

Practical Guidelines for Dulwich Helpline Volunteers

This document is meant to be a short reference point for all volunteers, and is separated into sections, depending on the type of volunteering you are offering to do.

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For other kinds of volunteering guidelines, e.g. office or events help, please contact the office on 0208 299 2623. Thanks.

We have two rules for all volunteers: -

1. **Please do not** give out your home telephone number to a service user, whatever the reason.
2. **Please do not** get involved in any financial transaction in any way.

1. Basic guidelines for all: -

As a Dulwich Helpline volunteer you will never be expected to help your service user with any of the following :

- Personal Care [toileting and washing]
- Domestic Tasks [housework]
- Moving or handling
- Administration of medication
- Handling money or anything financial

There are statutory services available to help older people with these tasks where necessary and Dulwich Helpline will help those in need to access those services as appropriate.

Volunteers on the other hand, offer a unique contribution, giving time and friendship to enhance the service users quality of life. This makes volunteering a very valuable and special activity.

In an emergency, volunteers may need to call 999, contact Dulwich Helpline on 0208 299 2623, or Southwark Council on 0207 525 5000.

2. Befriending: Home Visits

Before you start befriending an older person, usually a member of Dulwich Helpline's staff will accompany you on an introductory visit. After that, you will be expected to make regular visits on your own, either weekly, fortnightly or [at least] monthly, at the same time on the same day, as arranged with your service user.

It is useful to give the person you are visiting a rough idea of how long you are able to stay. This may, of course, vary from visit to visit, but generally an hour has been found to be the most suitable.

You are strongly advised not to give your telephone number or address to your service user. If they need to make contact with you for any reason, we would prefer that they do so via our office. We suggest this to protect you from having excessive demands made on you which you may find difficult to refuse. Once you have given out your home information, there is no way to take it back.

The most important thing about being a Befriender is simply to provide some regular company and to bring the outside world into an isolated and maybe housebound elderly persons' life.

In some cases, where appropriate, regular practical tasks may be part of your Befriending relationship - going for a walk, reading correspondence, playing board games or cards - as agreed between you and your service user. If, however, you find the nature of the Befriending is changing and you are unsure, please call the office to discuss the matter. This helps to set clear boundaries on what you do as a volunteer and again keeps you both safe.

Please be aware that circumstances can change either way and if you find you are unable, or unwilling, for any reason, to continue with your Befriending relationship, please let us know so that we can discuss this and where necessary make alternative arrangements.

3. Driving: Using your own car

We quite often make regular arrangements, especially for transport to and from our groups. Other arrangements are for one off visits and appointments. All requests for transport must come through the Helpline Office. Please do not undertake any transport requests independently without our knowledge as you will not be covered by the general insurance guidelines.

- **Legalities:** Before being accepted as a driver you will be asked to complete a Dulwich Helpline Transport Form which we keep on your confidential file. Should your details change please keep us updated.
- **Seatbelts:** Please ensure that passengers wear seat belts at all times, unless covered by a certificate of exemption. This also applies to passengers in back seats. It is the legal responsibility of the driver of the vehicle to ensure that passengers keep to these rules.
- **Mobility:** We will let you know if the service user has mobility problems and requires the use of an aid such as a walking frame, a wheelchair or requires light assistance from someone to get in and out of the car. You will not be expected to lift or transfer users in and out of the car, although you may need to help to some degree.
- **Parking Concessions:** We will tell you if the service user has a Disabled Badge, which should be displayed when parking or using a Disabled Parking bay. You may need to remind the service user to bring the badge with them.

- Expenses: Please claim your mileage for any volunteer driving you do and any parking charges, if required. Please note that we will pay legitimate parking costs as long as you have your ticket or receipt. To claim expenses, simply fill in a Volunteer Expenses Form, giving the reason for your journey and the number of miles travelled, then submit your form to the Helpline staff for reimbursement. Forms and details available on our website.
- Fines: We are sure that you will drive and park legally and therefore not incur any fines, but we must make it clear that Dulwich Helpline is not able to reimburse volunteer drivers for any fines incurred in the course of volunteer work for us, whether for illegal parking or speeding.

4. Gardening

Many of our service users find it hard to maintain their gardens and are often saddened to see their garden deteriorating. We do not ask volunteers to undertake heavy labour or major landscaping work, but general maintenance.

