



Aberdeen City Befriending

Evaluating the outcomes



"It is fine to know that someone nice is coming. Things feel like they are being sorted out, I have things in my life to look forward to. Everything is brighter."

Working in partnership to improve the lives of older people:



Aberdeen City Befriending Service Evaluating the outcomes

1. Terms of reference

Evaluate the outcomes of the Aberdeen City Befriending Service following 12 months of the service.

2. Key points

- 96 older and vulnerable people have been befriended in the 12 months that the service has been available with a further 81 referrals waiting to be matched with a volunteer or going through the initial referral process.
- Responding to a survey,
 - People reported feeling more positive, more able to make decisions about their daily life and feeling more in control of life after receiving the service,
 - 73% of people rated their ability to take part in activities higher after receiving the service than before,
 - 54% reported that they left their home more often,
 - 68% reported that they spoke to family and friends more often,
 - 77% reported more social outings,
 - 48% reported fewer contacts with healthcare professionals
- 73 volunteers have given 2,711 hours of their time to help older and vulnerable people feel less lonely and isolated.

3. Introduction

The Aberdeen City befriending service was launched at the end of January 2013 and accepted its first referrals in the February. The service is provided by a partnership of five local charities working together to help older and vulnerable people with practical and emotional support to tackle isolation and loneliness. The project is facilitated by ACVO (Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations) and funded by the Aberdeen City's Reshaping Care for Older People Change Fund.

The befriending service is available to people over the age of 55 who may be experiencing isolation as a result of ill health, bereavement or geographical distance from families. Referrals can be made by anyone who feels that they or a member of the family may benefit from the service or alternatively referrals can be made through a GP, a voluntary sector agency or community service. The Befrienders are trained volunteers who give their time to help and support others.

Isolation and loneliness is linked to health risks in older people and can lead to depression. Social contact, engaging in activities and being part of the local community can improve a person's health and well-being and therefore their quality of life. Improved well-being can help people to retain their independence and enable them to remain in their own homes for longer.

The service provided is based on the needs of the individual, whether that is having someone to talk to, being able to get out of the house or building up confidence to become more socially active.

The objectives of the service are to provide:

- a regular visit or telephone call for the person receiving the service
- support to establish other social contacts
- help to build confidence in order to join a club or network
- assistance in locating local facilities and accessing services

4. Partnership working

The service is offered by a partnership of 5 organisations:

- British Red Cross
- Sue Ryder
- Bethany Christian Trust
- The Living Well Project
- Parish Nursing

Each partner organisation covers a specific geographical area within Aberdeen however, partners will work together as required to meet individual needs.

There are some differences between the services offered by each partner.

4.1 British Red Cross – this service aims to support older people who may feel socially isolated due to living alone with no known support networks.

British Red Cross support people by:

- providing a regular visit from a volunteer and an opportunity to share experiences about times past, present and future
- supporting an older person who may feel socially isolated
- providing companionship
- developing a relationship of trust and understanding with their befriender
- assisting with shopping, collecting prescriptions etc
- enabling trips out with the befriender
- attending coffee mornings
- working with other organisations for wider socialising opportunities

For older people who may have mobility issues, a wheelchair can be provided to help them get around. Also the service can provide relaxation techniques such as hand, arm and shoulder massages to help reduce anxiety.

4.2 Sue Ryder – this service provides one-to-one befriending for older people over the age of 55 on a time limited basis of 10 weeks. It offers up to a maximum of two hours support in any one week. A follow up telephone befriending service is offered for as long as necessary. If at the end of the 10 weeks, individuals are still in need of one-to-one support, they will continue to be supported.

Sue Ryder befrienders:

- provide emotional and practical support through home visits
- facilitate and accompany individuals to activities in the local community
- go out for a coffee, walk, to the shops or to pick up prescriptions
- accompany individuals to appointments (by prior arrangement)
- provide telephone contact

Respite for carers can be provided by sitting with a person while their carer has a break.

4.3 Bethany Christian Trust – this service is a team befriending service to help older people enjoy health and quality of life, encouraging them to get active and build new friendships to help combat isolation and loneliness. Practical support from volunteers helps isolated or vulnerable people to engage with their communities by participating in social events and building positive, local relationships.

