

Third Sector Case Study: Adult Befriending Service



Description of revision to routine service delivery made in response to covid-19/lockdown

Normally we offer 1:1 befriending, group befriending and telephone befriending. Due to lockdown, we suspended all our group activity and 1 to 1 befriending visits. Instead, we moved over entirely to a telephone befriending service. Our staff and befrienders made regular telephone calls to our clients and supported in excess of 70 individuals.

These calls consisted of a friendly chat but also a welfare check. Sometimes people required more than one call per week as they struggled with lockdown. Many of our clients were not on the official shielding list but chose to shield voluntarily. Consequently, many of them had very little contact with other people so our telephone calls were a lifeline. When phoning we asked if they needed any help e.g. a prescription pick up or signposted them to another service e.g. CV support group, Age Scotland or Silverline. Where somebody did not answer their phone we made a visit to their home to check they were ok.

Description of additional activities introduced during lockdown

Initially, we called all our clients and people on our waiting list to check they would like a regular phone call from us. Thereafter, regular weekly/fortnightly calls were made to clients. Our calls lasted up to 1 hour and some of our more vulnerable clients required more than one call per week.

We used our Facebook page more to put local information on it for our followers. Also, we put updates on it to let folk know what we were doing with our service and any changes that were being implemented.

In June, we sent a Friendship Activity Pack to send out to all our clients. This gave them an update on our service but was also packed with activities such as puzzles, colouring in, recipes and useful contacts for shops doing food deliveries. The B.A.L.L. Group users have their own private Facebook page and our BALL Group Development Worker has organised regular Zoom dance classes and quizzes for them.

During August, we began to resume 1:1 visits and also started making doorstep

visits with deliveries of plants or activities e.g. jigsaws, books, wool and scrapbooks.

We have also supported our volunteers throughout lockdown with emails/telephone calls and messages on our private Volunteers Facebook page. Some of our volunteers have mental health issues and have required more support than others.

What you learned from the changes and what you might continue or develop as a result

There are a number of our clients who do not get help from other services aimed at older people. To these people, our telephone calls were a lifeline during lockdown. We will continue with our Telephone Befriending Service. This service will be useful as we can use it to offer a temporary service to people on our waiting list therefore helping to alleviate loneliness and isolation.

Service User feedback as appropriate

We have had positive feedback on our phone calls and also our doorstep visits.

Recently, one of our users went into hospital and her daughter contacted us to let us know how much our telephone calls had meant to her mother. She was so thankful that we were able to help her feel less lonely during this difficult time and thanked us very much.

Another lady who received a delivery of a plant from us reported that she is really enjoying having something to look after and “it gives me something to smile about.”

“I am so grateful for all the phone calls.”