

## **NATIONAL BEFRIENDING WEEK**

**1<sup>ST</sup> – 7<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER**

### **BEFRIENDING AND WIMBLEDON GUILD:**

Wimbledon Guild's befriending programme has been running for over ten years.

Some of our clients have little or no social contact and a visit from a Volunteer can make a very real difference to their life – and something to look forward to each week.

The service is so popular that we now have a waiting list of clients who have registered with us and are waiting for more befriending volunteers to come on board. So we need your help!

A regular visit of an hour or two a week can make a huge difference to someone's wellbeing. This can be taken on a weekday, weekend, morning, afternoon or evening. As it's based on mutual agreement between the volunteer and the client, times are often flexible.

For example, a number of our befriending volunteers work in Merton and arrange to visit their client after work once a week.

The visits can often develop into warm friendships and can bring peace of mind to relatives who don't live locally. Perhaps you could pick up some small shopping for them, post some letters or help with some paperwork.

### **HOW WIMBLEDON GUILD'S BEFREINDING PROGRAMME HELPED LILY**

At Wimbledon Guild we work with many organisations across Merton who are in contact with people who are in need and/or are socially isolated and lonely. One such body that comes across cases like this on a regular basis is the London Fire Brigade (LFB) and as part of their Community Health Strategy, they have set up a Fire, Safe and Well team that covers Merton. Through this project, Wimbledon Guild has built up a working relationship with this team and LFB referred Lily\* to our befriending team.

LFB's Fire, Safe and Well team met Lily during one of their fire safety visits. They realised that she needed some help. Lily is in her seventies, living on her own and becoming increasingly isolated due to progressively complex health conditions. The location of her house means that she has few neighbours to call upon. A relative is her main carer and the only person that comes to see Lily is her nephew – a visit that she looks forward to every week.

Working with Wimbledon Guild's befriending team, Lily was matched with a befriender, Sue\*. Sue started to visit Lily once a week, helping her with shopping and spending time talking about things Lily liked to do. Sue has been a volunteer with Wimbledon Guild for several years and is very familiar with the activities and classes that the Guild puts on each week. Over a few months Sue built up Lily's trust and confidence and suggested that during one of their befriending sessions they visit Guild House. Lily, accompanied by Sue, is now a regular visitor to one of the exercise classes and occasionally they both stay on to have lunch in Wimbledon Guild's HomeFood Cafe.

“It’s wonderful to see how far Lily has progressed” explains Sue. “She has also built up the confidence to talk to other people when we visit the café. The smile on her face when she has done her exercise class lights up the room and we have a great chat over lunch. We both look forward to our weekly catch-ups and it’s just wonderful to see the impact that just one visit a week can make.”

\*We respect the privacy of our customers and volunteers. Some names and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.

## TOP TIPS FOR BEFRIENDING

It can take time for a befriender to build up the confidence of a client, and there are many interesting ways to do so.

We have detailed some below, and sometimes a mutual love of a hobby or interest can add another dimension to your befriending.

- **MUSIC**

Are you into music? Some of our volunteers use music to engage with their client – like looking up old clips of their favourite artist on YouTube, putting together playlists, listening to old songs from days gone by.

- **REMINISCING USING ONLINE MAPS**

The virtual world is your oyster! Technology can transport us back in time. Look up where the client grew up, went on holiday, memorable places. Using an online map like street view on Google maps can take both you and the client on a virtual tour, looking at how places have or have not changed...travel down the road to see if the local shop or park is still there, talk about what they used to get up to.

- **CREATE A PHOTO ALBUM / PHOTO COLLAGE / SCRAPBOOK / MEMORY BOX**

We all have photos lying about waiting to be filed. The older we get, the more photos and memories we have! Helping to find, collate and put together the photos – and talking about them is a great way to initiate conversations, improve the memory and having a project that can be worked on each week is rewarding to both befriender and client.

- **ENJOY CREATIVE WRITING? YOU CAN HELP WRITE OR TAPE AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

Not something that everyone wants to do. But everybody has a story they want to tell. And just getting some of this information down on paper or recorded is a great way to tell a story.

- **ARE YOU UP-TO-DATE WITH TODAY’S NEWS?**

Something as simple as bringing a magazine or newspaper to read together and discuss can make a difference...and everyone loves to put the world to rights, don’t they?!

- **HAVE SOME FUN – TELL EACH OTHER JOKES, TAKE ALONG A JOKE BOOK TO KEEP IT GOING**  
'Why did the chicken cross the road? To get to the other side! '...OK, we won't give up the day job.... But having a laugh and making each other smile goes a long way in befriending!
- **DO YOU PLAY A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT?**  
You can offer to play a private concert for them or try to teach simple tunes. Teach to read music, or just play some music.
- **GREEN FINGERS?**  
Plant and look after an indoor window sill garden together. Plant some seeds or bulbs and help to look after them and watch them grow, just like your befriending!
- **ENJOY GAMES, CARDS OR QUIZZES?**  
Play word games, board games, create quizzes and have a prize. Gets the conversation going as well as the grey matter!
- **GO FOR A WALK ....**'Round the block' taking time to stop and look around and point out anything new or interesting. Or pop out to a local park, find a bench and watch the world go by.
- **START A COLLECTION OR HOBBY THAT YOU BOTH ENJOY** It can be anything, from funny newspaper stories, to interesting objects found whilst you are out-and-about together.
- **KEEP A TRACK OF FAVOURITE SPORTS / PASTIMES / SPORT TEAMS** Many people have a favourite sport or hobby that they used to, or still follow. Find out what that is and start to keep a track of what is happening around that pastime.
- **TALK ABOUT LOCAL LANDMARKS AND WHO THEY COMMUNITY HAS CHANGED** You can search through internet for old photos of the local area and discuss how it's changed. Or go for a walk or drive to see them.
- **DESIGN AND MAKE OCCASION CARDS FOR CHRISTMAS, EASTER ETC** Make cards together for Christmas, Easter or birthdays and anniversaries.
- **TALK ABOUT, RECITE OR PLAY SONGS AND RHYMES FROM CHILDHOOD**  
'London Bridge is falling down, falling down, falling down. London Bridge is falling down, falling down, falling down. My fair lady.' Once you start, you won't be able to stop!

*If you would like to be a befriender and want more information or sign up to our Befriending Programme contact:*

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