Bethany volunteers support individuals to:

- join local groups
- take part in activities
- become more active
- build new relationships

4.4 The Living Well Project - this service is open to anyone aged 60 and over and considered to be socially isolated. It has been running in the Bucksburn/Newhills area since early 2011.

Trained volunteers:

- visit weekly or fortnightly
- accompany the individual on short outings
- build new relationships
- help the individual to access or return to an interest group
- sit with someone to allow a carer to have a break

Through the visits the service aims to:

- work with the individual in an understanding and sympathetic way
- take account of the individual's interests
- provide emotional support
- direct the individual to other services that might benefit them

4.5 Parish Nursing – this service is for people aged over 55 years.

The service will:

- provide a minimum of one hour personal contact each fortnight
- help individuals to maintain hobbies and interests e.g. local community groups
- provide short term practical support e.g. with shopping and cleaning
- accompany individuals to appointments
- provide individuals with information on who to contact for help with health and diet, specialist services and health checks

It also provides:

- pastoral care to the local community
- lunch club for the over 55's
- health screening courses

5. Activity

5.1 Referral process

Once a person is referred to the befriending partnership either by themselves, a family member or by a professional their contact details are passed to the local befriending network. Their individual needs and requirements are discussed with them so that they can be matched with a trained volunteer befriender. Whether people receive contact face to face or by phone will depend on their individual needs as will the frequency of contact.

In some cases people have been referred by a concerned professional or family member who felt they were experiencing isolation, however, when the person was contacted they didn't feel that they needed a befriending service and so declined. In response to this the process was changed to ensure that referrals are made with the knowledge of the potential recipient.

5.2 Referrals to the services

In the first 12 months of the service there were **239** referrals. Some people declined the service (46) as they didn't feel they needed it and some were referred inappropriately (16) as their needs would not have been met by befriending. These people were subsequently signposted elsewhere.

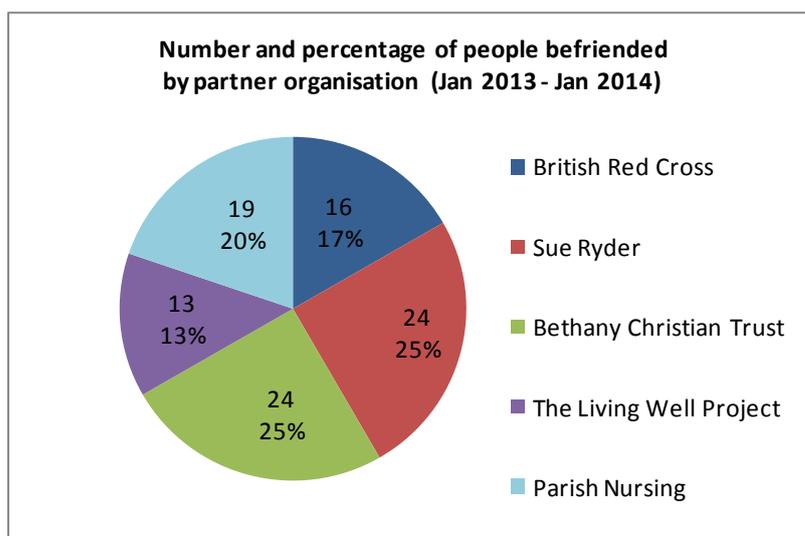
Of the remaining **177 referrals**:

- **96** people have received the service or are currently being befriended
- **25** people are on the waiting list currently being matched with a volunteer
- A further **56** people are either going through the initial referral process or are 'on hold' due to their circumstances having changed but will continue the service when appropriate.

The reasons for referral were loneliness (57% of people), feeling isolated (36%), bereavement (2%) and being housebound (5%). Some people are referred because they are in need of short-term support whilst recovering from illness or surgery when they may be less mobile.

"Recovering from hip surgery, feel very alone. Would like company until I can get out of the house again."

