**BEFRIENDING REFERRAL FORM**

**Guidance Notes**

Medway Voluntary Action (MVA) are working in partnership with Carers FIRST (CF), wHoo Cares and other local voluntary & community sector (VCS) and statutory organisations to deliver and co-ordinate befriending support in Medway.

Befriending can be defined as: an emotional, supportive, mutual relationship in which companionship is provided on a regular basis by a volunteer. Befriending can take place face to face, over the phone or in a group setting.

Befriending is **not**: the carrying out of any personal care, housework, or other domestic tasks. Neither is it the provision of social care, health support or any caring responsibilities.

**Covid:** please note that during Covid restrictions no face to face befriending will be taking place in people’s homes. We are, however, offering group chats in parks etc under appropriate government restrictions.

Our data shows that 96% of our participants improve by at least one measure of health and wellbeing, so this is a very effective service.

Key Principles:

* **Progression** – Individuals accessing support will be encouraged and supported to nurture their own social connections within their local community, empowering them to move on and even help befriend other local people.
* **Partnership Working** –The programme connects and communicates with statutory, community and voluntary Partners and commissioned frontline staff (e.g. Wellbeing Navigators) to increase effectiveness and efficiencies in order to achieve shared outcomes.
* **Capitalise on Existing Assets –** Operating on a principle of accessing existing community and commissioned assets in Medway where possible.

There are five core elements to the programme:

1. A (virtual) befriending Contact point to support referral and evaluation processing **(Covering the whole of Medway)**
2. Telephone Befriending **(Covering the whole of Medway)**
3. Face to face Befriending Support **(Covering the whole of Medway)** *subject to restrictions. This may include gardening support.*
4. Group Befriending **(Linking to the wealth of existing community activities across Medway).** This also includes Park and Chat and walking groups run by MVA’s Befriending Programme. More activities may be added to this list.
5. Virtual group befriending and digital inclusion through our Bridging The Divide programme.

Some important things you should know before making a referral to us:

* The key criteria for being eligible for befriending support is that the person being referred is living in isolated circumstances or has little social contact. Other eligibility criteria applies to specific befriending support provided by MVA and its partners, these are:
	+ This is for individuals aged 18 years and over
	+ Priority *may* be given to those with a long term illness or disability
	+ This is targeted at those with limited/ no family or friends who visit them and/or who spend long periods of time alone.
	+ This service is **not** suitable for complex cases e.g. Advanced Dementia, difficult behaviours or Complex Mental Health needs
	+ Each referral will be considered on an individual basis and those not appropriate may be signposted to VCS & Wellbeing Navigators
	+ The aim is for this to be a short to medium term intervention that is person centred. There is no defined time limit set, however the ultimate aim is to discharge an individual from services once they are better connected within the community.
* All referrals for befriending support will be assessed by MVA’s “Friendly Team”, who will arrange or signpost to appropriate befriending support where appropriate. If it is not possible or suitable to arrange befriending support for an individual, MVA will contact the person who made the referral to explain any decisions made and suggest alternative solutions where possible.
* If you know someone who might benefit from the befriending support we offer, then the simple referral form can be completed by any of the following:
	+ A relative, friend, health & social care or any other support worker – in this situation, the person being referred must be aware of, and have agreed, to the referral; or
	+ An individual wishing to refer themselves to the befriending scheme
* The completed form should then be emailed to befriending@mva.org.uk

Should you require further information or help completing the referral or wish to discuss a case before referring, or have any comments/ observations/ suggestions please contact our “Friendly Team” on 01634 564939 or email at befriending@mva.org.uk.