

befriending
networkni
Support / Strengthen / Build

Directory of Befriending Services

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Introduction

The Befriending Network was launched in November 2011 and aims to support and build capacity of organisations providing or wishing to establish volunteer-involving one to one befriending services.

The Network is made up of a number of different organisations working across Belfast and further afield who support people with many different needs, sensory impairment, disability, mental ill health and challenges that older age can bring. The Network aims to:

- Provide opportunity for organisations to network and share information
- Provide support and encouragement to organisations who wish to establish befriending schemes
- Raise awareness of Befriending and those organisations providing support
- Link with and signpost to other services that can provide support to organisations, volunteers and service users

Definition of Befriending:

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

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

Befriending Networks

This publication has been produced by Volunteer Now in collaboration with The Befriending Network. This directory is a tool for health professionals, organisations, families and individuals when looking for support services for people in their community or care who may be feeling lonely and/or isolated.

Many of these projects/schemes rely heavily on support provided by volunteers and therefore the organisations would welcome any enquiries from people interested in finding out more about ways in which they can become involved.

The Befriending Network meets quarterly and is co-ordinated by Volunteer Now through its Community Projects Team supported by Belfast Health & Social Care Trust.

For further information please contact:

Volunteer Now
Skainos Centre
239 Newtownards Road
Belfast
BT4 1AF
Tel: 028 9023 2020
Email: befriendingnetwork@volunteernow.co.uk

Please note this is not a definitive list of befriending services but those who have joined the Network or responded to questionnaires.

Information correct at time of print, March 2024.

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Action Ability Belfast USDT

Project Name: Action Ability Belfast

Where: Belfast

For: People with a disability who are socially isolated and would benefit from having visits and outings in the community

This is a one-to-one befriending service that is funded through several streams of Self Directed Support, such as; Direct Payments, Commissioned Trust Funding or the Carers Fund. Service users and/or carers then purchase our befriending services in a package that best suits them. The service is here to enable people to develop their independence, confidence and self-esteem. It can also help support people into other activities in their community and to build their social networks. We are continuing to develop our befriending service to meet our growing area of need, within which we hope to expand our volunteer befriending basis.

Referral process: Referrals can be made by individuals or carers, Social Services, community and voluntary agencies or other professionals.

Contact: Springfield Learning Centre
200 Springfield Road
Belfast
BT12 7DB
Tel: 028 9023 6677 (option 8)
Email: actionabilitybelfast@gmail.com

Bangor Salvation Army

Project Name: Bangor Befriending Service

Where: Bangor, Newtownards and Donaghadee

For: People 65+, living alone, socially isolated

Our aim is to relieve social isolation and loneliness in our community and bring a smile to an older person. Volunteers visit for a minimum of one hour a month for face to face coffee and a chat. Volunteers can also take befriendees out for coffee or a drive. This contact does not come to an end unless one of the parties requests it.

Referral process: Referrals can be made by individuals, families, Social Services or other professionals by contacting Julia below.

Contact: Tel: 07469658405

Email: julia.gillen@salvationarmy.org.uk

Web:

<https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/bangor-county-down>

Belfast Central Mission

Project Name: Befriending Scheme

Where: Greater Belfast Area

For: Socially isolated, lonely older people.

The Befriending Scheme aims to reduce social isolation or loneliness experienced by people who have little or no contact with family and friends. Volunteers will visit on a weekly basis to help reduce these feelings of isolation and loneliness and hopefully improve the quality of the older person's life.

Referral process: Referrals accepted from Social Services, GPs and other Referral Agencies.

Contact: Grosvenor House
5 Glengall Street
Belfast
BT12 5AD
Tel: 07958 057457
Email: jsewell@belfastcentralmission.org
Web: www.belfastcentralmission.org

The Black Box

Project Name: Gig Buddies

Where: Belfast

For: Adults with learning disabilities and/or autism/neurodiversity

Gig Buddies is an international project that pairs adults with learning disabilities and/or autism/neurodiversity with a volunteer, based on their shared interests, to build a friendship and attend monthly events together.

The aim is to ensure adults with learning disabilities and/or autism/neurodiversity feel confident when attending local venues so that they can enjoy all the great events happening in their community and be actively involved in making decisions about their own social lives.

