



Two's Company Information Pack



Two's Company Telephone Befriending Framework

Introduction

During these unprecedented times we believe the Church has a unique opportunity to respond to the needs of many who find themselves isolated from contact with the outside world.

Linking Lives UK is a national Christian charity that has built many years of experience in equipping local churches to respond to the needs of loneliness and social isolation. Since 2012 we have facilitated this through establishing face to face befriending projects in over 30 towns and villages across the country. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic it has been necessary to adapt to social isolation in a different way. We have therefore developed the programme 'Two's Company', a telephone befriending service, to offer to the Church as a way of addressing the current vast need.

We believe the Church are in a unique position to respond to those needing telephone befriending. Many churches have a team of trusted and vetted volunteers from a variety of ministries who, due to the current circumstances, are unable to serve in their usual capacity but will still have a desire to help others. 'Two's Company' seeks to mobilise the Church's team of volunteers to become an answer and lifeline to many who will be experiencing loneliness. Linking Lives serves to provide the framework for this process which the local church can take and use to fit its own context.

Psalm 61:5-6 highlights God's concern for those for whom loneliness is a daily reality - ***'A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families'***.

The following information gives the basic framework of how to run a Two's Company project within a local church context, with most of the necessary tools and skills already available.

Advertising

We recommend that this is done in the context of the local church. If it is felt that advertising is necessary, the local church will often know the best methods for this. Possible methods could include:

- The local newspaper/radio
- Church website
- Social media or other online groups (although the people most in need are often not online)
- Key local agencies such as voluntary sector umbrella bodies (CVS) and Local Authorities
- Covid 19 hubs which may recently have been set up

It is important at this stage to be clear what it is you are offering. There is much pressure on services at the moment and referring agencies may be keen to pass on potential Link Friends whose needs are more complex than a volunteer phone befriender can or should deal with. Two's Company is a befriending service, provided by volunteers. It is not a counselling, advice or mentoring service, and it is important that referring agencies grasp this early on.

Referral System

Referrals should be directed to a nominated 'Coordinator'. For this reason, we recommend using the same phone number on all publicity. We recommend a dedicated freephone 0800 number which diverts calls to a mobile or landline phone number. We have provided guidance separately on how this can easily be set up.

Once a referral has been received, the Coordinator will carry out an initial telephone conversation to decide if the person being referred ('Link Friend') is appropriate for the service. If so, the information from the assessment, using the 'General Information form' will be used to match the Link Friend to a Befriender.

Many of those who could benefit from this service may already be known to the congregation. Any of the

following processes could be used to seek/receive referrals:

- Local contacts (friends, relatives, neighbours)
- A central email address through which to direct people and assess need
- Referrals may also be gained through GP's surgeries and social workers etc, although this may be a lengthier process in the current crisis.

The Co-ordinator

The Co-ordinators role would be to oversee the whole befriending scheme and briefly comprises of

- Referrals
- Managing volunteers
- Matching Befrienders with Link Friends
- Supervision
- Reporting

A more detailed summary of the role is contained in the Role Description and explained clearly within online training.

Volunteers

For speed and efficiency at this time, we recommend using suitable volunteers already known to and vetted by the church according to their Safeguarding Policy. This will enable the whole process to begin quickly and safely.

The qualities of a befriending volunteer should include:

- Being an active listener
- Having a warm, friendly and empathetic character
- The ability to relate to people of different ages, personalities and backgrounds
- Being person centred
- Having enthusiasm, motivation and professionalism

Training

Linking Lives UK will run regular training for Coordinators using Zoom. This training can then be used by the local coordinator to train local volunteers (again, by Zoom) and will last for approximately one hour.

Topics covered include:

- Active listening in the context of phone conversations
- Safeguarding
- Boundaries
- Recording and monitoring
- Signposting

Once volunteers have carried out their training, the Co-ordinator will begin to match them with a potential Link Friend. The Coordinator will contact the Link Friend to let them know who they have been linked with and inform them of when to expect their first call.