5.2.1 People befriended by partner organisation



5.3 Profile of service users

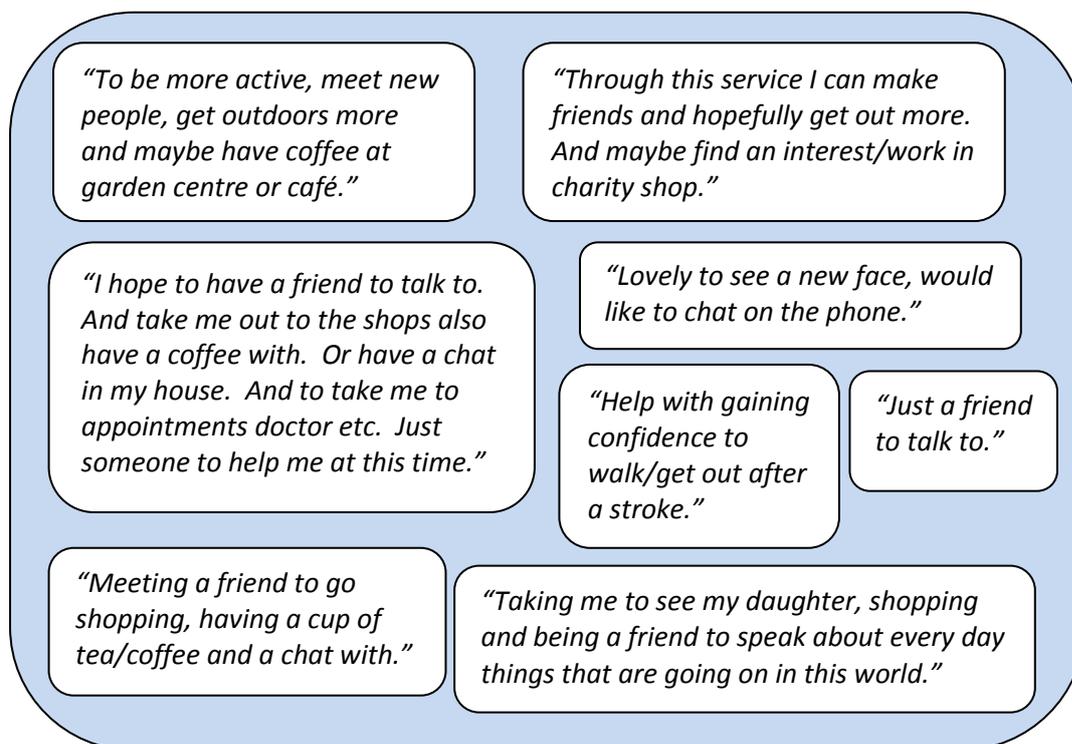
The service is available to people aged over 55, however, the majority of people being befriended are much older. Of those being befriended:

- Ages range from 58 to 94 years
- 62% are aged 80 and over
- 24% are male, 76% are female

5.4 Small Things – Big Difference

Before being befriended people were asked what they hoped the service would help them with. What people felt would make a big difference to them were small things like having someone to chat to, going to the shops, having a coffee or going to the garden centre. Things that most people take for granted.

What people said..



These things can make a big difference to a person's well-being and therefore their quality of life even if it is just an hour or two once a week or fortnight.

As one volunteer befriender says, *"I can see the difference a chat can make to their lives."*

5.4.1 What happens at the visits

Visits are tailored to the needs of the individual but include outings, walks, chatting, doing crafts, having a coffee, going out for lunch, shopping and taking people to dentist and hospital appointments.



Meeting individual needs is demonstrated by one volunteer who is befriending a person mostly housebound. By being inventive the befriended person was able to see Aberdeen from her own home.

"It is easy to see how much my beneficiary enjoys the visit, and as she is mostly house bound I used my Ipad to give her a virtual tour of Aberdeen one week. It was a joy to see her so interested in not only the image she was seeing, but also she was intrigued by technology."

6. Outcomes

Enhancing the quality of life for service users is measured through questions relating to 'Staying as well as I can', 'Improved well-being' and 'Feeling independent and in control'. The aim of the survey is to demonstrate a change in how people feel before and after receiving the service. This does not take into account any other changes in their lives that may have impacted on their overall well-being.

6.1 Survey

A 'before and after' survey was carried out with service users at the start of the service and followed up at a later date after having received the service for a period of time. For Sue Ryder where the service is time limited the follow ups were done at the end of the 10 weeks. Other services are open-ended so follow ups are being done at different times.

