

EARLY INTERVENTION FEATURE

Who needs a Friend ?

Everybody needs a friend, and friends who offer support are particularly important. Here we feature some of the befriending and home support schemes around the county and celebrate the services they offer.

Age Concern Bromsgrove & District run a very successful befriending scheme. Here are comments from satisfied clients:

One person told me that the Befriender volunteer who visits him each week has made a huge difference to his life. He says "It's marvelous - he's such a lovely fella"! This gentleman was no longer able to drive or get out alone, but is happy to know that the volunteer, who has become a good friend, will take him shopping, then drive him home, unpack and put away the provisions. Then he will sit and chat over a cup of tea. The client has also enjoyed trips out in the car with his volunteer and they have stopped off once or twice at a pub for a drink.

When close family are living a long distance away, the client said, it is a real help to know that I have support and a friendly person to visit me each week.

A close relative of one of our clients receiving regular visits from a Befriender has been pleased to be able to comment on the positive impact that the Befriender has made on the life of her relative.

This lady expressed how important early intervention had been for her dad; she felt that the mental stimulation of receiving a regular visitor had improved her dad's interest in the world around him and offered her, as a daughter, the reassurance of knowing that if she didn't visit him herself that day, that should anything be amiss, the volunteer would alert her to this.

She said "Knowing that someone outside the family can observe any changes to dad, can help me to cater for his needs."

For further details contact Sue Wilkes on 01527 871840
email: acbromsgrove@tiscali.co.uk



Pershore Volunteer Centre Befriending Service

My name is Jan Wortley and I am the Befriending Co-ordinator for Pershore Volunteer Centre.

I was a scientist in a previous life but I have been befriending now for about a year and a half I find it to be a most rewarding job.

I have sixteen 'clients' all in their eighties or nineties and nothing has given me greater pleasure than introducing a volunteer to an older person knowing that someone will visit them regularly and will always be on the end of a telephone for them. Maybe a trip out to a garden centre too. These places seem invaluable because as well as being surrounded by flowers they usually have coffee shops!

The last befriending I did was two weeks ago and the befriender was a lady in her seventies who loved dogs but had moved into a flat where she wasn't allowed to keep one.



I befriended her with a lady in her nineties who of course had a dog. I left them discussing all their 'doggy stories' from the last fifty years. A match made in heaven!

I have a friend who is also a volunteer and she tells me that her old lady wakes up on a Thursday and thinks 'Oh good it's Thursday- Brenda will be coming this morning.' Brenda was so pleased to hear this. The benefits work both ways.

Make a Difference with Worcestershire Sitting Service

Peter's Story

"My husband had a stroke when he was quite young. As a very independent couple we got on with life; I did the things he couldn't manage, and over the years we coped on our own. As time went on things became more difficult. My husband occasionally fell, and if I went out shopping I had to rush because I worried that he may have fallen. I no longer enjoyed meeting my friend for lunch because I couldn't relax".

"We were introduced to Worcestershire Sitting Service, managed by Age Concern. Now everything has changed. A Sitter comes to our house each week, stays and chats with my husband, and I usually go out shopping or have lunch with my friend. Having a Sitter has made a big difference to both our lives. My husband and the Sitter have so much in common, they get on so well, and I no longer have to rush everything or worry about him. These few hours makes such a difference. Please offer your time, so more people can benefit."

Worcestershire Sitting Service, asks ordinary people, just like you, to go and sit with someone, keep him or her company,



so that the person who is usually at home with them can have free time. Our sitters do not provide personal care.

If you would like further information please contact; Sue Abbott, or Miriam on: 01905 726652, 01386 422700, or 01584 819750.

Worcestershire Association For The Blind

The Home Visiting Service empowers and supports socially isolated visually impaired people by giving them opportunities which improve their quality of life.

Specific aims

To enable clients to retain choice and independence

To enable clients to resume responsibility for their health and financial affairs

To reduce the depression, social isolation and loneliness often experienced by this client group

To increase clients access to information and services.

The Service

Currently there are 120 trained volunteers visiting for approx. 200 hours per week.

Volunteer visitors may help by:

- * Providing company, someone

- to chat with over a cup of tea.
- * Reading and replying to letters, writing greetings cards, sorting out bills, bank statements etc.
- * Accompanying on a walk or outing.
- * Going shopping; e.g. for clothes, shoes or gifts.
- * Playing cards, dominoes or other popular table games.
- * Reading a local newspaper, book or favourite magazine.

A recent survey of clients found the following:

- * 100% look forward to their volunteer coming
- * 100% say they are feeling happier since they have had a volunteer visitor
- * 89% have had their assessed needs fully met
- * 61% have other practical needs met by the volunteer that help them to carry on living independently.

"I enjoy going out shopping as it helps me stay independent" Mrs D

"She is a very caring person - she has completely changed my life!" Mrs A

"I felt very down when I was told my sight would not improve. Now my volunteer comes each week and it means I can get out of the house for a walk. It's made such a difference and I feel so much better" Miss D

Contact Jo Merrett at Worcester Association for The Blind on 01905 723245

To find out more about any of these organisations, or other similar schemes, contact John Taylor, on 01684 580702. Email johnt@comfirst.org.uk