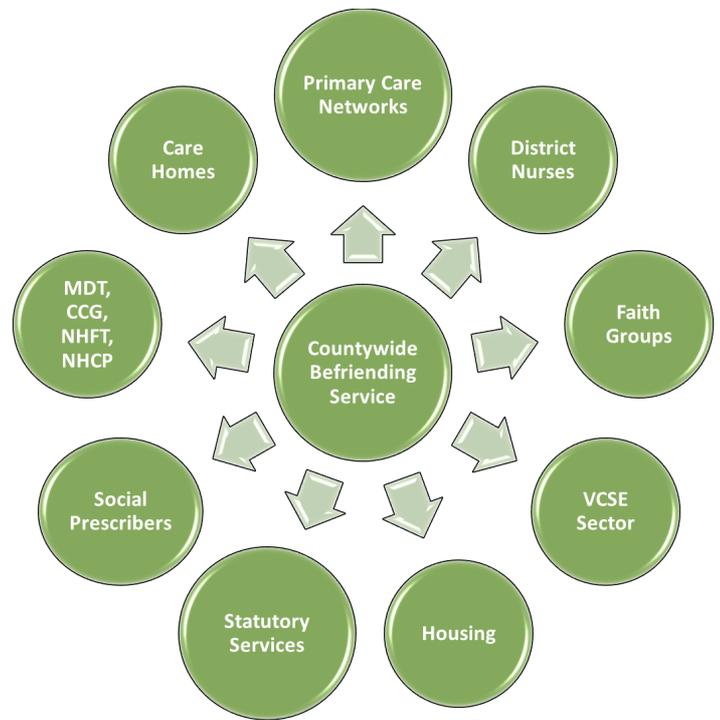
There have been key conversations around the first two exclusion criteria. Specialist services have challenged our thinking.

This does not define the individual, but recognises the challenges around safe environments, level of support needed, services working together and maintaining the key purpose of the befriending service.

# INTEGRATED BEFRIENDING PATHWAY

Managing this depends on capacity, our personalised, person-centred approach and evaluation of how we can best meet the needs of individuals who want to achieve social wellbeing and grow in confidence.

The befriending service countywide is seeing referrals come from all referral routes which shows accessibility, diverse place-based needs for the service and the expanse of connectedness with service providers.



## CASE STUDY

When resident J was referred to us, this particular gentleman was experiencing some low moods and had lost the motivation to go outside and socialise with other people.

Our volunteer Janice started visiting this gentleman on a regular basis and phoning in between times to ensure he was okay. She encouraged him to go out with her for a coffee and cake each week.

This gentleman has now returned to going out independently, he has made new friends and is in a much happier place as a result.

He says of Janice:

*"She has been wonderful, I don't know what I would have done without her. She is always reliable and always returns my calls if I ring her. I don't think I would be where I am now if it wasn't for her."*

# A VOLUNTEER'S STORY

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I visit an elderly person once a week and have built a friendship with that person, including swapping life stories, playing board games, helping with the garden, fetching items from the shop – anything reasonable that is asked of me. I am committed to one hour per week but I normally stay for 2 hours.

Volunteering offers an opportunity to be completely selfless, to do something good and worthwhile without receiving or expecting any reward.

There is also the aspect of being a representative of the organisation you are signed up with, which helps keep me professional when necessary, and aware of issues such as health and safety etc.

Unlike many volunteering posts, this is about a one-to-one friendship. The person I visit and I, have much in common and we share a wicked sense of humour! I really feel I am doing something good and worthwhile, as the person I visit makes it clear that they appreciate me and look forward to our visits.

I think Happy at Home is one of the best volunteering schemes I have come across. I look forward to these visits and enjoy my time with this client. I'm really not sure who gets the most from this – the client or me!

# ACHIEVEMENTS

Service delivery has evolved over the past year, particularly for SERVE

- Speaking with voluntary sector, health, and social care services, we have reduced our referral form to capture key determinants that will help with prioritising referrals
- Home risk assessments have been redesigned to provide a more holistic, person-centred approach in supporting service users referred into the Befriending Service
- Volunteer role description and application form have been reviewed and updated to help with capturing key data needed

SERVE were successful in recruiting to the post of Befriending Coordinator for Kettering and Corby. The challenge was the process took 5-6 months following three cycles of recruitment. The service is showing signs of growth.

Happy@Home Daventry District & South Northants have recruited recently and now have three part time coordinators which will help to widen the scope and support offered across the rural localities

SERVE have integrated to a new database system which allows for a central system to be used to record accurate records for project delivery. This system was introduced by Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire

Websites across all partners are being updated to be accessible.

Clear instructions, referral forms, volunteer packs and contact details made available.

It is our aim actively use the countywide logo across all websites to unify and promote the Befriending Services



**Northamptonshire**  
Befriending Service

## CASE STUDY

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### General Information about resident at first home visit

Resident P is a lovely charming lady, living alone she relies on the carers to do some everyday tasks and was looking for some help in this area. We were able to help her with this and she was delighted that we could help her. We explained that we had a lovely volunteer befriender who lived locally that we thought would be suitable and she was thrilled.