What difference has the service made? - comparing 'before' and 'after'

The survey was completed by 56 people.

It is recognised that some service users may be unable to complete a survey due to capacity.

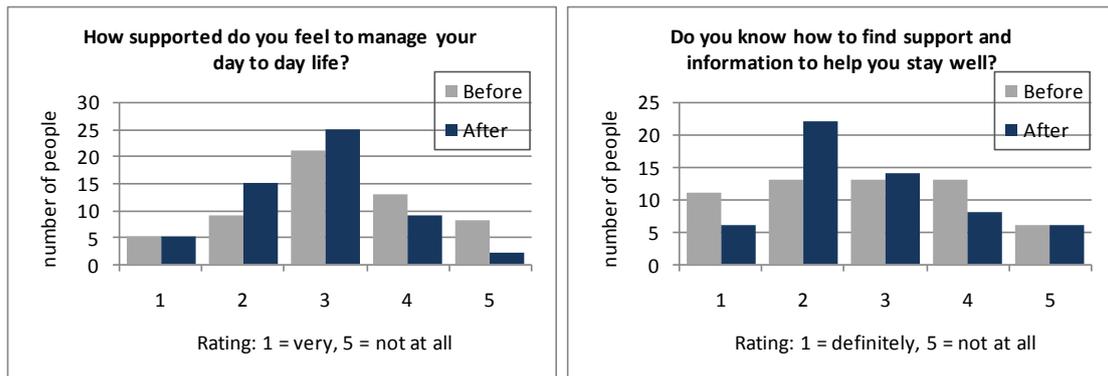
Service users were asked to rate the questions on a scale of 1 to 5 according to how they felt about it before they started to receive the service and again afterwards. A rating of 1 represents a positive response and 5 a more negative one.

The following charts compare the results. The expectation is that there will be a shift towards more positive scores once people have started to receive the service.

A good result will show a greater number of people rating 1, 2 or 3 after having received the service and fewer rating 4 to 5, the more negative responses.

Staying as well as I can...

Having support to manage everyday life and knowing how to get information and support if needed enables people to stay as well as they can. Befrienders can give support and information and signpost to services where help may be available.

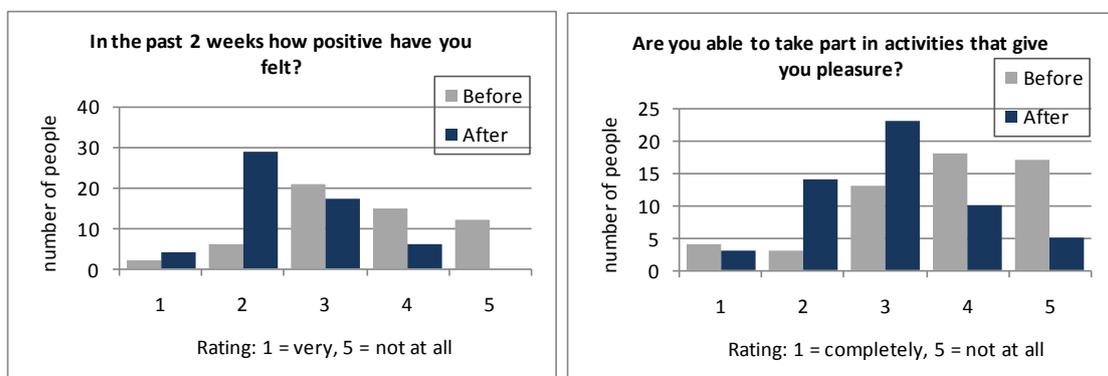


- 80% of people (rating 1, 2 or 3) felt supported to manage their day to day life compared to 63% of people before receiving the service.
- 75% of people (rating 1, 2 or 3) felt they knew how to find support and information compared to 66% of people before the service. There was a drop in the number rating 1 between the two surveys. The reason for this is unknown.

“It is fine to know that someone nice is coming. Things feel like they are being sorted out, I have things in my life to look forward to. Everything is brighter.”