The project was launched in Belfast in 2021 with support and funding from The Belfast City Council via The Black Box, who are ideally placed as one of Belfast's top inclusive venues, to host Gig Buddy Socials where we all get together for some serious fun on a bi-monthly basis. We want to grow Gig Buddies Belfast even further as we have found that the project has enriched the lives of both Buddies by improving self-confidence and reducing isolation and loneliness. If you enjoy going to gigs or social events and want to have a buddy to go with this could be the perfect volunteering opportunity for you!

Referral process: Online application available on the Black Box website to be a participant or volunteer or contact the Gig Buddies Project Co-ordinator via telephone/email.

Contact: 18 – 22 Hill Street
Belfast
BT1 2LA
Tel: 028 9024 4400
Email: gigbuddies@blackboxbelfast.com
Web: www.blackboxbelfast.com/gig-buddies-belfast/

British Red Cross

Project Name: British Red Cross Community Connector
Service Greater Belfast area (Belfast Trust).

Where: Belfast

For: Service for those aged 55 and over living in the Belfast area who are experiencing isolation or loneliness

Our team of staff and volunteers provide a 12 week service that is person centred on a 1:1 basis. Meeting once a week we provide befriending, signposting and linking service users with organisations within their community for advice, support and social interaction. In the first meeting with the Community connector we complete an initial support plan to find out the needs and interests of the person and set realistic goals to encourage and empower people to get involved within their community.

Referral process: Referrals to the service can come from anyone; this can be an organisation, health professional, family member or this can be a self-referral and we ask you complete the referral form attached.

Contact: Rosie Jenkins
Service Co-ordinator
Tel: 07921 404 092
Email: rosemaryjenkins@redcross.org.uk

Cancer Lifeline

Project Name: Cancer Lifeline

Where: North Belfast, Shankill and Newtownabbey

For: People affected by a cancer diagnosis and their family members/carers.

This organisation aims to support people affected by a cancer diagnosis including the person diagnosed, family members and carers. Services include: counselling, complementary therapies, benefits advice, female support group, male support group, bereavement group, carers group, nutrition, fatigue, well-being programmes including yoga, relaxation and walking group, peer support and linking clients into support services in community, voluntary and statutory services.

Referral Process: Clients can self-refer directly to the organisation. Referrals are also accepted from voluntary, community and statutory organisations.

Contact: 44 Alliance Avenue
Belfast
BT14 7PJ
Tel: 028 9035 1999
Mobile: 07949 109091
Email: info@cancerlifeline.info
Web: www.cancerlifeline.info

CLARE (Creative Local Action, Responses & Engagement)

Project Name: CLARE CIC

Where: North Belfast

For: Isolated older people 65+

CLARE staff and volunteers work in partnership with older people to help maintain independence, reduce social isolation and achieve the best health and wellbeing possible. CLARE encourages volunteering, recognising the potential of people within their communities to help each other and improve lives.

Referral process: The older person agrees to being referred and is experiencing isolation due to lack of support networks. The current catchment area is North Belfast. Referrals are accepted from individuals, community and voluntary organisations and others identifying isolated individuals.

Contact: Tel: 028 9077 4185
Email: j.harrison@clare-cic.org
Web: www.clare-cic.org

Crossroads Care NI Charitable Group

Project Name: In Your Prime

Where: Belfast and North Down

For: People aged 65+ at risk of feeling lonely and socially isolated

Crossroads offers a free service to people age 65 and over living alone who are feeling isolated and lonely. The service is run by local volunteers who will visit for a cuppa and a chat each week.

Referral process: To refer an individual to the project you can contact one of the In Your Prime team for a referral form, or alternatively visit our website. We also accept self-referrals.

Contact: 432 Upper Newtownards Road
Belfast
BT4 3GY
Tel: 028 9181 4363
Email: iyp@crossroadscare.co.uk
Web: www.crossroadscare.co.uk

Deafblind UK

Project Name: Deafblind UK

Where: NI Wide

For: People who have a dual sight and hearing loss, which is affecting their ability to communicate with others, access services and to be as mobile as they used to be. The project aims to improve member's quality of life by reducing isolation and/or loneliness they may be enduring through:

- E-Befrienders: volunteers communicate with Deafblind UK members via email
- Tele-Befrienders: volunteers communicate with Deafblind UK members via regular phone calls (text and/or Skype also available). Volunteers offer support and friendship through regular contact, working to reduce feelings of isolation and/or loneliness and increasing confidence and well-being.
- We also help people connect to other accessible local social opportunities and also to telephone and video based groups.