All requests for gardening should come through the Helpline office.

The service user will normally provide the necessary equipment for each job, but we may be able to loan tools when required. We can also issue you with a circuit breaker, which must always be used when working with any electrical equipment in the garden. Any loaned equipment should be returned to us if, for any reason, you decide to stop volunteering for gardening.

Please place any gardening debris in the designated bin, normally green, or in bags available. You will not be expected to dispose of garden rubbish, as this is collected on a regular basis by Southwark Council.

5. Helping with Groups

We run many groups for our service users, assisted by volunteers and overseen by our Project Coordinators from the office. Some are held in public venues and others in the homes of our users. Some of the groups are led by a facilitator or a specialist tutor where required i.e. exercise, but we are keen to encourage volunteers to be as involved as possible.

In the groups we aim to support and foster an atmosphere of equality, friendship, pleasure and mutual understanding.

It is helpful if you can feed back to Helpline staff any concerns, suggestions or requests you may have from the Group with which you become involved, either on your own behalf or that of other members.

We hope you will derive enjoyment and satisfaction from your involvement with any of the Groups you choose to attend and support.

6. Hospital visiting

We do have a designated volunteer who will visit any service user that we know is in hospital.

If the person you are supporting as a volunteer goes into hospital, please let us know, but also feel free to continue visiting them during their stay.

7. Shopping

Often volunteer shopping involves a trip with your service user to the local supermarket. This might be by car, taxi, bus or foot and is viewed as an enjoyable, socially valuable and practical activity for both volunteer and user.

Your service user must pay for his or her own shopping and under no circumstances should you use your own money or offer a loan.

Sadly too, there may come a point when the person you are visiting becomes housebound for various reasons and unable to accompany you on these shopping trips. It would be at this point that we would need to reassess their situation and needs, as we cannot undertake any tasks which clearly come within the remit of a Home Care Package set up by Southwark Social Services. Please contact us as soon as you become aware that this situation is arising, Thank you.

8. General guideline for younger student volunteers

Young students under 16 are welcome to volunteer for Dulwich Helpline but only if engaged in an activity supervised by an approved adult, teacher or parent. They may only volunteer through their school and the Helpline requires liaison with the appropriate member of staff to make the necessary arrangements.

Those aged 16 and above are eligible to become part of Dulwich Helpline volunteering individually in their own right, but if they would prefer to go through their school then this would be acceptable.

9. Further general policies:

- Dulwich Helpline treats all personal data as confidential and follows the guidelines of the Data Protection Act 1998.
- Dulwich Helpline is registered with the police checking service, the Churches Child Protection Advisory service. All members of staff are police checked by the Criminal Records Bureau and volunteers, including students aged 16 or over, will be required to have a police check before starting volunteering.
- Information sharing: Dulwich Helpline will provide the over 16 year old volunteers information as appropriate about their service users, including their name, address, telephone number and any other additional information that is felt to be helpful, and, of course, this will be reiterated at the initial introductory meeting between the service user, the volunteer and the Project Coordinator from the Helpline responsible for that particular user or group.
- Boundaries: Helpline staff will act as intermediates for any messages between student volunteers and service users. Direct telephone contact between volunteers and service users is discouraged and we do advise all volunteers not to disclose personal telephone numbers. Any difficulties in this respect should be discussed with the Helpline staff.
- Visiting in pairs: It is acceptable for younger volunteers to visit with a volunteer friend if they prefer, as it is considered beneficial for safety and support.

- **Introductory visit:** Usually volunteers will be accompanied by a member of the Helpline staff on the initial visit as a Befriender or to a Group activity.
- **Subsequent visits:** Volunteers will make regular visits to their service user, during term time, normally once a week, or to Groups as appropriate. Any problems should be reported to Dulwich Helpline.
- **Missing a visit:** If a volunteer is unable to attend for any reason, they should ring Dulwich Helpline as soon as possible. Likewise if the service user cancels, Dulwich Helpline should be informed.
- **Ending Visits:** If volunteers plan to stop being involved for any reason, they should discuss with Dulwich Helpline and their service user. Likewise, if any person they visit wants them to stop they need to contact the office.

In an emergency, volunteers may need to call 999, or contact Dulwich Helpline on 0208 299 2623, or Southwark Council on 0207 525 5000.

Our office is normally open from 9.00am - 5.00pm Monday to Friday.