



# Reaching Out Befriending Programme



in association with



## Everyone needs a hand to hold onto...

As a social species, we humans require safe, secure social surroundings in order to survive and thrive. Relative to non-lonely people, lonely individuals see the social world as a more threatening place, expect more negative social interactions, and remember more negative social information. Negative social expectations tend to generate behaviours from others that confirm the lonely persons' expectations, thereby setting in motion a chronic, self-fulfilling prophecy in which lonely people actively distance themselves from would-be social partners. This self-reinforcing loneliness loop is accompanied by feelings of hostility, stress, pessimism, anxiety, and low self-esteem, and can be incredibly hard to break out of.<sup>1</sup>

**Social isolation and loneliness is a serious health risk**, and there is an extensive body of research supporting the fact that those without adequate social interaction over an extended period suffer a range of physiological and psychological health issues, with some studies going as far as stating that such individuals are twice as likely to die prematurely<sup>2</sup>. The increased mortality risk is comparable to that from smoking.



And loneliness is about twice as dangerous as obesity. Social isolation impairs immune function and boosts inflammation, which can lead to arthritis, type II diabetes, and heart disease<sup>3</sup>. In effect, loneliness is breaking our hearts, but as a culture we rarely talk about it.



In the social media age, where people are supposedly more 'connected' than ever, it is notable that study after study highlights a sense of isolation and loneliness affecting people of all ages and from all walks of life.

*A recent evaluation of a befriending service for older people showed “many reported feeling more content with life and several said they no longer suffered as badly with depression... which in turn had a positive on effect their physical health... Another important finding...was that the service helped older people to gain confidence and thereby re-engage with the community...”*

Cattan, Kime & Bagnall (2011)<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Heinrich LM, Gullone E. The clinical significance of loneliness: A literature review. *Clinical Psychology Review*

<sup>2</sup> Holt-Lunstad J, Smith TB, Layton JB (2010) *Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-analytic Review*.

<sup>3</sup> Jaremka, LM., Fagundes, C. P., Glaser, R., Bennett J. M., Malarkey, W. B., & Kiecolt-Glaser, J. K. (2013). Loneliness predicts pain, depression, and fatigue: Understanding the role of immune dysregulation. *Psychoneuroendocrinology*

<sup>4</sup> Cattan, Mima, Kime, Nicola and Bagnall, Anne-Marie (2011) 'The Use of Befriending in Low Level Support for Socially Isolated Older People' *Health and Social Care in the Community* 19 (2) pp. 198-206

## So what is this “Befriending”?

Befriending is a **supportive relationship** offered to vulnerable people who find living in their community difficult. It is for those lonely and isolated individuals who have become ‘stuck’ in the self-reinforcing loneliness loop described earlier, and lack the skills, self-esteem and even motivation to break out of this by themselves. Befriending **makes a**



*“The funniest joke in the world is not funny if you have nobody to tell it to. [With befriending]...you can share with somebody and it gives you an incentive again to get up and do something rather than staying at home”*

Befriender

**real difference** to people who find themselves struggling, and find that they need the dedicated support of a volunteer befriender to help them navigate their way. It covers **a range of supportive and purposeful activities** involving the development of a relationship in which the befriender, who is not family or a close

friend, gives time to support and encourage another.

A befriending relationship might involve being visited at home, going for a coffee and chat, a walk, watching a film in the cinema - anything both parties enjoy that will not only provide companionship but also help to boost the self-confidence of the person seeking support. There is a growing body of evidence based research<sup>5</sup> highlighting the positive tangible benefits of befriending for all those involved.

## QE5’s Reaching Out Programme

The Befriending Programme developed by QE5 Ltd has been in place since 2006, and we are proud to say that there are hundreds of individuals across Northern Ireland currently providing high quality befriending support to vulnerable and socially isolated individuals. It has been subject to rigorous evaluation with individuals affected by

*“You can’t put it into words. It’s just knowing that there’s somebody there, especially when you live on your own. It’s just priceless....”*

Befriender



trauma, and has consistently been found as a highly effective and rewarding service for all involved.

QE5 originally developed the Reaching Out programme in response to research undertaken by ourselves into those caring for victims and survivors of the Northern Ireland conflict. What struck us first in this

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/briefings> and <http://www.mandbf.org/policy-and-evidence/research-and-project-evaluation-directory>

research was that it was the first time this issue had been considered in over thirty years of conflict. Then, we were blindsided by the level of post-traumatic stress indicated by those affected by the conflict, and the impact that this was having on their families, who often ended up in the role of carer. There were alarming levels of stress, burnout and emotional exhaustion reported by carers, and overwhelming levels of isolation by victims/survivors of trauma.