Referral process: Referrals accepted from professionals and voluntary sector organisations. Self-referrals are also welcome.

Contact: Tel: 0800 132 320
Email: info@deafblind.org.uk
Web: www.deafblind.org.uk

Engage with Age

Project Name: The PAL Project, Telephone Befriending

Where: Greater Belfast

For: Older people experiencing loneliness/isolation including carers of people living with dementia.

Engage with Age seeks to enable older people to live happy, healthy, independent, and more connected lives. Addressing the impact of loneliness and/or isolation is a key priority. The telephone befriending service has a full time Befriending Officer funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. The Befriending Officer supports a team of volunteer telephone befrienders that support people experiencing loneliness and/or isolation. Befriendees receive weekly telephone calls, invitations to other Engage with Age activities, opportunities to meet, and occasional group get togethers. Volunteer Befrienders receive training and support. People referred are assessed against a criteria for Telephone Befriending.

Referral process: Referrals are taken via a range of methods including GPs, Social Workers, voluntary sector organisations, self-referrals and family members.

Contact: East Belfast Network Centre
55 Templemore Avenue
Belfast
BT5 4FP
Tel: 028 9073 5696/ 07423 702721
Email: befriending@engagewithage.org.uk
Web: <https://engagewithage.org.uk/>
Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/EngageWithAgeBelfast>

Good Morning Antrim

Project Name: Good Morning Antrim

Where: Antrim, Randalstown, Toome, Crumlin, Parkgate and Templepatrick

For: Members of the community who are feeling vulnerable or isolated for any reason including experiencing physical or mental health difficulties

Good Morning Antrim offers telephone support, befriending and alert service. Recipients are contacted by telephone on agreed weekdays at a pre-arranged time. The call will consider three main points:

- A friendly chat about health and wellbeing
- Provide information on services in the area and forthcoming events
- Listen to any concerns, assist to resolve and with permission pass these on to relevant agencies/individuals

Referral process: Anyone can refer including self by telephone or email.

Contact: 1-5 Somerset Park
Antrim
BT41 2JB
Tel: 028 9446 4619
Email: goodmorningantrim@familycaringcentre.co.uk

Good Morning Larne

Project Name: Good Morning Larne (GML)

Where: Larne and surrounding areas.

For: Seniors in the Larne community who are feeling lonely or isolated for any reason.

Good Morning Larne is a free and confidential telephone befriending service. Our volunteers call our clients on their chosen days and help create a bond with the client to help them feel more connected to the community. Our services include:

- A morning telephone call
- A safety check
- A signposting service
- Events throughout the year

Referral process: Referrals are taken through a range of methods including: self-referrals, family/friend referrals and referrals by professionals such as doctors, social workers and district nurses.

Contact: 1-5 Doric Way
Antiville
Larne
BT40 2BH
Tel: 07730482888
Email: gmlarne@larnecc.org.uk

Good Morning North Belfast

Project Name: Good Morning North Belfast

Where: Greater Belfast

For: Vulnerable adults, people suffering from dementia, a mental health illness, a physical disability and older people

Good Morning North Belfast operate a telephone support and befriending service to vulnerable adults and the elderly. We can offer daily reminders, support and sign posting to other local community groups and advice centres. The Good Morning North Belfast team can offer a call 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Referral process: Call 028 9071 9200

Contact: 254 – 256 Ballysillan Road
Belfast
BT14 6RA
Tel: 028 9071 9200
Email: goodmorningnorthbelfast@outlook.com
Web: www.goodmorningni.org

Good Morning West Belfast

Project Name: Ardcomm Elderly Services

Where: Greater Belfast

For: Older and vulnerable adults

Services provided:

- Good Morning West Belfast (telephone support)
- Information Days
- Social Events.

Ardcomm Elderly Services' overriding priority is to tackle social isolation and loneliness through telephone call support and some group befriending activities for those ages 55+ across our catchment area.

Referral Process: Service users are referred to our service through a number of avenues including self-referrals, families, GP's, statutory agencies and community sector.

Contact: 61- 63 Ardmonagh Gardens
Belfast
BT11 8DX
Tel: 028 9024 5943 (ext. 2)
Email: goodmorningwestbelfast@outlook.com
Web: www.ardmonagh.org

Guide Dogs NI

Project Name: My Sighted Guide

Where: Throughout Northern Ireland

For: Adults living with sight loss

My Sighted Guide is a service provided by Guide Dogs to support people with sight loss get out and about, to do the things they want to do. The My Sighted Guide service matches a person with sight loss with a trained volunteer for 2-3 hours a week to improve their confidence and support them to build links in their community.

