



Well Connected

Volunteer Befriending in East Lothian

Befriend with Changes and be a part of something special!



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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:

- Tai chi
- Ukulele
- 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 who may be struggling 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, lack of social connections, and low mental health in individuals aged 16+ 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 support for up to 6 months. Whether this be in person face-to-face, through video calls, 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 since 1996. 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
- Confident communication
- Passion for positive mental health
- Respect and value for community
- Good time management
- Comfortable with lone working
- Sensitivity
- Reliable and punctual
- Awareness of prevailing mental health issues
- Able to travel within East Lothian (if considering face-to-face)

Volunteering


Your role

- As a befriending volunteer you will build a compassionate and trusting relationship with your matched befriender.
- 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.
- Minimum commitment of 6 months.

What to expect

A befriending meetup will usually look as follows:

- Last one hour per week
- Pre-planned location/venue
- Pre-arranged video call
- Pre-arranged telephone call
- Mutually agreed time



We match based
on hobbies and
interests

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
- Potentially have sensitive conversations

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:

1. Apply as a volunteer and have an informal interview with the coordinator

2. Induction and training begin with role specific tips and resources provided

3. Matched with a befriender based on hobbies, interests, and location

4. First meetup is with the coordinator and then befriending partnership begins (up to 6 months)

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 and supervision, 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.

Emergency support

If you need support during the befriending meetup you should contact your befriending coordinator, and if they are unavailable then call the Changes office. You will receive relevant contact details from staff as well as emergency contacts. A check-in and out text is required to ensure we keep you safe while volunteering.

Policies and Procedures

As an overview, we have listed a few key pieces of information for you to understand the befriending policies and procedures at Changes. The full list of policies and procedures are available on request.

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.

You and your befriender sign befriending agreements too, ensuring you both understand the limits of your role and set boundaries.

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 volunteer 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 befriend?

After your application is received, you will have your induction and befriending training and then be matched. You can be matched multiple times depending on how long you are partnered with participants. We cover in depth practice scenarios and sensitivity training during the befriending training.

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. We have helped volunteers gain more experience within the mental health field which has sometimes led to new job opportunities too!

What if I am ill and cannot attend?

You should contact your coordinator and inform them of any absence during your time as a befriender. We value your time and understand that illnesses and pre-planned events can stop you from befriending from time to time. Taking holidays and breaks is 100% okay too!

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.

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

Changes office: info@changeseastlothian.org | 0131 653 3977

Befriending Coordinator: zanjbeel@changeseastlothian.org | 07548740741