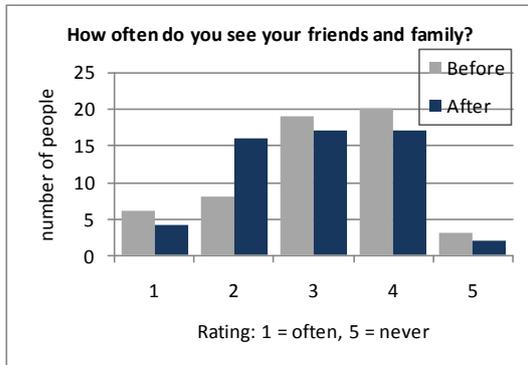
Improved well-being...

Well-being is about feeling positive about life, being able to take part in activities and having social contact with others. Befrienders provide social contact but also encourage people to make new friendships and to build confidence to engage in the local community.



- 89% of people (rating 1, 2 or 3) felt positive compared to 52% of people before receiving the service.

- 73% of people (rating 1, 2 or 3) were able to take part in activities compared to 36% of people before receiving the service.
- 66% of people (rating 1, 2 or 3) saw family and friends more often compared to 59% of people before receiving the service.



“Having someone to talk to when I am feeling lonesom and it is motivating for my frame of mind to have a befriender.”

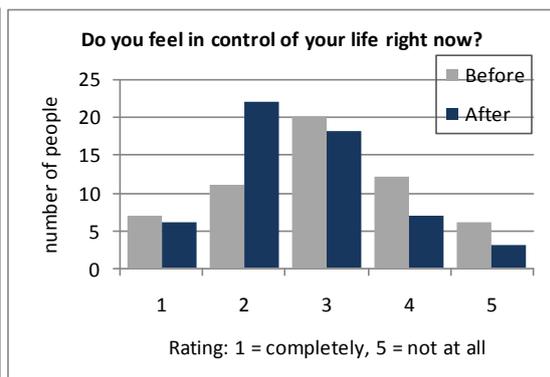
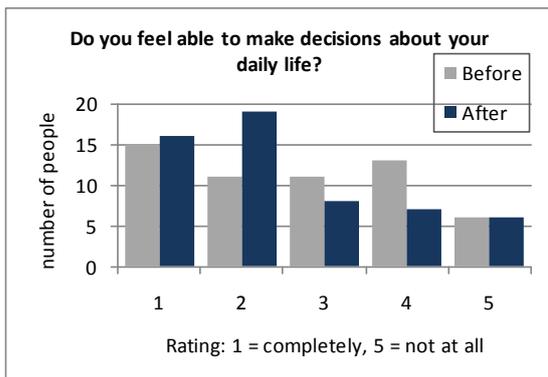
“Look forward to the person coming in, she is quite lovely and a nice person to talk to. I do not have many people to talk to other than the CPN or my doctor.”

“I am happier and look forward to going out.”

“Having something to look forward to regularly that I enjoy, has made a huge difference”

Feeling independent and in control...

Being independent is being able to make decisions about your own life, feeling that you are in control of what happens to you and being able to do the things you want. Befrienders can help people to build confidence so that they feel in control.



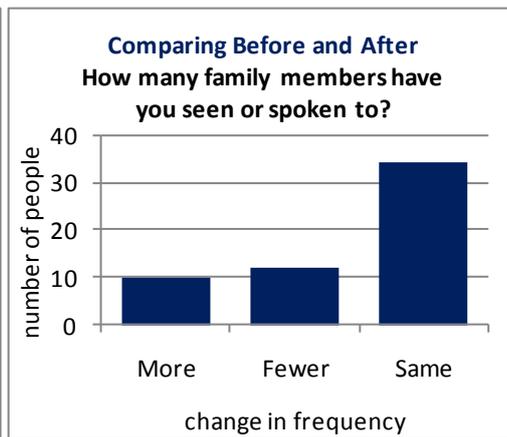
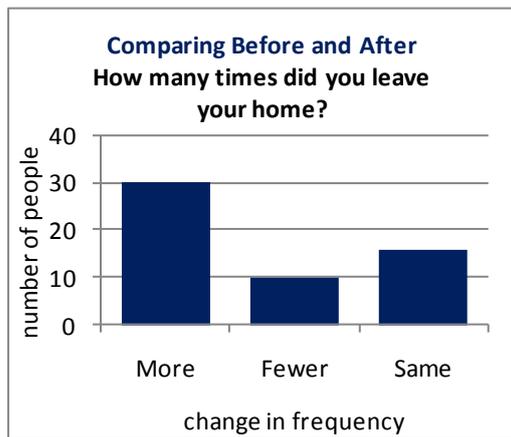
- 77% of people (rating 1, 2 or 3) felt able to make decisions about their daily life compared to 66% of people before receiving the service.
- 82% of people (rating 1, 2 or 3) felt in control of life compared to 68% of people before receiving the service.