Referral process: Clients can self-refer, be referred by health professionals or those working in the voluntary and community sector.

Contact: Unit 17
18 Heron Road
Belfast
BT3 9LE
Tel: 0800 781 1444
Email: services@guidedogs.org.uk
Web: <http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/mysightedguide>

Laurencetown, Lenaderg & Tullylish Community Association

Project Name: Connecting the Community

Where: Laurencetown and surrounding towns and villages e.g. Bleary, Gilford, Tandragee, Scarva, Laurelvale, Donacloney, Warringstown, Blackskull areas, Banbridge and extending towards Lurgan and Portadown.

For: People over 65

Connecting the Community is a new 4 year National Lottery funded programme that commenced in 2021. It aims to support the over 65s who may feel lonely or who are socially isolated keep connected. There are three main strands to the project offering 1-1 support and providing opportunities to get involved in other groups and activities and connect with other services. As well as helping older people embrace technology and supporting older carers have a bit of Time Out for themselves, there is a big focus on offering befriending.

Referral process: Referrals can be made by friends, family, self-referral and through a range of statutory, voluntary and community organisations.

Contact: LLTCA, Laurencetown Community Centre
10a Drumnascamph Road
Laurencetown
Craigavon, BT63 6DU
Tel: 028 4062 3770
Email: cc@lltca.com
Web: www.lltca.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/LaurencetownLTCA/

Macmillan Cancer Support

Project Name: Macmillan Volunteer Buddy Service

Where: All Trust areas

For: People affected by cancer

Telephone buddy service – Volunteers offer a weekly 1 hour telephone buddy service for 12 sessions. These calls offer befriending and signposting to other relevant services.

Community buddy service – Volunteers visit people affected by cancer at home and provide emotional and/or practical support up to 2 hours a week for 12 sessions. Support can include light housework, shopping or running errands, having a chat and a cup of tea and signposting to other relevant services.

Referral process: A service request form must be completed. A satisfactory risk assessment must be completed prior to community buddy support being offered.

Please contact Sharon Gorman, Volunteering Services Delivery Lead at Macmillan to find out if the service is available in your area.

Contact: Tel: 07821 687349
Email: sgorman@macmillan.org.uk
Web: www.macmillan.org.uk or
www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/get-help/emotional-help/telephone-buddies

Marie Curie

Project Name: Marie Curie Companions at Home Service

Where: Northern Ireland wide

For: People who are considered to be in the last 12 months of life as a result of either a cancer diagnosis or any other life limiting illness.

The Marie Curie Companions at Home service is provided by trained volunteers who offer one to one support to people with terminal illness (cancer and other illnesses), completely free of charge. This support may continue with their carers and families for a short time after bereavement. Trained Volunteers support people in their own homes, offering a few hours of their time each week to provide a listening ear and companionship; to give families and carers a short break from their caring role; to offer practical support such as accompanying individuals to appointments or to go out for coffee; or to source information on other available support.

A Marie Curie Companion at Home does not provide any nursing or medical care or advice.

Referral process: Anyone (Professionals or family) can refer into the Marie Curie Companion service directly by calling the Marie Curie Hub on 028 94331868.

Contact: Tel: 028 94331868
Email: Belfast.Mail@mariecurie.org.uk
Web: <https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/companions>

Omagh Volunteer Centre & Strabane Community Project

Project Name: B-Friend Hub – Beyond the Call Project

Where: Omagh, Strabane & Fermanagh

For: Older people living in the areas of Omagh, Strabane and Fermanagh who are experiencing loneliness or social isolation.

We deliver a menu of tailored services:

- **Phone Befriending** – is a free telephone befriending service. The call provides a friendly chat, information on events and services in each area and signposting to relevant services/organisations if requested.
- **Home Visit Befriending** – provides a free home visit befriending service to older people in their own home. The service is delivered by trained volunteers who will offer support and friendship through a weekly visit.
- **Buddy Sessions** – provides ‘out and about’ with a matched volunteer buddy for a walk/coffee/to attend a group/activity.
- **Signposting** – provides signposting/connecting/ referral and advocacy based on individual client’s needs.

Referral process: Referrals accepted from Social Services, healthcare providers, family members and self-referrals. A risk assessment will be completed prior to the service being offered.