Phone Calls

It is important to remain flexible about the frequency and length of each call. Both the needs of the Link Friend and the availability of the volunteers may vary considerably during this time of change and so it is necessary to keep this under review. We would usually recommend a call to last around 30 minutes, but it may be that a Link Friend would benefit from shorter, more frequent phone calls.

The calls would be from the volunteer's own phone and we recommend following our guidelines to protect caller identity. To hide a number from a

Landline: dial 141 and then the number

Android device: go to the 'Phone', press the vertical 3 dots for a drop-down menu and select 'Settings', select 'Supplementary Services', select 'Showing Caller ID', click 'Hide my Number'

Apple device: go to 'Settings', select 'Phone', select 'Show my Caller ID', slide the circle to the left to hide number and back to right (green) to show number.

The phone call should check on their Link Friends wellbeing. This could include asking if they are in need of anything, encouraging them to keep in touch with people over the phone or digitally if they can; recommending listening to a chatty radio station and putting some extra photos around the house of people they care about.

After the initial phone call, the volunteer will contact the Coordinator to let them know how the call went and if it is appropriate to continue contact. If both parties are happy with the match, this will continue, initially, for 4-6 months. If not, the Coordinator should be informed and will then find an alternative match.

Recording

A brief record of the conversation will also be made, for safeguarding and monitoring purposes using the 'Call Log Sheet' template. Details should be kept in a safe, locked place until calls finish.

Feedback and Reporting

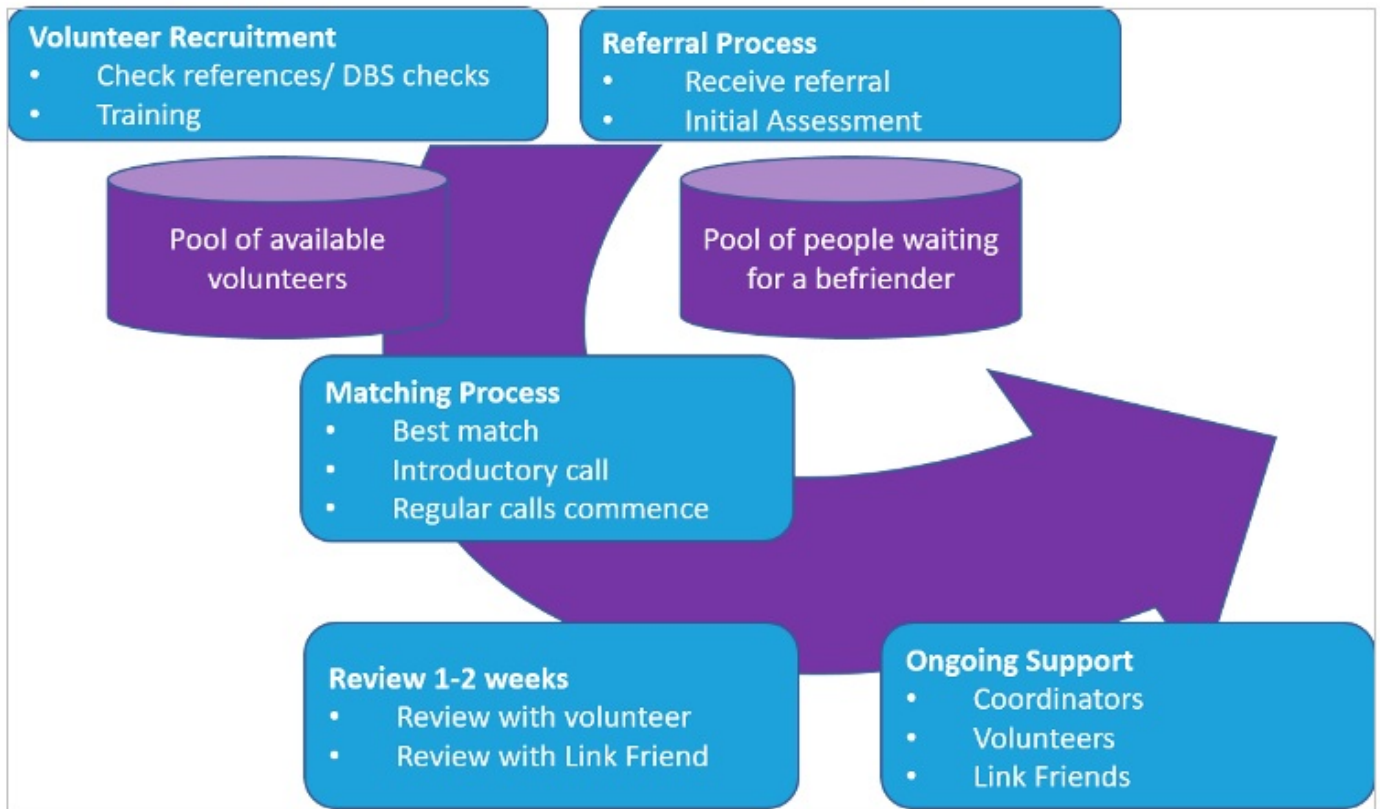
This is vital to ensure everyone is benefiting from this service. It is the Coordinator's responsibility to maintain contact with the volunteers through regular phone calls but the Volunteers should also know how to be in touch with Coordinators if they are concerned about Link Friends wellbeing or if they are concerned about their own wellbeing. Issues that arise can then be dealt with swiftly and efficiently.