“I used to feel anxious, I feel a lot better about it now. I am seeing things in a better way, the visits have been good for me.”

“I get to go to the shops which is not something I was able to do before because my neighbour does the shop. It is nice to enjoy the sunshine and be independent.”

“Chatting about things. I don’t feel pressured to talk about things that make me feel uncomfortable, but I am able to share things with her that bother me. I like having a quiet and friendly person visit me.”

As part of the survey, people were asked to answer a series of questions thinking about how things had been for them in the preceding 2 weeks. The following charts show the number of people who reported that they did things more times, fewer times or the same number of times after having received the service than before. The expectation is that people will get out of the house more, speak to family and friends more often and have more social outings. As people become more independent and build up support networks it is hoped that they will have fewer interventions by healthcare professionals.

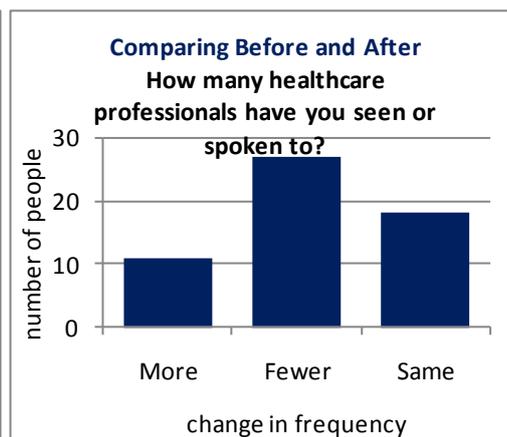
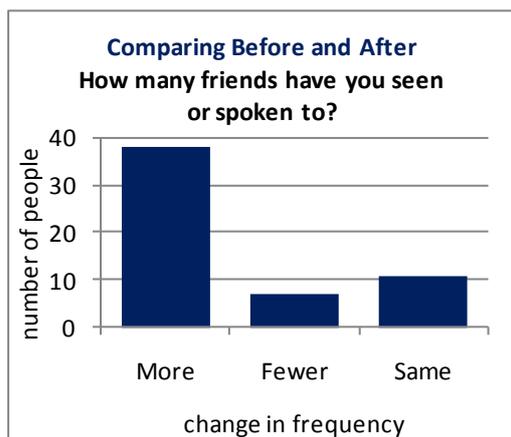


- 54% of people reported leaving the house more often
- 18% of people saw or spoke to more family members

“I get to walk to the hairdresser and to the shops, I would not be able to do that on my own. With my osteoporosis, the exercise is good for me.”

“I get to town more often, I did not like to go on my own before.”

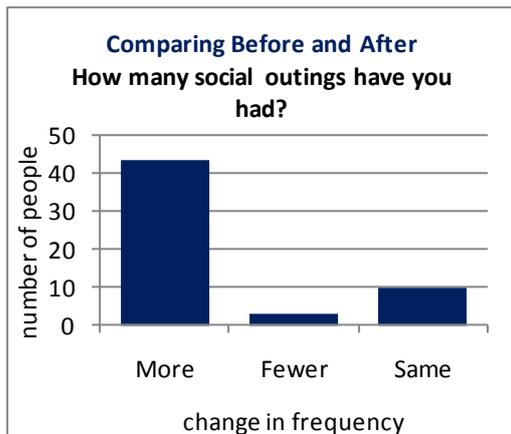
“Walking in the fresh air (unable to walk alone – unsteady on feet and bad sight).”



- 68% of people saw or spoke to more friends
- 48% of people reported seeing or speaking to fewer healthcare professionals

Befriending may have an impact on frequent healthcare contacts related to loneliness and its associated health issues but not in the case of significant medical problems.