Contact: **Beyond the Call Project Omagh**

Tel: 028 8224 0772

Email: laurence@thebefriendhub.org

B-Friend Hub/Beyond the Call Project Strabane

Tel: 028 7188 3102

Email: micky@thebefriendhub.org

B-Friend Hub/Beyond the Call Project Fermanagh

Tel: 028 6698 0027

Email: rita@thebefriendhub.org

Praxis Care

Project Name: Praxis Care Befriending Scheme

Where: Antrim, Belfast, Coleraine, Magherafelt & Foyle

For: Adults who feel socially isolated as a result of their mental ill health (a service for adults with a learning disability is available in Foyle).

Praxis Care has a 'blended' approach to its befriending; a variety of methods/mediums are offered including face to face, telephone and video calls. Some matches may only ever be established as a remote service. The support is offered to individuals who feel lonely or isolated as a result of their mental ill-health.

Referral process: Referrals can be received from Community Mental Health Teams, for example from Social Worker or Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN). Please contact befriending co-ordinator at the address below for up to date information on availability of the service.

Contact: **Antrim & Belfast**
Tel: 028 9442 8321
Email: susanbrewer@praxiscare.org.uk

Coleraine
Tel: 028 7035 2292
Email: jeanettetinsmore@praxiscare.org.uk

Magherafelt
Tel: 028 7963 4488
Email: karenrobinson@praxiscare.org.uk

Foyle
Tel: 028 7130 8020
Email: befriendingderry@praxiscare.org.uk

South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust

Project Name: Safe & Well

Where: South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust area

For: People 65+ who are feeling lonely and are socially isolated, including people in the early stages of dementia.

Safe and Well aims to help people tackle the issues of social isolation and loneliness by offering information, advice, access to services and volunteer befriending that will help promote safe, healthier independent living.

A Safe and Well Officer will provide a holistic assessment and where an older person is feeling lonely and socially isolated, with little or no contact with family, friends or neighbours a Volunteer Befriender will be offered through either a face to face visit or a telephone befriending call on a weekly basis.

Referral process: Anyone can refer including self-referrals by telephone or email.

Contact: Safe and Well
Ballynahinch Community Services
45-47 Main Street
Ballynahinch
BT24 8DN
Tel: 028 9756 6934
Email: safeandwell@setrust.hscni.net

The Rainbow Project

Project Name: LGBTQIA+ Social Groups and Regional LGBTQIA+ Peer Social and Support Groups

Where: The social groups are open to LGBTQIA+ people aged 18+ across Northern Ireland. The Regional groups are in locations across NI.

For: Anyone who identifies as LGBTQIA+

There are a range of groups and other events throughout the year in our Belfast and Foyle centres.

These services reduce social isolation for people who identify as LGBTQIA+. The service offers a social experience for people; to give them the opportunity to meet other LGBTQIA+ to build up their social connections.

Referral process: Self-referral and referral through another organisation/service with persons permission. All participants will need to meet with a member of staff for a Health and Wellbeing Consultation. Referrals can be made over the phone or by email, contact details below.

Contact: Belfast LGBTQIA+ Centre
Cathedral House
23-31 Waring Street
Belfast
BT1 2DX
Tel: 028 9031 9030

Foyle LGBTQIA+ Centre
Orlan House
Strand Road
L/Derry
BT48 7AB

Email: info@rainbow-project.org

Web: www.rainbow-project.org

Volunteer Now

Project Name: Befriending Scheme

Where: Belfast

For: Socially isolated and/or lonely older people 65+ living in their own homes.

The Befriending Scheme aims to reduce social isolation or loneliness experienced by older people, living in their own homes, who have little contact with family and friends and are unable to attend day centres or other social groups due to older age and age related illnesses. Volunteer support is provided through regular telephone calls or home visits. We hope that this support will help reduce feelings of isolation and/or loneliness and increase happiness and general well-being.

Referral process: Referrals are accepted from social workers and social care co-ordinators within the Belfast Health & Social Care Trust. Contact should be made with the scheme co-ordinator before submitting a request as there may be capacity restraints.

Contact: Skainos Centre
239 Newtownards Road
Belfast
BT4 1AF
Tel: 028 9023 2020
Email: info@volunteernow.co.uk
Web: www.volunteernow.co.uk

VOLUNTEER NOW

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T: 028 9023 2020

E: info@volunteernow.co.uk

W: www.volunteernow.co.uk

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