Resident P said that she was looking for a gardener for her. She would love to get out as she hasn't left her home in many months

### Volunteer recruited:

SA has received all her training and DBS and Character references have been collected. She is a hairdresser and wanted to offer her services and befriending to someone who was lonely and was keen to help them out for a coffee in a local café.

### Introduction with Resident & Volunteer:

The introduction with Resident P was very easy and straightforward. We stayed for a while to establish conversation, reminded both the volunteer and resident that they needed to exchange telephone numbers and arrange their next visit.

### Volunteer Feedback

*"I wanted to do something that would help other people and be enjoyable for me. Freda was the second lady I had visited and we hit it off very well. She is a lovely lady who has no immediate family. She is always cheerful and is very grateful for any help she gets and I enjoy visiting her."*



# UNEXPECTED ACHIEVEMENTS

## Supporting diverse communities

- Carers support continues to expand providing opportunities and provision through additional funding to meet the growing needs
- The Countywide Befriending Manager was elected community chair of North Northamptonshire LGBT+ Forum. Two projects that have been considered, and currently being undertaken is LGBT+ support for older people who identify as LGBT+ understanding the issues relating to inequalities and gaps in health and social care, statutory obligations and community connections. Secondly the visibility, support and care undertaken by GP surgeries to be LGBT+ welcoming and accessible
- Funding from The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust has been granted to Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire to provide Befriending for Veterans by Veterans to meet up socially or on a one-to-one basis.

I've been a Befriender for 6 years, and it's so worthwhile. For me it's a way of giving back. Befriending brings many surprises, lots of laughter and is hugely rewarding.

*Volunteer Befriender*



The Befriending Team North Northamptonshire supporting the Get Up And Go sessions which is part of a countywide falls prevention programme providing strength and balance exercise sessions for older adults to improve their mobility and confidence. Run by Northamptonshire Sports Falls Prevention

# CASE STUDY

## Issues established on assessment for a resident in West Northants - Daventry District:

- No local family – widow of 5 years
- Heart failure that has caused rapid decline in mobility – unable to pick up items dropped on the floor
- Poor eyesight
- Refusal to access care services and limited ability to provide personal care and home cleanliness
- In receipt of pension credit with no personal, private pensions.

## Support:

- The resident has a reluctance (and fear) of engaging with traditional support services. For many years they cared for their partner independently. The resistance in part was due to poor medical care provided during their childhood.
- Through befriending and a person-centred approach DVC were able to identify the issues that were affecting their health and wellbeing as highlighted above. The resident was also in a very precarious financial position and would often say they were 'fine' when telephoned by statutory organisations when they visibly were not.
- While of course understanding we are a professional charity the resident sees us as 'trusted friends' who offer help when it is required.

## Referrals:

- Adult Social Services
- Daventry Area Community Transport
- Referrals to Northampton General Hospital (Eye Department)
- GP surgery
- Clean & Project – Gardening
- Daventry Volunteer Centre volunteers for a one-off deep cleanse of the inside of the property
- Covid Support Project – Shopping/ Transport/White Goods purchasing and installation
- Patient Ambulance Service (EMAS)
- Air Ambulance Charity shop for bedding.
- Halifax Building Society – re potential fraud against them
- Age UK Car Insurance
- A local independent cleaning company
- DVC volunteers for a one-off deep house clean
- The New Street Café - Winter Warmth Project – providing meals and warm clothing during the winter months.



# VOLUNTEER PASSPORT



The Volunteer Passport is an integrated cloud based platform simplifying volunteer sharing across multiple health and social care Service Providers.

The Volunteer Passport has been developed by General Practice Alliance (GPA), in partnership with SERVE, Northamptonshire Carers, Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire, Age UK Northamptonshire and WORTH Northampton.

It aims to help more people to get involved in volunteering, whilst providing a platform for Service Providers to recruit and support their volunteers in Northamptonshire.

The Volunteer Passport allows volunteers to set up a profile, complete mandatory training, upload certification, and other required documentation forming a 'Passport'. This can then be used to apply and book volunteering sessions across the county and help volunteers to support their local community.

The current figures are provided on this page. Compared with figures in July 2021, we can see an increase of 444.5% of volunteers, 160% of registered providers, 190% increased opportunities and 816% increase in logged hours.

The National Volunteer Learning Passport is a standard package of training courses that are free to access to help develop knowledge and abilities and helps support volunteering within the Health and Care sector. As part of applying to become a Volunteer the Service Provider will let individuals know which modules that are required to complete. Most modules are 20-30mins in length, with a multiple-choice questionnaire to complete at the end. These can be found on the [Volunteer Passport website](#).

GPA have recently recruited a Volunteer Coordinator who will oversee the ongoing project and service delivery. This has primarily been piloted in Northampton but will be launched across Northamptonshire in 2022

**29**

**OPEN OPPORTUNITIES**



**174**

**LOGGED HOURS**

**98**

**REGISTERED VOLUNTEERS**



**72**

**SESSIONS**

**13**

**REGISTERED PROVIDERS**

# PARTNERSHIP WORKING RELATIONSHIP

*"The overall aim with iCAN is to meet the needs of our ageing local population and help people to Choose Well, Stay well and Live well"*

*[NHCP iCAN website](#)*

## OVERVIEW

Strengthening reputation with collaboration and partnering is at the centre of our work and in line with the Integrated Care Across Northamptonshire framework.

