



# engage

befriending

Impact Statement **2023**



At Engage Befriending, we are passionate that every individual should have the opportunity to thrive no matter what age or season of life. We do this by connecting a local volunteer with an isolated or lonely older person to enjoy a lasting friendship and support the person to connect with opportunities for social engagement.

We connect people with the outside communities by signposting them to local clubs, if they would like to, and are able to attend.

We hold a monthly drop-in, which is for volunteers and all service users to make contact with others and to chat with some of the team.

We also send a monthly newsletter by post to service users and a different one via email to volunteers.

The project supports those aged 26 to over 100 years old with the overwhelming number of service users being over 55 years.

## Engage in numbers



In 2023, two volunteers (who are in their late 70's and early 80's) who live in supported living stepped forward to befriend those living in their communities. People had been identified as needing befriending, and these two volunteers have been befriending between one and three people each.

Located in Reading, a diverse town, we are also training new volunteers who have multi-language skills who can befriend those who face isolation in diverse communities.

In 2024, we will be introducing an advisory group to support our decision making and strategy going forward.

**We know that our work makes a difference to the lives of our service users. 96% report that their health and wellbeing has improved since being befriended.**

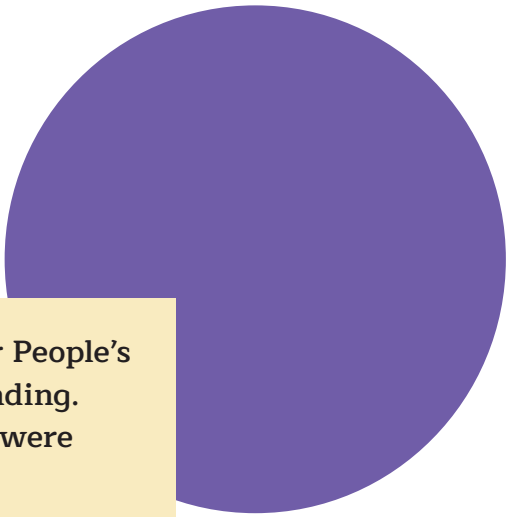
M has lived on her own for sometime and enjoys the visits that her befriender makes. She had struggled to leave the house but when reading about a new social group in our newsletter she decided to give it a go. She booked transport to travel there and thoroughly enjoyed herself. Now she regularly attends with her neighbour.

Wilma\* lives in sheltered housing and enjoys being part of the Engage project. During the very hot weather in July 2022, she asked if a member of the team was able to get her shopping for her as it was too hot to leave her flat. We were happy to help.

However, in a recent review via the telephone with her Regional Co-ordinator, it became apparent that Wilma was not well as it became clear she was having hallucinations. Our Regional Co-ordinator immediately alerted the sheltered housing team, and they called an ambulance.

Our Regional Co-ordinator also attended and, when she arrived, the ambulance was already there. Following a long stay in hospital, Wilma is now recuperating in a care home, hoping to be return home soon. She also now has a social worker looking after her interests.





Joyce\* felt lonely and isolated and, at the Older People's Day in 2021 referred herself to Engage Befriending. Joyce and her volunteer got on really well and were friends for a couple of years.

At our monthly coffee morning, Joyce was talking with another Engage client about how lonely it can be at weekends. Within about 20 minutes of the conversation starting, they had planned to meet up for lunch and since enjoyed a number of days out.

When Joyce's volunteer had to step down, she decided that her social group was enough but wanted to keep in touch with us and so receives our monthly newsletter and is a regular at the coffee morning.

We saw her recently the Older People's Day 2023 in Reading. She was on the front row showing everyone how to do the chair exercises!

This year we are starting an Advisory Group to advise us on the way forward for the Engage Befriending project and Joyce has accepted our offer of joining it.

*"It's made me feel less isolated  
– it has helped to lighten my mood"*

\*Names changed to protect identity.





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