



BEFRIENDING at CHANGES

Volunteer with Changes to be a part of something great!



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About Us

Who are we?

Changes is a community health project based in East Lothian, here to help achieve and maintain positive mental health and wellbeing.

OUR VISION

Our vision is that everyone in East Lothian enjoys positive mental health and wellbeing

OUR VALUES

Compassion,
Welcoming and
Community – we live
and breathe these
values!

OUR MISSION

Changes has grown from within the community to enable people to achieve and maintain good mental health and wellbeing

What do we offer?

At Changes we offer a wide range of wellbeing services including but not limited to:

- One-to-one therapy
- Support groups and courses
- Training

- Volunteer opportunities

We aim to help with varying challenges such as:

- Stress
- Low mood
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Negative thinking

Offering a plethora of wellbeing activities means individuals and communities of East Lothian can find their therapeutic outlet through:

- Cycling
- Tai chi
- Mental health swims
- Wellbeing walks
- And more!

Our Befriending Services

What is befriending?

Befriending at its core is all about warmth, empathy, and companionship. The aim with befriending is to support individuals suffering from mild to moderate stressors, such as loneliness, and aid their mental health and wellbeing by pairing them with a befriender.


By doing so both people can engage in mutual hobbies and interests within the community. Befriending is not a form of counselling or therapy but is a partnership that can generate positive change into the daily routines of individuals.

Befriending with us

Our befriending service 'Well Connected' aims to target isolation loneliness and lack of social connections in individuals aged 18+ residing in East Lothian. Since the pandemic there has been a significant rise in social anxieties, worries and loneliness across all ages.

Our objective therefore is to pair a volunteer with a befriender for one-to-one befriending. Whether this be in person face-to-face, through Zoom or telephone as to accommodate for the comfort and ease for both individuals.

From going on walks, to getting a coffee, to chatting for an hour on the phone: our befriending services aim to cater the wider community to make it easier to implement positive changes on people's mental health.



We offer face-to-face, online and telephone befriending!

Why Changes?

Changes has been established as a fundamental mental health and wellbeing service in East Lothian for 25 years. the befriending project 'Well Connected' offers new and innovative approaches to helping and supporting our community. We have worked with various organisations including the NHS, Volunteer East Lothian, and Health in Mind so can provide a supportive and welcoming environment during and after your time volunteering with us.

Befriending checklist

We accept volunteers of all ages, experiences, cultural backgrounds, and genders. We have put together a general checklist to see if you'll be a good fit as a befriender. Some of the qualities you have should include:

- Warmth
- Empathy
- Good communication
- Passion for positive mental health
- Respect and value for community
- Good time management
- Comfortable with lone working
- Sensitivity
- Reliability
- Awareness of prevailing mental health issues

The Volunteer


Your role

- As a volunteer you will build a compassionate and trusting relationship with your matched befriender suffering from loneliness, isolation, and/or a lack of social connections within East Lothian.
- Being matched based on hobbies and interests as well as location means you will find it easy and natural taking on this befriending role without having to travel far or push you out of your comfort zone.
- You are not there to meet all the befriender's needs. Boundaries and understanding your own limits of what you can provide is important.

What to expect

A befriending visit will usually look as follows:

- Last one hour per week,
- At a pre-planned location/venue
- Pre-arranged video call
- Pre-arranged telephone call
- Mutually agreed time scale



We match based on hobbies and interests, so you'll get along great!

You and your matched befriender will have the time to have a friendly and compassionate chat while engaging in the community, with the hopes of relieving the befriender's feelings of isolation and loneliness.

During your time together you will:

- Build a strong rapport and relationship
- Implement positive change
- Create a trusting and supportive connection
- Engage in like-minded interests and hobbies
- Have fun!

The Process

Becoming a volunteer means you will receive relevant and specific training to accommodate to your role as a befriender and be matched with a befriender:



How we support you

During your time with Changes, you will have continuous support from the befriending coordinator, including check in supervisions, contact details for your direct supervisor and check ins on your own mental health. Your coordinator will hold regular group sessions for you and your peers to attend, whether that be for questions/queries, group support or general socialising.

Any concerns can be discussed at any time over the phone or an arranged face-to-face meeting. We love embracing the community and as a volunteer you are more than welcome to participate in other activities we hold while volunteering as a befriender.

Policies and Procedures

As an overview, we have listed a few key bits of information for you to understand about the befriending role and policies at Changes.

Limits and Boundaries


As a befriender, you will be partnered with individuals who may be struggling with their mental health. Hence it is important to set boundaries so that you as a volunteer do not feel overwhelmed.

You are not a GP, therapist or carer so should not take on these roles. Understand your own limits of what you feel comfortable taking on while building a strong companionship and engaging in fun community activities as a volunteer.

In the initial meeting with your matched befriender you will mutually attempt to set limits as to where you will meet, how long for and best ways of communication.

Lone working

Being matched with someone from the community means you will be taking on a 'lone working' role so we would ensure you feel safe and comfortable with this. This could be over the phone / in person / online lone working. You will never be asked to work at a venue you feel unsafe or uncomfortable in.



Let's make sure you
feel safe and
comfortable
volunteering with us

Health and Safety

While volunteering as a befriender you will be covered by Changes Health and Safety policy. It is still important to take responsibility to ensure you do everything possible to avoid injury to yourself and others if matched and going out into the public.

FAQs

How do I apply to volunteer?

Contact the befriending coordinator or direct to the Changes office and you will be given an application form to apply. There may be a period of waiting but your details will be added to our database, and you will then be contacted by the befriending coordinator.

Why get involved?

Making a difference in someone's life can be greatly rewarding – and that journey begins by volunteering. By volunteering your time, your skills and confidence grow immensely as your role can positively impact an individual's mental health and wellbeing.

What if I am ill and cannot attend?

You should contact your supervisor and inform them of any absence during your time as a befriender.

Can I participate in other activities with Changes?

We welcome anyone and everyone to participate in other courses and wellbeing activities Changes have to offer. If you are interested feel free to contact us directly using the details provided below, and/or ask your supervisor during your period of volunteering.

For any other questions or general queries feel free to contact us:

Changes office: info@changeschp.org.uk / 0131 653 3977

Befriending Coordinator: zanjbeel@changeschp.org.uk / 07548740741