

About Buckinghamshire Mind

We are Buckinghamshire Mind, the mental health charity. Our vision is that everyone with a mental health problem gets both support and respect.

We connect. We support. We influence. We deliver services in our local communities, in Buckinghamshire and East Berkshire. We promote wellbeing and recovery; we prevent mental ill health; we offer talking therapies and we provide support in times of crisis.

We are affiliated to national Mind and proud to play our part in the local Mind network. Together we are Mind. Open, caring, experienced, unstoppable, together.

We stand up for mental health. Our services change lives. For support. For respect. For you.

Buckinghamshire Mind is run by local people for local people and is responsible for its own funding and the services it provides. To donate or fundraise for us, please visit www.bucksmind.org.uk/support-us



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Buckinghamshire Mind is affiliated to national Mind and is quality assured under the Mind Quality Mark.

Buckinghamshire Mind (The Buckinghamshire Association For Mental Health) is a Registered Charity (No: 1103063) and a Company Limited by Guarantee (No: 5000185)



“My Befriender has provided company and opportunity. I can see myself through someone else’s eyes and can check my thinking and whether my perceptions are reasonable.”



A Guide to Befriending for people we support

Befriending Service

What is the Befriending Service and who uses this service?

The Befriending service is just one of a range of services offered by Buckinghamshire Mind. A successful, trusting Befriending partnership with a Bucks Mind volunteer can encourage you to feel more confident about forming relationships in the future. If you are over 18 and experiencing mental health difficulties, Befriending may be right for you.

What does a Befriender do?

A volunteer Befriender will either meet you for an hour or two or talk to you on the phone for 20-40 minutes, once a week for six months. What you and your Befriender do or talk about in that time depends on what you want from the partnership – so Befriending can be based around a specific activity, learning a particular skill or simply there to give you regular social contact. We have Befrienders who go walking together, knit together or just chat over a cup of tea.

What happens after I have been referred to the Befriending Service?

Once we have received your referral form, a Befriending support worker will contact you to complete a support plan. This helps us understand what you need from us and how we can support you. You can ask questions about the service and let us know of any concerns you may have. We will then try to find you a suitable volunteer and introduce you as soon as possible.

How long will I have to wait for a Befriender?

This depends on the volunteers we have available. We need to make sure that we find the right Befriender for you, so we look for someone who shares your interests and is available to call you or

meet at a time and a place to suit you. We are always looking to recruit new volunteers, so we can make good matches with people.

How will you protect my confidentiality?

Any information that you give us will be treated confidentially and will not normally be passed on to any outside agency without your permission. However, if we become aware of any risk to your own or anyone else's safety, then it might be necessary to break confidentiality.

Will the Befriender be able to understand my difficulties?

All our volunteers are given mental health awareness training, have a DBS check and have to provide two references. We only select volunteers who we have established are suitable for the role.

What happens when I meet my Befriender?

If you are meeting in person, we usually suggest a café or community venue that you are familiar with and your Befriending support worker will be there to introduce you to each other. If you are receiving phone calls, we will let you know when the Befriender will call so that you are prepared. After that, you'll be able to arrange when and where you want to meet or chat, and discuss what you want to do in your time together. We will try to contact you regularly to make sure your Befriending partnership is going well. If you are not happy, please contact us and we'll do what we can to help. If possible, we'll try and find you another volunteer.

What happens at the end of a partnership?

When you start a Befriending partnership, you will be aware that it will come to an end after six months. The hope will be to leave you in a more

positive place with new links to community activities and more options for support if you need them. About six to eight weeks before your last meeting, your volunteer and Befriending support worker will start to prepare you for the end of the partnership.

If I have a Befriender, what do I need to know?

Please tell us if you no longer want to see your Befriender so we can ensure you and the volunteer are OK.

Remember the partnership is for six months, so try to keep to the arrangements and use the time to your benefit.

Volunteer Befrienders are not counsellors, therapists or mental health professionals. They are not able to do anything they have not been trained for. However, they are there for you because they want to be and they will try to be consistent and reliable each week for the six month period, giving listening or signposting support.

It is very important that you are not affected by alcohol or non-prescribed drugs whenever you meet your Befriender.

Buckinghamshire Mind does not allow volunteers or staff to receive gifts or to pay your expenses, so if you are buying refreshments you should each pay for your own.

It is not acceptable for you or your Befriender to behave in ways that are racist or sexist or to show other forms of discrimination. If either of you should complain of inappropriate behaviour, Buckinghamshire Mind will take action.

Please do call us if you have any concerns at all.