

TWO'S COMPANY TELEPHONE BEFRIENDING



During these unprecedented times we believe that the Church has a unique opportunity to respond to the needs of many who find themselves isolated from contact with the outside world.

Linking Lives UK is a national Christian charity that has built many years of experience in equipping local churches to respond to the needs of loneliness and social isolation.

Since 2012 we have facilitated this through establishing face to face befriending projects in over 30 towns and villages across the country. However, due to the current Covid-19 pandemic it has been necessary to adapt to social isolation in a different way. We have therefore developed 'Two's Company', a telephone befriending service, to offer to the Church as a way of addressing the current vast need.



We believe the Church is in a unique position to respond to those needing regular company by telephone at this time. Many churches have a team of trusted and vetted volunteers from a variety of ministries who, due to the current circumstances, are unable to serve in their usual capacity but will still have a desire to help others. 'Two's Company' seeks to mobilise volunteers to become an answer and lifeline to many who will be experiencing loneliness. Linking Lives UK provides the framework for this process which local churches can take and use to fit their own context.

Psalm 61:5-6 highlights God's concern for those for whom loneliness is a daily reality

'A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families.'

This document provides a summary of how 'Two's Company' operates within a local church context, including the key steps required to commence this in your community.

APPOINT A COORDINATOR

Each local project will require a nominated coordinator to look after the day to day running. This will involve raising the profile of the project locally through social media, email and engaging with local organisations. Other key aspects of the role include receiving referrals by telephone from representatives of those requesting calls; recruiting and training volunteers; matching volunteers to suitable individuals; supporting volunteers and others involved in the project. All of this can be done remotely either by telephone or video conference calls and we have developed a process to enable this to take place effectively and safely.

REFERRALS SYSTEM

Referrals of those requesting a regular call would be received from existing known local contacts within the community. This could include GP's surgeries, social workers, charities or emergency Covid-19 hubs. A Freephone number would be created specifically for this project, and calls diverted to the coordinator.

VOLUNTEERS

For speed and efficiency at this time, we recommend using suitable volunteers already known to and vetted by the church according to their Safeguarding Policy. This will enable to whole process to begin quickly and safely.

The qualities of a befriending volunteer should include:

- ✓ Being an active listener
- ✓ Having a warm, friendly and empathetic character
- ✓ The ability to relate to people of different ages, personalities and backgrounds
- ✓ Being person centred
- ✓ Having enthusiasm, motivation and professionalism

TRAINING

Linking Lives UK will run regular training for Coordinators through video conference calls. This training can then be used by the local coordinator to train local volunteers (again, by video conference call) and will last for approximately 90 minutes.

Topics covered include:

- ✓ Active listening in the context of phone conversations
- ✓ Safeguarding
- ✓ Boundaries
- ✓ Recording and monitoring
- ✓ Signposting

PHONE CALLS

We recommend calls to last around 30 minutes, but it may be that some people will benefit from shorter, more frequent phone calls. Calls will be from the volunteer's own phone with their number screened from view.

Calls will check on each individual's wellbeing and will encourage them to keep in touch with people over the phone or digitally if they can. If both parties are happy with the match, this will continue, initially, for 4-6 months. If not, the Coordinator should be informed and will then find an alternative match. A brief record of each conversation is kept, for safeguarding and monitoring purposes.

SIGNPOSTING

We recommend being aware of local new or existing services dealing with food provisions or picking up medication etc. This will ensure that telephone befrienders are able to focus specifically on their role in providing crucial company and friendship.

Although set up to be an initial response to the Covid-19 crisis, we expect Two's Company to become a strategic way in which churches can continue to engage with socially isolated people within their communities in the longer term. It could also be coupled with home visiting opportunities in future, once restrictions are lifted.



**IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS HAVING
READ THIS DOCUMENT, PLEASE CONTACT
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