Volunteer Support
and Giving Feedback
Volunteer Support and Giving Feedback

Aims:

- To improve how we support one another as Befrienders, thereby enabling us to offer the best possible care for our callers.

Objectives:

- To share ideas about different structures, methods and approaches when we offer volunteer support
- To practise different kinds of support
- To practise giving and receiving feedback

Resources:

- Flip chart paper and pens
- Individual paper and pens
- Demonstration skills practice scenario (RESOURCE: 1) and (RESOURCE: 2)
- Terminology guidance notes (RESOURCE: 3) one for each participant

Total length of workshop: 2 hours 45 minutes (approximately)

(you may need to be flexible with timings to take account of local needs and the needs of individuals)

You can, if you wish, divide this workshop into two separate sessions (Volunteer Support and Offering Feedback), and deliver them on separate occasions.

If you run the workshop as one session, add a comfort break of 20-30 minutes, depending on your schedule.
### Introduction

Why is volunteer support so important?

By offering support through appropriate structures and mutual support we enable each other to feel strengthened. In turn this enables us to give good and consistent care to the caller.

By being sensitive to each other’s needs we are able to offer appropriate support and constructive feedback. This ensures that every Befriender is better able to support callers appropriately.

### Start:

Establish that in this exercise they are going to share feelings that may have arisen from supporting a caller.

Also, they are going to look at what support they can offer a colleague who may have experienced a difficult, stressful and/or challenging situation in the Centre whilst supporting a caller.

### Get into small groups (not larger than 5)

Ask the group members to share:

- **What do you do individually if you have had a difficult/stressful caller?**

- **What you would do as a volunteer in your Centre? What structure (if any) is there? Who do you talk to?**

- **What happens next?**
### Staying in groups:

**Discuss:**

- What you would do as a **new volunteer** in your Centre? What structure (if any) is there? Who do you talk to?
- If you are not a new (PV) volunteer, can you think back to what you did?
- Is there any difference?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feed back to the main group</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total for exercise:</strong></td>
<td><strong>30 mins</strong></td>
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### Start: Establish that the next exercise is designed to get volunteers to think about what their personal support needs are.

**Start the exercise by asking your co-presenter what he/she needs by way of support as a volunteer.........**

*For example, they may say something like ‘I need a bit of quiet space to reflect on what I feel. I don’t like to be pounced on, asking me how I feel.........but I like a call next day’*)

### Now ask attendees to work individually:

- **For a few moments** think about what it is you personally need as a volunteer, in terms of support from your fellow volunteer/s
- **For a few moments** think about what it is you personally need as a **new** volunteer, in terms of support from your fellow volunteer/s. Remember if you are not new to think back to when you were. Is it any different?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feed back to the main group</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total for exercise:</strong></td>
<td><strong>15 minutes</strong></td>
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**Start:** Establish that this next exercise is an opportunity to practise some of the best ideas for volunteer care that have been shared.

**Developing and practising skills in supporting each other.**

**Get everyone into pairs**

Looking at offering support, start by doing the two role plays in (RESOURCE: 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Play and Introduction:</th>
<th>10 minutes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 minutes</td>
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<td>2 minutes</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start: Explain that having watched the two role play scenarios they will each have the opportunity to practise giving appropriate support. It is important that those on the receiving end are able to tell their colleague what works best for them. This session is about being empathetic towards a fellow volunteer and being honest and open, in a supportive manner. It is important that those being supported are able to talk freely about any feelings that come to the surface - even those that may be uncomfortable to share. To give this exercise relevance, ask the attendees to think of any feelings they may have experienced after supporting a caller. <strong>Get everyone into pairs, working as far as possible in a different pair from the previous exercise</strong> Ask the pairs to decide which of them is to receive support first, and then read out Situation 1 below.</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Situation 1:</strong> Your fellow volunteer has just befriended a distressed and suicidal caller. Please practise supporting your colleague. Feed back to each other how that worked/or not.</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
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<td>2 minutes</td>
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**Ask the pairs to now swap roles** and then read out Situation 2 below.

**Situation 2:** Your fellow volunteer has just befriended an angry and aggressive caller. Feed back to each other how that worked/or not

| 5 minutes |            |
| 2 minutes |            |
**Continue this exercise again**, so that each pair has had the opportunity to practise in both roles.

| 5 minutes, 2 minutes, 5 minutes, 2 minutes |

**Bring the whole group together** and facilitate feedback from whole group

- What if anything did you find difficult?
- Was there anything you would do differently?
- What worked for you and why?
- How did you feel .......?

**Total time for exercise: 60 minutes**

This is the point in the workshop where you can split it into two separate sessions.
### Introduction

Looking at offering feedback

To offer good volunteer care and to support our callers in the most appropriate manner, it is vital that all volunteers are empowered to offer appropriate, constructive feedback to their co-volunteer.

Each of us must consider the way we behave with our callers and understand that on occasions we may need to be reminded of the need to follow best practice and remember our initial training.

### Start:

Establish that the next exercise will be exploring how we can best offer constructive feedback/support to each other, in a safe environment. It will enable us to develop our skills to support each other.