- 77% of people reported that they had more social outings



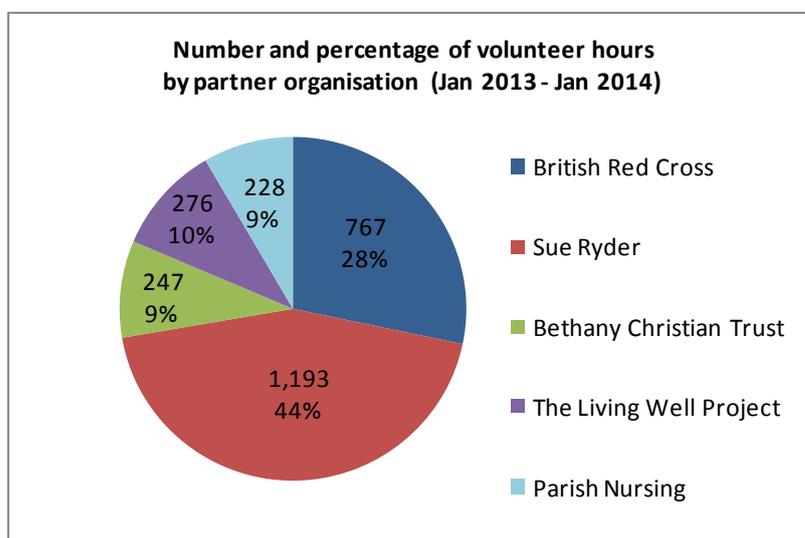
“Befriending has been a help to me especially the contact I have with a Parkinson’s singing group.”

“I get to do the things I enjoy again and it is much better when you do it with someone you get on with.”

7. Volunteers

Across the services there are **73 volunteers** providing **2,711 hours** of their time to help older and vulnerable people feel less lonely and isolated. Each of the partners recruits its own volunteers and provides training. The time spent with people varies depending on the programme organised and the needs of the person. It can vary with visits either during the week or at weekends and with weekly or fortnightly contact for an hour or two at a time.

Volunteer hours by partner organisation



There are many reasons why people have become a volunteer befriender. When volunteers were asked, they gave reasons such as, rebuilding their own confidence following bereavement, having experienced being on their own and being able to relate to feeling isolated. Others had enjoyed caring for a family member so wanted to help others, had free time and wanted to help people or just enjoyed the company of older people.



7.1 What does it mean to volunteer?

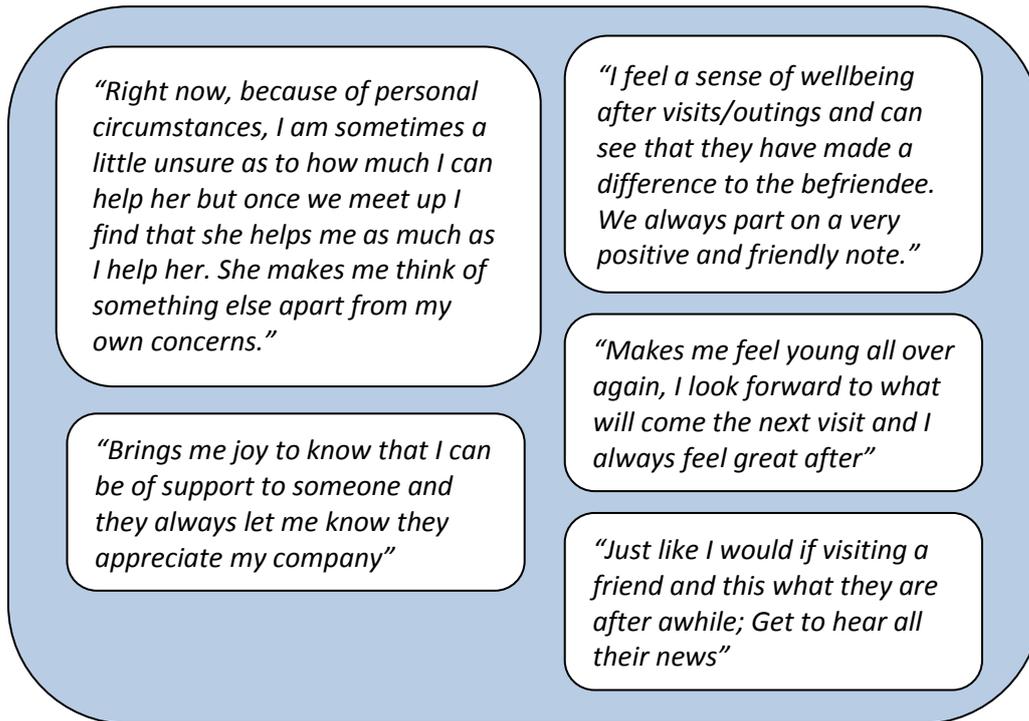
Volunteering has many benefits to the person being befriended but also has its rewards for the volunteer.