At the beginning of the service, SERVE hosted monthly Befriending Steering Group meetings online led by an independent chair by the CEO of Northamptonshire Carers. As the service evolved, it was agreed that this would move to bi-monthly meetings.

In addition, Befriending Coordinators attended the steering group which became apparent was not beneficial to them. A Befriending Peer Support meeting was established providing a safe space to share best practice, talk about operational challenges and share ideas for growth.

Both groups provide integral input with developing befriending services and ensuring projects fulfil their aims through time measured action logs.

Continued work is carried out with our main strategic partners, strengthening relationships and providing evidence of collaborative accountability.

Monthly statistics are collected by the Countywide Befriending Manager from the partners. These are shared with NHCP and the Newton Europe team who are developing Key Performance Indicators that can measure success.



# PARTNERSHIP WORKING RELATIONSHIP

Each befriending service in the partnership have long standing relationships with their GP practices.

The introduction of Primary Care Networks (PCN) and the integration of transformation work ongoing, offers person-centred care around the patient. Links have been made with PCN Managers and efforts to embed within the multidisciplinary teams are in progress; particularly across North Northamptonshire.

The Happy@Home Project in Daventry District and South Northants provide infrastructure support to Social Prescribing Link Workers. This is reflected in the work carried out across SERVE and Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire on a referral basis.



It is clear that additional work needs to be done. A more coercive multidisciplinary approach must happen with work to be more involved, appropriately utilising knowledge, skills and best practice from multiple disciplines across service provider boundaries. This clearly is a result from the inappropriateness of numerous referrals, challenges around volunteering opportunities and collaborative working.

## CASE STUDY

Service User H was referred to SERVE as having no family, very anxious when going out, history of homelessness and drug misuse. Possible underlying mental health issues but has not reached out to his GP due to confidence and difficulty talking about it and COVID.

A Home Risk Assessment took place to discuss the Befriender Project. H was unsure as to whether to take part in befriending and receive a Volunteer Befriender into his home. He said that he used to be an outdoor person and wants to get back out there but just needs to build up his confidence. He explained that he enjoys cycling, supports Liverpool Football Club and listens to music.

The Befriender Project is all about supporting lonely and isolated people (65+) in their own home, therefore it was felt that this service was suitable for this gentleman, but ***other alternative services would be more beneficial***. An email was sent to the referrer explaining this and suggested the below options.

- Outdoor activities at Stanwick Lakes where he could cycle to and from.
- Supporting Independence Programme which supports and manages health and wellbeing to people who are showing signs of reduced independence.

Therefore, this case was closed but suitable options/alternatives were offered.

# WE ARE LISTENING

Across the partners, we have encouraged informal feedback from befriendees, befrienders, and stakeholders to understand how we are performing with service delivery to help meet local needs to evaluate what is working well and what changes we face to overcome any issues.



Attending events have benefitted the countywide befriending service. Raising awareness of volunteer opportunities and having conversations about the health and wellbeing benefits for the individual and others.



We have listened to compliments, comments and negative feedback about the service which has resulted in updated leaflets, clear information about referrals, update to websites, broadening accessibility to information, training for volunteers have been redesigned and renewed to allow a more less intensive process. Encouraging choice, especially around the Volunteer Passport to access volunteer befriending opportunities.



"making connections so people don't feel lonely"

*stakeholder feedback*

"being kind, helping others, supporting people, emotional & mental wellbeing"

*befriender feedback*



There was a THANK YOU event for volunteers at SERVE which the Befriending Service appreciated the continued commitment, time and skills are volunteer befrienders offer on a weekly basis. We even have a Volunteer Befriender Champion who visits four people a week. Shirley's experience can be viewed on our [website](#) or [YouTube](#)

# LOOKING AHEAD

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in the coming year, our priorities will remain committed to meeting the needs of older people 65+ who are lonely, isolated and frail as we move towards an Integrated Care Service across Northamptonshire.

We are looking at innovative ways to help reduce waiting lists, continuing to work collaboratively and co-productively with statutory and voluntary sector organisations to upscale the Befriending Service.

The Befriending Service and across all Partners will continue to focus on supporting our residents, increase accessibility, diversify services to meet the needs of the whole community, support and deliver digital inclusion and build on intergenerational links.

There is the need to enhance the support of other services, businesses and individuals to see the wider impact of loneliness and isolation leading more people to volunteer and meet the growing demand.

Ensure service users / residents and volunteers continue to pay a full and active role in service design. This will be achieved through newsletters that are sent to volunteers in each service, questionnaires, regular reviews and through simple conversations.

As part of our continued growth strategy we will maintain collaborative working with Partners and stakeholders as part of the wider service delivery of Integrated Care Across Northamptonshire (iCAN) service.

We want to maximise the benefits of technology within service delivery and organisational efficiency, which steps have been made to accurately record data.

