

## **Befriending relationships at seescape – managing endings:**

To avoid misunderstandings and feelings of guilt or creating dependency it is important befrienders, and the befriendees understand how seescape manage befriending relationship including ending these.

We recognise that volunteers invest time and themselves in building a relationship with their befriender, and that the client/s involved can become accustomed to looking forward to your contact and support which has been offered to them, which is why we try to avoid sudden endings for all involved.

We ask all befrienders to give an initial commitment of 3 months, from being matched, and the befriendees will be aware of that. If the ending of a relationship is dealt with in a sensitive manner, although it will leave a gap in the befriender's life, hopefully some of the benefits and good work achieved through the relationship will not be lost. It also means seescape can plan and refer or signpost onto other appropriate support should this be needed.

seescape review all befriending matches at 3 and 6 monthly intervals, with feedback being sought from befriendees and the volunteer befrienders towards the 12-month period (from date of initial contact with client and volunteer), to review what has been achieved. seescape are funded to oversee befriending relationships for up to 12 months.

The best outcome would be for the befriender to be able to look back on the relationship and remember the fun and constructive support, there is bound to be some regret, but the objective of the service is to keep this in proportion and look at what has been achieved. Endings can be a reason to celebrate. A time to look back on what has gone before and an opportunity to look to the future, especially if the befriending relationship has helped the befriender to move on.

Endings should therefore be planned to give all parties sufficient time to deal with their feelings. As a service, it is our aim to avoid abrupt endings as these can lead the befriender to have feelings of rejection and abandonment. This can be very damaging for someone who lacks confidence and has little experience of trusting relationships.

Please always bear this in mind and let us know as soon as possible if you will have to end the befriending relationship. Please do not feel guilty when it is time for you to move on, it will be recognised and appreciated that you have already given your time and effort to support a befriender.

We understand that at times a befriender may have a change in their circumstances which could lead to them having less spare time and they may therefore wish to bring their befriending activities to an end. In this situation it is imperative and helpful to the service if you could give as much notice as possible.

Ideally, endings should happen within the time limitations of the project, following a review with the befriender, and after discussion between all concerned; the befriending co-ordinator, the befriender and the befriender. The befriender may no longer need the support as they may be getting out more on their own and have made other friends. The Community Engagement Coordinator should be made aware of this through monitoring the befriending relationship and by volunteer benders actively seeking support and guidance with their role. It can be unhelpful to allow a relationship to drag on or drift and thereby create an unhealthy dependency.

Once the befriending relationship does end, the service will no longer be accountable for the relationship. If you plan to stay in touch with a befriender once the service has finished, you must consider the appropriateness of your contact, why you want to maintain contact, and be aware that you no longer have the policies & procedures of the organisation in place to cushion your relationship.

## How best to deal with endings?

- Plan for positive endings ideally with a minimum period of 6 weeks' notice
- Recognise that most people require a period of adjustment
- Do not ignore any signs that the relationship has appropriately run its course
- Make your last interaction a special event or celebration

### **The befriending co-ordinator will:**

- Be aware of the stage of the relationship and will offer advice about how to end contact.
- Send a letter out acknowledging the end of the befriending relationship, which will signify the project is no longer accountable
- If either the befriender or befriender has had to end the relationship abruptly for unavoidable reasons, appropriate support will be offered.
- Have the right to terminate a befriending relationship at any time in particular circumstances, such as the befriender's safety being compromised.

This policy was last updated on 17082021.

If you have any questions, please contact:

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