Befriending was a way of addressing this by tapping into available voluntary resources within communities and channelling these to make a real and tangible difference.

*“(It) gives me great pleasure in making other people smile and give some company to those who have no family and support...a few hours can make a big difference to someone’s life.”*

Volunteer Befriender

## *Befriender Training*

Accredited with the Institute of Leadership and Management, the Reaching Out Befriending training programme covers the skills, knowledge and values required to be an effective Befriender. The comprehensive four day training programme develops the existing skills, attitudes and beliefs of volunteers in areas including:

- *Becoming a Befriender –*
  - Exploring Personal Motivations
  - Identifying Personal Hopes & Fears
  - What is Befriending?
  - Qualities needed in a Befriender
  - The Befriending Role
  - The Befriending Triangle
  
- *Building Relationships –*
  - Understanding “Friendship”
  - Friendship within the Befriender Role
  - How do Relationships Begin and Develop?
  - Model of a Helping Relationship
  
- *Communication & Listening –*
  - Verbal and Non-verbal Communication
  - Active Listening & Barriers to Listening
  - Communication Skills within the Helping Relationship
  
- *Befriending & Confidentiality –*
  - Understanding Boundaries
  - Confidentiality within Helping Relationships
  - What’s “OK”

- Exploring Personal Boundaries
- *Attitudes & Values –*
  - Understanding Discrimination and Stereotyping
  - Effects of Labelling on Vulnerable Individuals
  - Personal Values – Explicit & Implicit
- *Endings –*
  - Types of Endings
  - Links between Endings & Loss
  - Recognising Natural Endings in the Befriending Relationship
  - Importance of Managing Endings Appropriately
- *Support for the Befriender –*
  - Why Support is Vital
  - Barriers to Helpers Asking for Help
  - Support within the Befriender Project
- *Delivering a Professional Befriender Service –*
  - Policies and Best Practice Guidelines in a range of areas including Health & Safety (including Lone Working), Confidentiality and Data Protection, Complaints/Grievances, etc

The programme addresses complex issues, and tackles a range of issues affecting those engaging with befriending support, and draws on QE5's extensive experience in developing and delivering Befriender Projects across Northern Ireland. However, the programme is also designed in such a way that it challenges and developed participants in a way that is also highly enjoyable, and continually recognises and highlights the valuable contribution that befriending offers within communities.

*"It offers a good grounding to those new to befriending and can challenge your pre-conceived knowledge...delivered by a trainer with her finger very much on the pulse of befriending..."*  
Reaching Out Befriender

## *Befriender Co-ordinator Training*

Further, more specialised training is available to **Befriending Co-ordinators** – those who assume responsibility for developing and operating projects and provide direct supervision and support to volunteer Befrienders. This is an additional two day course which follows from the original Befriender training programme, and looks in depth at the

*"[QE5's trainer] was excellent, very easy to interact with and clear and easy to understand"*  
Reaching Out Befriender

implementation, operation and management of volunteer befriending to ensure a transparent, consistent and accountable service. This training is also accredited.

As a general guide, QE5 would recommend that one Co-ordinator is trained for every ten individuals accessing the service for support.

## Progression Routes

QE5's Reaching Out Programme for Befriending and Befriending Co-ordinators is currently accredited with the Institute for Leadership and Management (ILM) – the UK's largest management body, and part of the City & Guilds Group.

ILM share QE5's passion for good leadership and management, and their power to transform individual and organisational performance. Leadership has been defined as “a process of social influence” towards an identified goal<sup>6</sup> by making best use of a range of ethical and appropriate skills, knowledge and values. This is how we see our trained befrienders – as leaders and inspirational forces within their communities.

*“They provide a lifeline for me. I used to just stay in bed most days but now I get up and dressed. I take more interest in daily life...I now get out of the house and meet other people”*

Befriender

Whilst we are conscious that the training we provide has often been more than adequate in delivery of skilled befriending services - and has frequently exceeded the expectations of trainees and those developing services – we are currently in the process of developing

progression routes for our trained Befrienders and Co-ordinators in the areas of coaching, mentoring and advocacy. We feel that this will add even further value to such a valuable and rewarding service.



<sup>6</sup> Chemers M. (1997) *An integrative theory of leadership*.

## Developing & Managing a Befriending Service

Over the last eight years, QE5 has developed what we consider to be a model of best practice in delivering high quality, professional and accountable befriending services to vulnerable individuals across Northern Ireland.

*Research highlights the importance of the fact that befrienders are meeting the individual voluntarily – it can be one of the few times someone sees them without being paid to be there*

Befriending Networks, Scotland

Our programme successfully incorporates the talents and skills of our uniquely individual volunteers within a framework that is professional, accountable and that protects them and the individuals they support.