Signposting

This will again vary depending on the church, but if possible, we recommend being aware of local new or existing services dealing with food provisions or picking up medication etc. This will ensure that telephone befrienders are able to focus specifically on their role in providing crucial company and friendship.

It may become necessary to refer Link Friends on to more specialised services such as Mental Health teams. We recommend this is done sensitively on a case by case basis, in collaboration with the referring agency where possible.

Two's Company Process



Coordinator Role Description

Summary and Main Purpose of Role

- To be responsible for the day to day safe operation of Two's Company locally ensuring that Link Friends and volunteers are well supported and equipped.
- Liaise with other key local agencies as necessary.

Main Tasks

- Ensure the safe and thorough assessment and allocation of Link Friends with suitable telephone volunteers.
- Ensure that volunteers receive the necessary support and supervision to flourish within their roles.
- Oversee the safeguarding aspects of the scheme in liaison with the church/ organisation's safeguarding officer and policy.
- Ensure that procedures are circulated to and followed by all volunteers.
- Liaise with statutory agencies and other voluntary organisations to ensure suitable referrals are maintained and that the project is meeting identified needs.
- To work with members of your team in addressing ongoing issues and agreeing future strategy.
- Liaise with Linking Lives UK and in order to remain up to date with national developments.
- Oversee the training programme for volunteers.
- Coordinate the monitoring of all aspects of the scheme.

Specific Tasks

- Ensure that all volunteers have been properly vetted through relevant references.
- Maintain accurate records in accordance with data protection requirements.
- Compile and return Linking Lives monthly reports.
- Compile and produce necessary publicity material ensuring that it is kept up to date and relevant.

Becoming A 'Two's Company' Project

If after reading through this information, your church would like to become a Two's Company project, the next step would be to complete the online Registration Form at <http://linkinglives.uk/tc-registration>, which will register your church as a partner with Linking Lives UK.

What information is required to register with Two's Company?

We ask for key details of the Church setting up the project, and also contact details for the key person. In addition to this, it is necessary for us to ensure each registration is bona fide and so we also ask for a signed letter of authority from the Church Leader and a copy of the Church's latest set of financial accounts to be uploaded at the time of registration. There is no financial commitment to becoming a Two's Company partner, although there is the opportunity to make a suggested one-off donation of £100 towards the work of the charity should you decide to go ahead.

Commitment to Two's Company

We anticipate each project to continue it's telephone befriending for as long as possible during the Covid-19 pandemic, with a minimum commitment of 4 months of telephone calls.

Beyond Covid-19

We hope that each project would tailor their service to the needs of their community and would remain flexible to the changing situation of both volunteers and Link Friends as lockdown is gradually released, bearing in mind that isolation is something that will continue for many people well beyond the pandemic.

The possibility of moving from telephone befriending to face to face befriending once social distancing restrictions have been lifted is something that is possible for projects wanting to develop their outreach in this way, and Linking Lives UK will work with churches wanting to do this.