Look at offering constructive feedback/support, starting with the two role plays in (RESOURCE: 2)

Please note: You can develop the good and bad practice situations to fit what is necessary within your Centre. For example, you may have a situation where some volunteers are struggling with taking sex calls and need support, and yet others in the Centre are not bothered and so are dismissive of their fellow volunteers, and therefore not able to give good support.

### Start:

Explain that having watched the two role play scenarios they will have the opportunity to practise, in pairs, offering appropriate feedback to each other.

It is important that those receiving the feedback are able to tell their colleague what works best for them. This session is about being empathetic towards a fellow volunteer and being honest and open, in a supportive manner.
**Get everyone into pairs, working as far as possible in a different pair from the previous exercise.**

In order to make this exercise relevant, ask the attendees to think of an occasion where they have either experienced a similar situation or perhaps been an observer.

Ask the pairs to decide amongst themselves which one is to be supported first, and then read out **Situation 1**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation 1: Your fellow volunteer has just unburdened him/herself, telling you they have given advice to the caller......</th>
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<tr>
<td>Now practise offering appropriate support, listening carefully to what your co-volunteer is saying.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feedback to each other how that worked/or not.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Situation 2:</strong> Your fellow volunteer has just befriended an angry and aggressive caller. When unburdening him/herself they express how useless they feel.........</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feedback to each other how that worked/or not</td>
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<td><strong>Continue this exercise again,</strong> so that each pair has had the opportunity to practise in both roles.</td>
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2 minutes

2 minutes

5 minutes

5 minutes

2 minutes

5 minutes, 2 minutes, 5 minutes, 2 minutes
**Bring the whole group together** and facilitate feedback from whole group

- What if anything did you find difficult?
- Was there anything you would do differently?
- What worked for you and why?
- How did you feel........

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Demonstration role-play – Support

Angry Caller - Bad Practice

The volunteer is upset by an angry caller and is trying to unburden to his/her fellow volunteer.

The fellow volunteer is too busy sorting papers, distracted and only half listening!

(This is obviously BAD practice!)

Suicidal Caller - Good Practice

The volunteer has just taken a very distressing call and is feeling bad. The volunteer is worried that he/she has not done enough, as the caller was still very suicidal at the end of the call.

The fellow volunteer reassures the anxious volunteer that they have done all they possibly could, including the offer of a follow up visit/call.

(This is obviously GOOD practice)
Demonstration role-play – Feedback

A volunteer comes back into a busy operations room and their fellow shift member admits that he/she has disclosed personal details about him/herself to the caller.

The fellow volunteer gives very inappropriate feedback at this by speaking in front of the busy room of people, saying ‘you’ve done this before, will you never learn.......?’

(This is obviously BAD practice!)

A volunteer has just taken a call from a caller he/she has spoken to on several occasions, so feels empathy for the caller. In the course of the befriending the topic of the school fees for a particular school has arisen. The volunteer has suggested that this is a good idea as she knows the school, generally giving advice about which school to send the child to.

The fellow volunteer gently points out that this is not what should be going on and explains kindly (but clearly) why advice should not be given in a befriending situation.

The fellow volunteer explains the thin line between exploring options and ‘advice giving’, as well as what can happen if advice is taken which then turns out to be wrong for the individual........

The volunteer realises his/her mistaken belief and thanks the fellow volunteer for pointing this out, saying they will never do it again as they now understand it is wrong to give advice.

(This is obviously GOOD practice)
(RESOURCE: 3)

A few points for trainers to consider when using this workshop:

The following points are for clarification and may be developed further to take account of your Centre’s own individual needs. By incorporating into the workshop some of the points below, it may help to tailor the session in a more focused way.

Remember, when using this Training session, to focus on highlighting the importance of supporting each other when on shift in the Centre.

A great deal of time is spent looking at different ways to support those in need of our service who make contact with the Centre, and our primary purpose is to befriend them. So it is equally important that the volunteers who offer that service are fully prepared/trained and supported in the best possible way.

Remember also that it is important to allow those attending the workshop to voice their concerns and issues in a safe environment, to respect them and not to dismiss their issues as trivial.

On Going Training (OGT): Specific issues can be addressed by using OGT as a method of highlighting bad practice. A kind of ‘Refresher Training’ session could be run to remind everyone of a specific aspect of caller care or volunteer support. This is an ideal way of bringing all the members of the Centre in line with current practice, without singling out any one individual.

Mentoring: Assigning a more experienced volunteer (mentor) to a new volunteer (or a volunteer who has been inactive for some time and would value some active support). The mentor will be chosen because they have a grasp of good practice and how to give active support.

In the case of the new volunteer, this is like a continuation of Training, in that the mentor can be on the same shift as the new volunteer to support them. The mentors do not take calls themselves. Their attention is fully on the new volunteer, offering constructive feedback and active support both in and out of the Centre, especially after difficult calls.

Mentoring continues officially for the first 10 shifts (or following the usual practice in a Centre) and after that sometimes unofficially for a lifetime!

Mutual trust, respect, and honesty is vital (as with our callers) and should always be uppermost in all our interactions in the Centre....... always ensuring it is delivered in a caring and supportive manner.