Developed to the highest standards, our programme meets the current standards requirements set down within Northern Ireland by the Commission for Victims and Survivors Minimum Practice Framework for services provided within the non-statutory sector<sup>7</sup>.

In addition, our programme meets, and we believe exceeds, national quality standards specifically designed for mentoring and befriending projects within the UK<sup>8</sup> (as illustrated, right).

**The 12 Elements of the Approved Provider Standard (APS):**

- Element 1:** The project or service has a clear rationale and purpose
- Element 2:** Effective organisational and management structures in place
- Element 3:** The competence of staff involved in the project is developed and maintained
- Element 4:** There is a clear process for the identification and referral of service users
- Element 5:** Service users are fully briefed about the project or service
- Element 6:** Rigorous recruitment and selection process for volunteers
- Element 7:** Safeguarding the involvement of participants in the project
- Element 8:** Adequate preparation and training is in place for volunteers
- Element 9:** Process in place for matching service users with mentors/befrienders
- Element 10:** Supervision and support provided for mentors/befrienders
- Element 11:** Monitoring of relationships
- Element 12:** Evaluation of project effectiveness

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.cvsni.org/images/policy-research/pubs/MPF-for-Services-Oct-2011.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.mandbf.org/quality-standard>

## Why QE5 Ltd?

QE5 has been in operation since January 2002, and we have built our reputation on providing the highest level of service to our clients in public, private, and community and voluntary sectors. The name QE5 is based on six core principles that underpin all of our work:

### *Quality, Excellence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Economy & Equality.*

These are not just marketing terms, but the foundation of every single contract we undertake with our clients. In recognition of this, our Managing Director, Eileen McGlone, was awarded a Fellowship with the Institute of Leadership and Management in 2013. This Fellowship Award is bestowed upon individuals who have consistently displayed outstanding leadership and management throughout their career. Recipients of this fellowship have significantly impacted and improved the wellbeing of those under their charge and wider society and, based upon their astute leadership, would have gained the professional respect and admiration of their peers both locally and internationally.

Every member of our team has a strong academic and career background which is used to optimum effect for the benefit of our clients. Collectively, we have qualifications ranging up to the level of Masters degree in:

- Health and Social Care Management
- Social Research
- Nursing
- Social Work
- Mental Health
- Counselling
- Criminal Justice
- Neuro Linguistic Programming
- Motivational Interviewing
- Mediation & Conflict Resolution
- Business Management
- Accountancy

We are fully proficient in leadership, management and governance, and in working to the highest ethical standards. Many of our team are registered with professional organisations such as the Northern Ireland Social Care Council and Royal College of Nursing.

We mentioned previously our extensive work with victims and survivors of the Northern Ireland conflict, and it is through this that our appreciation of the need for, and benefits of, befriending has been established. However, our track record spans a range and breadth of our services across all sectors, as evidenced in a body of work (much of it published) including:

- Perceptions of Ageism in Health and Social Services in Ireland for the National Council for Ageing and Older People;
- Development of Anti-Ageism campaign material for the Equality Authority;
- Evaluation of the multi-million euro Health Inequalities Fund for the Health Service Executive;
- Exploration of issues around Disability and Sexual Orientation for the National Disability Authority;
- Needs Analysis of the Homeless Population in Limerick;
- Evaluation of the Empowerment Programme delivered by MS Ireland;
- Accommodation Strategy for the Traveller Community on behalf of Longford County Council;
- Evaluation and development of Teen Parent Programmes;
- Work for the Department of Justice & Equality including Evaluation of Probation Programmes and Assessment of the Needs of Resettled Refugees.

In addition to this, we have accumulated an extensive back catalogue in the areas of strategic and business planning, bespoke training and development programmes, and organisational support to improve areas including efficiency and governance.



QE5 Ltd is a Northern Ireland based management consultancy, trading since January 2002, specialising in social-based research and development consultancy, and drawing on the vast knowledge and experience of its staff in public sector management, the health service, community and voluntary development, and the private sector. The name QE5 stands for Quality, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Economy, Equality and Excellence – principles we strive to exceed in every contract we undertake.

Our uniqueness lies in our track record of solid and effective delivery, helping our clients to achieve a sharper appreciation of the changing environment in which they operate, courses of action open to them, and the criteria which will allow them to make their choices.

We have a flair for innovative approaches to difficult issues, and for achieving a high degree of consensus among ostensibly conflicting perspectives. This is in large part due to our focus on ensuring that issues and differing viewpoints are dealt with sensitively and constructively, with an appreciation of organisational cultures and stakeholder interests. We work comfortably with clients in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

For further information/clarification on anything contained within this document, or QE5 Ltd itself, please feel free to contact us at any of the contact points listed as follows:

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