Volunteers report that they enjoy meeting new people, sharing life experiences and find it rewarding when they can see what a difference it makes.



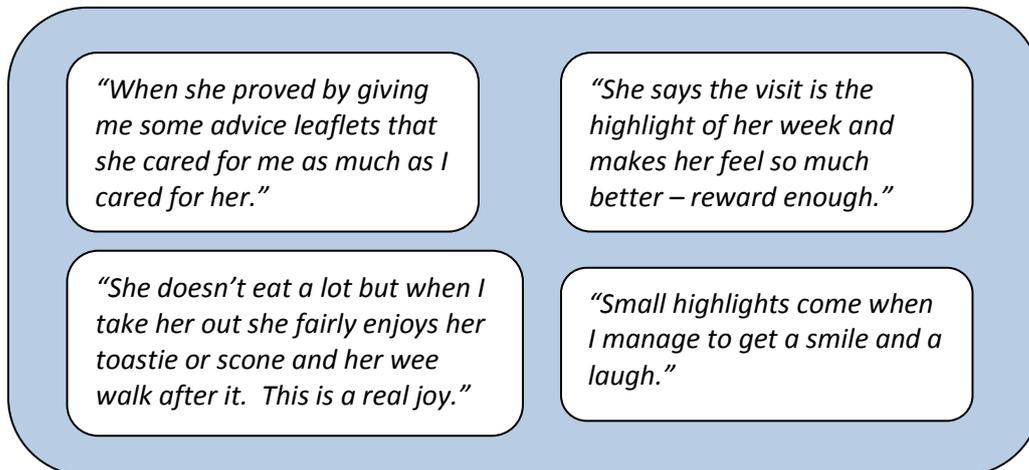
7.2 How do you feel when you visit?

Volunteers reported that visits gave them a sense of well-being and feeling good about themselves. For some it enables them to put their own concerns into perspective and they can feel supported in return by the befriended person. It was clear that there are mutual benefits to volunteering as a befriender.



7.3 Highlights of visits

Volunteers were asked if there was a highlight from their visits. The responses were varied and in many cases the highlights were small things but which demonstrated that they were making a difference.



8. Summary

The service has now been operational for 12 months and has already befriended 96 older and vulnerable people with more referrals received to be matched with volunteers. The survey results highlight that just an hour or 2 a week can make a difference to a person’s well-being enabling them to stay as well as they can and feel more independent and in control of life.

Being befriended enables people to build their confidence through increased social contact and encourages them to develop their own social networks. The comments received show that the service is highly valued by those who have been befriended. It demonstrates that by providing a relatively small amount of time to enable people to visit the shops, go out for a walk or just to have a chat can have a greater impact on their well-being. There was an increase in the number of people reporting that they felt positive, able to make decisions about their daily life and feeling in control. Many people (54%) reported that they left their home more often and 77% had more social outings as a result of the service. Being more socially active improves health and well-being and consequently people may have fewer contacts with healthcare services. From the survey, 48% of people reported that they had fewer contacts with healthcare professionals.

A total of 73 people have volunteered to be befrienders providing 2,711 hours of support to make life better for older, vulnerable people. Comments from volunteers show that they get as much from the experience as the befriended person widening the impact of the service.

For further information

For more information about the Aberdeen City Befriending Partnership, and how you can get involved, contact us

call: 01224 896339

visit: www.acvo.org.uk/befriending

Working in partnership to improve the lives of older people:

