

# Befriending Projects

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## Report 1 - The First Year

October 2015 to September 2016

**“The support that you have offered has given my husband the dignity of being somewhere that allows him to be a participant, giving the feeling of well-being. In a short space of time, my husband lost control of his life, unable to drive or to manage any financial affairs. People tend to look past him in normal conversations and to have access to the befriending service where you know that the people he is with have an understanding of his issues, is important and long may your work carry on.”**

- a carer of a person  
living with dementia

## In partnership with...



**Town Break**  
Dementia Support Services



**Quarriers**  
Transforming Lives

# Introduction

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In October 2015, the Life Changes Trust invested £680,000 in seven befriending projects across Scotland, over a period of five years. Six projects provide befriending for people living with dementia who are at various stages of their dementia journey, and one provides befriending for carers. These initiatives are all very different. There are those who provide befriending across a particular geographical area, whereas others provide a befriending service in care homes or in a person's own home as part of a therapeutic model.

Since the funding began, the communities have met once every three months to share learning and network with each other. Not only have they met with each other, but they have met with other projects funded by the Life Changes Trust, for example, dementia friendly communities, projects on transport ([www.upstream.scot](http://www.upstream.scot)) or empowering people with dementia ([www.dementiavoices.org.uk](http://www.dementiavoices.org.uk)). These projects have given and received help and support from each other, and many new partnerships have been formed as a result.

This first report has been compiled using evidence gathered from the first year's monitoring and evaluation reports of the initiatives. This report is intended to give a flavour of the impact that these projects are starting to have, demonstrated through quotes and case studies. Projects have been very honest about the challenges of getting their work off the ground and some have spent a large part of the first year putting infrastructure and staff in place. Others, when they received funding, already had infrastructure in place and were 'ready to go'.

This is the first of five reports – a report will be produced annually for each of the five years during which funding runs. We hope that this report will inform and inspire anyone who is interested in starting a befriending project.

**Andrena Coburn, Funding and Evaluation Manager  
People Affected by Dementia Programme, March 2017**

# Trust-funded Befriending Projects 2015-2020

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## **Alzheimer Scotland Forget Me Not Project**

Forget Me Not was set up in 2008 to recruit and train volunteers to befriend people with dementia who are living in care homes or are in long term hospital care. The befriending relationship encourages the person with dementia to feel more confident in taking part in social and community-based activities, lessening their isolation and keeping them connected for as long as possible. Funding is being used to develop the service, try out new approaches with music and technology and evaluate the impact of the service.

[http://www.alzscot.org/services\\_and\\_support/search/2802\\_forget\\_me\\_not\\_service](http://www.alzscot.org/services_and_support/search/2802_forget_me_not_service)



## **Alzheimer Scotland Knowing Me Knowing You Project**

This is a new volunteer buddying scheme for people with dementia in Lanarkshire. Funding provides reminiscence therapy sessions from trained volunteer befrienders, to people at all stages of the dementia journey, within their own homes. Reminiscence sessions cover a broad range of reminiscence subjects, from sport and local heritage to working life or cultural changes, and are tailored specifically to each individual. Memories are then captured in a life story book to help families connect with their loved ones in a way that can continue even as their condition changes.

[http://www.alzscot.org/volunteering/opportunities/3590\\_knowing\\_me\\_knowing\\_you\\_befriending\\_project\\_lanarkshire](http://www.alzscot.org/volunteering/opportunities/3590_knowing_me_knowing_you_befriending_project_lanarkshire)

## Quarriers

This befriending project currently delivers a service for people with dementia in Largs, Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenson, but will gradually expand across North Ayrshire. The project provides companionship and encouragement to people with dementia, using befriending as a means of reducing isolation and helping them stay as mentally and physically active as possible. It supports people with mild to moderate dementia to continue to live in their own homes for as long as possible, and provide extra support for full-time family carers.

<https://quarriers.org.uk/about-us/>



## The Eric Liddell Centre

A new personalised and flexible support service has been designed with input from carers. This befriending initiative aims to reduce isolation and loneliness for new carers by offering them opportunities to talk about and share their feelings on their caring role, and to have a break from their caring responsibilities, promoting confidence and self-esteem.

<http://www.ericliddell.org/services/befriending>



## The Haven @ Home Project

Based on a successful pilot, this innovative initiative delivers complementary therapy sessions at home for people living with dementia in Blantyre, Wishaw and Forth. The therapy sessions aim to improve emotional health and well-being and reduce stress so that people with dementia and their carers are more able to cope with illness and caring. Families benefit from having someone to talk to and confide in and from the short respite breaks provided by volunteer befrienders with therapy skills.

<http://www.thehavencentre.com/about.php>



## Town Break Stirling

Town Break provide a befriending service in the Stirling District for people who have early to moderate dementia. Services are focused on people who may not receive other support or those who have no carers and live alone. Weekly visits provide companionship, mental stimulation and new friendships, supporting people to continue to live in their own homes for as long as possible, increasing confidence and reducing isolation.

<http://www.townbreakstirling.co.uk/befriending/>



# Background

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In 2015, the Life Changes Trust made a commitment to fund a range of befriending projects across Scotland over a five-year period. Befriending is one of the services which people with dementia and carers say they most value because of the positive impact it has on the person with dementia and/or their carer. It has been identified through research as a key way in which isolation and loneliness can be reduced, factors which can have a significantly negative impact on a person's sense of well-being and their physical and mental health.

The Trust will invest a total of **£680,000** in Befriending Projects between 2015 and 2020.

In providing this funding, the Trust aims to:

1. Improve the quality of life and well-being of those whose lives are affected by dementia.
2. Support more rapid and effective development of befriending and peer support initiatives and practices across Scotland so that:
  - people will be aware of, and understand more about, the benefits of befriending for people affected by dementia and carers;
  - those whose lives are affected by dementia will seek and find the help and support they need; and
  - people affected by dementia will experience a greater sense of confidence, independence and well-being, and will be able to experience more choice and control in their lives
3. Share findings and learning from befriending initiatives funded by the Trust in order to improve practice across Scotland and so that others can learn from Scotland.
4. Support the development of positive relationships, mentoring and learning between befriending initiatives in Scotland.
5. Identify ways of establishing long term befriending initiatives that are innovative, sustainable and cost-effective.

The Trust was looking to fund projects that would contribute to the following outcomes for people living with dementia and carers:

- I know that I have someone who will listen to me and who understands my situation
- I feel less lonely and more positive about life
- I have an increased sense of well-being
- I feel safe, valued and respected
- I have more confidence to make choices and do the things that matter to me
- I can give examples of how befriending has made a difference to my life

## Self-evaluation

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Although many of the projects funded by the Trust will be externally evaluated, the Trust believes that self-evaluation of a project, from the very outset, is very important. Good self-evaluation requires befriending projects to reflect on their activities, progress and outcomes for people living with dementia and carers. Doing this on a regular basis means that adjustments to ways of working can be made quickly and, if the project starts to lose its focus or purpose, this can be rectified before it is too serious.

At times, self-evaluation has been challenging for projects, for reasons outlined in the report. However, it has proved a useful process in terms of looking more deeply at the impact that befriending is having and the best way for projects to demonstrate the benefits of their work.

The quarterly gatherings held by the Trust, which all the befriending projects must attend, provide an opportunity for the projects to share learning and reflect on their own practice alongside other Trust funded projects. A recent evaluation of these gatherings showed that the projects greatly value these events and are keen to have even more time to network and learn from each other.

Every befriending project has a thorough evaluation plan. They have been provided with tailored self-evaluation guidance and also have access to the Trust's evaluation toolkit.<sup>1</sup>

Each project is required to submit a six-monthly monitoring and evaluation report to the Trust. This is to satisfy financial reporting requirements, but it is also to report on progress, learning and outcomes.

Each project reports against the outcomes for people living with dementia and carers, listed earlier. They also report on a range of statistics such as the number of people with dementia / carers participating, the number of volunteer befrienders involved and the number of new partnerships formed.

They provide evidence of how the organisation itself is growing and developing. This information is important because it provides some indication as to how likely it is that the work will be sustainable in the longer term.

The Trust would want to take early action and, if appropriate, provide support if a project appears to be struggling. In addition, this evidence will assist projects when they come to source match funding in years three, four and five.

Evidence from people with dementia and carers is gathered by a variety of methods – feedback after the session (written or verbal), well-being assessment forms, informal conversations, videos, surveys, photographs and impromptu feedback. Each befriending project has its own way of hearing from its members and continues to review this.

The remainder of this report draws on the self-evaluation of the befriending projects between October 2015 and September 2016 and provides great insight into the impact of befriending on people living with dementia and their carers.

# Overview of progress – Befriending

From October 2015 – September 2016 (the first year):



## Benefits for people living with dementia and carers

Over the past year, projects have been busy recruiting and training volunteers, matching volunteers with people with dementia and establishing processes and systems to record evidence of the impact that befriending has on people who are befriended and also on the befriender.

Sometimes gathering evidence has been challenging. However, projects have used various methods to gather feedback to ensure that people with dementia, carers, volunteers and staff of organisations are able to share with us the benefits of befriending. Even at this early stage projects are able to demonstrate these benefits. Evidence relating to each of the outcomes is set out below.

## Having someone to listen and understand

All of the befriending projects have involved people with dementia and carers from the very start, helping to shape what the project will deliver. In some cases, this has provided a great source of information for volunteer befrienders on the type of activities that the person with dementia would like to participate in.

For example, Town Break used a Wish Tree Project exercise which enabled people with dementia to identify what they wanted to do with their befriender. This evaluation tool is undertaken at different points throughout the year with small focus groups of people with dementia and carers who provide suggestions of activities and pastimes that they are interested in. Having this information early on in the befriending journey can help befrienders when dementia progresses and the person with dementia is less able to communicate.

Organisations are using the experience of people with dementia to inform not only the befriending project, but also wider practice within their organisations, for example looking at how carers are being supported.

**“Listening to the voices of our clients and carers makes us a stronger organisation as we know we are directly influencing their lives and making a difference for them to ensure that they are not alone when dealing with a diagnosis of dementia.”**

And in many cases befrienders themselves are not only providing support and listening to the person with dementia but are also providing an important source of support for the carer too, **“by updating them on how their loved one is doing, and the calls they make, or chats they have, after each visit are greatly appreciated.”**

The Eric Liddell Centre provides group befriending and feedback has shown that the meetings are appreciated and that carers enjoy having the chance to chat with other carers, in a welcoming environment.

Staff at The Haven at Home project have undergone specialist training in Talking Mats<sup>2</sup> to ensure that the voices of people with advanced dementia are included in developing services. Staff are also planning to introduce the use of Dementia Diaries<sup>3</sup> to capture the immediate benefits of their service, record progress and highlight any changes in support needs between visits.

Befriending has also been important in ensuring that people with dementia whose first language is not English are also able to communicate their needs and wishes.

## Case Study

B comes from a minority ethnic background and does not speak English. She has advanced Alzheimer's Disease. The project has successfully matched her with a befriender from her own cultural community. She can now communicate in her native language with someone other than her immediate family. B has difficulty communicating her needs and can become quite frustrated. However, since having visits from her befriender she has appeared happier and more settled. She enjoys listening to music. Most of all, B responds very positively to having one to one dedicated support.

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2 <http://www.talkingmats.com/>

3 <http://dementiadiaries.org>

Busy care home staff appreciate the one to one time that befriending can provide for residents and, in one case, this has led to staff gaining insight into the life of a resident whose first language is not English.

## Case Study

**“We are a local authority home with 40 residents. Although we can do a lot with the residents, we can’t offer the one to one that everyone needs. We have a lady who is Russian, whose husband used to do everything for her before he passed away. As her English is going we were able to gain insights into her life because the volunteer befriender spoke Russian. The lady was a TV presenter. We got lots of amazing information from the volunteer.”**

## Feeling more positive about life and a greater sense of well-being

The benefits of befriending on well-being have been well researched and **“show that one-to-one activities, such as befriending...are effective in reducing loneliness. They also note that befriending additionally reduced depressive symptoms... by a small but significant margin”**.<sup>4</sup>

Where befrienders have been matched, they are beginning to see a difference in the person they befriend. Some projects still struggle, for various reasons, to capture this outcome from the point of view of the person with dementia. Within a care home setting, where people being befriended have more advanced dementia and are less able to communicate, observations about the positive impact of befriending are made by the befriender, family members (where possible), staff and the care home manager.

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<sup>4</sup> IRISS Insight 25, Preventing Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older People, March 2014, Emma Collins

The Forget Me Not project found that **“Residents, who previously spend a lot of time in their room, are now engaging more with other residents. Verbally expressing their feelings and thoughts, or visually through smiling and laughing.”**

Partner organisations are also reporting changes in the person with dementia due to their befriending relationship.

Town Break receives many referrals from the Community Mental Health Team and **“... heard from one of our Community Mental Health Team partners that they had noticed an improvement in a client’s mood and the client had expressed an acceptance of their diagnosis, which they had struggled with in the past”.**

Research has shown that carers are prone to loneliness and social isolation due to the time and emotional effort spent on their caring responsibilities.<sup>5</sup> According to Charlesworth et al., whose study focused on carers of people with dementia, these carers **“are reported to be under more mental and physical strain than carers of other older people”**, which consequently makes them more likely to be socially isolated and lonely. Befriending was found to be important in allowing the carer a break for short periods and the opportunity to relax.<sup>6</sup>

As one carer commented, **“I appreciate my ‘me time’ while you care for A. He also loves his time with R on a Wednesday and I know they have some good laughs together. For all that support I am so very grateful”.**

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5 Befriending Networks, 2014: A Summary of Recent Research Evidence, About loneliness and social isolation, their health effects and the potential role of befriending

6 ibid

## Case Study

D was referred to the service by her Community Psychiatric Nurse in June 2016. When the Volunteer Co-ordinator first met her she did not want the service and was not interested in a befriender. However, she reluctantly agreed to give the volunteer a chance and she is very glad she did.

D looks forward to seeing her befriender and they have built up a great relationship. Visits have taken place every week for the last eight weeks. Initially, D's main goal was to get to know the befriender. After chatting about different activities, D told her befriender that she used to love going to church and singing. Her befriender suggested going along to the Musical Minds club in Largs.

The club is held every two weeks and is facilitated by Alzheimer Scotland in a church in Largs. They both really enjoyed the music group and are looking forward to the next one.

D sang every song and chatted to other people. She was confident with the songs and said she had a great time and enjoyed seeing everyone else enjoying themselves as well. She smiled the whole afternoon and was very relaxed and not anxious to get back to her partner. After some of the songs D would tell her befriender a story about her family as the songs were triggering some memories of her childhood.

D's partner (and main carer) feels that the befriending gives him a good break from his caring role. **"I enjoy a Thursday afternoon when she is with her befriender as I can get things done on the boat I am building and not worry about her. The befriender is great with her and they both get on really well. I am very pleased with how things are going and would recommend the service to anyone who needs it".**

## Feeling safe, valued and respected

Creating an environment where people with dementia know that they have a significant say and will be listened to is an important way to show respect. Feeling safe and comfortable in someone's company to the point where verbal communication is not even necessary demonstrates a safe environment where someone's desire to not communicate is respected.

As the Forget Me Not project demonstrates, for people with advanced dementia who are no longer able to communicate verbally, this companionship can be sustaining.

As one volunteer befriender reports, **“What a world I discovered. Over the following months we began to speak a different language, the communication of quiet contemplation, of companionship, of smile and touch, of music and dance, of listening and picking up the mood”**.

Town Break's befrienders will take time to support someone in whatever they want to do, no matter how trivial it might seem. Befrienders understand that taking time to visit a local coffee shop or going for a drive in the car can help the person with dementia **“to feel re-connected to their community and often brings back special memories for them”**.

Other projects, such as Alzheimer Scotland's 'Knowing Me, Knowing You' project, make people feel valued by acknowledging their role in society and allowing them time to reminisce about their life. Befrienders at 'Knowing Me, Knowing You' support people with dementia to discuss and research a range of subjects from local heritage to working life or cultural changes.

Town Break is providing befriending through inter-generational work with schools and youth groups, including army cadets. People with dementia who were in the army have been reminiscing with young cadets about the differences between how things were 40 years ago and what people's experiences are now. People with dementia have felt valued and important in passing on their knowledge to the younger people. Staff reported that **“this has increased their self-esteem and confidence levels and has impacted on their social connectedness”**. This work is also helping to raise awareness of the value of older people and reduce stigma of dementia among young people.

## Case Study: Quarriers North Ayrshire Befriending Service

C was referred to the service by the Dementia Advisor at Alzheimer Scotland. He had been feeling really lonely since his wife had died two years before and was really keen to have a befriender.

C and his befriender have been building up a great relationship over the visits they have had and are really getting to know each other. C has poor mobility and is not as confident on his feet as he used to be. At present he would like to stay in the house and chat with his befriender, rather than go out. He hopes to build up his confidence to going out and this is one of his goals.

C loves to chat about his time in the Merchant Navy and he really enjoys looking through photos of his wife with his befriender, telling lots of stories, such as how he proposed to his wife after only one date. C always looks happy to see his befriender and they both chat and laugh throughout the visits.

C said **“I love having visitors. I don’t know when someone is coming to see me and I get fed up and lonely, especially since my wife died. My son comes to visit but he has to work and it’s a lot for him”**.

## Confidence to do the things that matter to me

According to recent research, befriending has helped befriendees to re-engage with their local community and participate in more social activities, often as a result of increased self-confidence.<sup>7</sup>

There has been a lot of evidence emerging from projects that befriending has enabled people living with dementia to gain the confidence to continue, or start again, to do things that are important to them.

**“I am happy to be going swimming again. I did this when I was younger and it’s so nice to be in the pool again. I am a strong swimmer and will try to come here more often.”** - Person with dementia.

### Case Study

One woman played the piano before her diagnosis and, over the years gradually reduced playing. We had mentioned to her that we have a piano at the Day Club and if she ever wanted to play, she was very welcome. Over the weeks with her befriender she had been talking about this more and more, and a few weeks ago she decided that she wanted to start playing again. She got the chance at a Day Club session and everyone enjoyed this enormously, including the woman herself. She is now very pleased with herself that she was able to do this and now plays whenever she comes across a piano!

The following quote from Town Break also demonstrates the need to raise awareness more widely about dementia in order to create an environment where people with dementia feel confident to do the things that they want to do.

**“One of our gentleman is now able to walk to his local grocery shop on his own to get his paper, something he hasn’t done for a while due to lack of confidence because of the stigma that he was experiencing.”**

<sup>7</sup> Befriending Networks, 2014: A Summary of Recent Research Evidence, About loneliness and social isolation, their health effects and the potential role of befriending

## Case Study

One of our befrienders is a strengthening coach (provides supports to improve strength and flexibility) and she befriends a lady, G, who has some mobility issues and has become very dependent on her husband, who is becoming very tired.

The befriender and client discussed whether going swimming would be helpful and the client was very keen to get back in the pool as she had always been a strong swimmer.

The befriender reports that G is now moving forward to better health and everyone is benefitting, especially G who is really enjoying being back in the pool again and feeling good about herself. Her husband is getting the chance to have a couple of hours to himself to relax which he says he is benefitting greatly from. He is able to meet his friends who he doesn't see very often these days.

Town Break has also been working with the MacRobert Arts Centre at Stirling University, who run dementia friendly film screenings in their film theatre, to advertise these events. This has led to people with dementia enjoying visits to the cinema again and shows the benefits of working in partnership.

**“Another client and volunteer spend time drawing. The volunteer tells us, ‘We went back to A’s for a cuppa and spent time looking through painting and sketching pads she did in the 1970s which she had dated so I am using them to jog her memory’. This volunteer knows the importance of cognitive stimulation through her visits.”**

The Eric Liddell Centre project, which provides befriending for carers, has partnered up with the carer’s organisation VOCAL to deliver information sessions to carers. It is early days but the project hopes that this will enable carers to feel confident in their caring role and to ensure that they are fully aware of their rights and options.

## How has befriending made a difference to my life?

There has been a lot of feedback from family and friends about the impact of befriending on their loved one. As the befriending projects develop and grow we hope to see more evidence from people living with dementia themselves about the impact that befriending has made to their lives.

Quarriers are recording the difference that befriending makes through Volunteer Logs which are completed after each visit. These logs outline progress towards goals set by the person with dementia, ranging from getting to know the befriender, to going out for tea and cake, to spending a whole afternoon undertaking different activities. They demonstrate the increasing confidence over time that befriending can provide to a person living with dementia. Some of the differences noted so far are **“becoming more independent and not having to rely on a carer/family to go out”** and **“feeling as though they are being themselves”**.

As mentioned earlier, the benefits of befriending for people with dementia can also extend to the family of the person being befriended. One carer at Town Break has reported that the improvement in her parent’s mood has had a positive effect on their relationship.

In some cases, it is difficult for the person with dementia to articulate the difference that befriending makes. Some projects, including Alzheimer Scotland, use observations made by family members or staff from the befriending or referral organisation on the changes in a person’s demeanor or well-being to determine the impact of the befriending relationship.

## Case Study

R is 93 and lives with his youngest son. He rarely leaves the house now and has lost confidence in social situations as he is very hard of hearing. He tried a day centre but hated it, saying: **“I don’t like playing cards or bingo”**. He rarely gets visitors now as all his friends have sadly passed away.

He has led an active life and had a career in London with Scotland Yard as a driver. He loves to reminisce about this period of his life and he has lots of stories to tell about his childhood in the west of Ireland where he grew up. He has lots of photos that he very proudly likes to share with his befriender.

Before he was introduced to his befriender, his son reported that his father’s mood was becoming quite low and he was refusing to get up or come downstairs some days.

**“Now he is like a different person; he loves to sit by the window of the living room with his befriender and chat away. He has a brilliant sense of humour. His befriender remarked one time that she hardly got ten words in during the whole hour she was there because there was so much he wanted to share with her.”**

Due to memory issues R might not be able to tell us himself what a difference his befriender has made to his life, but judging by our observations so far we would say that it definitely is making a huge difference to his mood, well-being and his sense of identity.

Befriending can also make a big difference to the volunteer. For volunteers who have been out of work for a while, volunteering provides an opportunity to rebuild confidence and gain new skills.

A volunteer at Quarriers commented **“I am enjoying volunteering and the training opportunities provided. I know I have the support of the Volunteer Co-ordinator and having her shadow me initially was great for my confidence”**.

## **Learning and progress for the befriending initiatives**

As well as looking at results for people living with dementia and carers, a secondary purpose for evaluation of the befriending projects is to find out how Life Changes Trust funding is helping to build stronger organisations, partnerships and leadership. This is useful to the projects but can also be useful to others who are thinking of starting their own befriending initiative. Again, it is important to remember that this report is an early stage report covering just the first year of projects that will run for five years.

## **Recruitment**

A common challenge encountered by projects has been around recruitment for staff posts and volunteers. In some cases, this had a knock-on effect, delaying the befriending work. Projects have reported that some delays in recruitment have been due to organisational restructuring, rebranding and general low turnover in the job market. However, broader issues like attitudes to dementia have surfaced as well, where it was difficult to find volunteers who did not just view people with dementia clinically, as a diagnosis, rather than as a person; or who could grasp the concept of people with dementia living well.

One solution to the recruitment issue has been to work in partnership with other organisations to write and advertise vacancies, spread the word through their networks or promote the project at different events.

Quarriers said **“After speaking to other organisations, in particular those that work in dementia, we learned about other sites to advertise on, widened our recruitment and were successful in appointing second time round”**.

Projects also acknowledge that the time commitment required of befrienders and the varying nature of the role from person to person makes it difficult to recruit and train befrienders. However, the main reason given for the difficulty in recruiting volunteers appears to be the lack of confidence to visit people with dementia in their own homes. There is a misunderstanding that befriending someone with dementia requires specialist expertise and significant experience in dementia.

Training and support for volunteers is crucial but sufficient knowledge about dementia to be a befriender can be learned by most people if they have the right character to be a befriender. It is also clear that a wider awareness raising of dementia and some myth busting needs to be carried out.

Time delays have also been incurred due to lengthy waits for Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) checks, which in some cases have taken up to three months.

In order to provide a service in the face of a shortage of volunteers, the Eric Liddell Centre offered group-befriending support while people wait to be matched with a befriender. Clients referred to the Haven at Home project are initially provided with one to one nurse support until volunteer befriender therapists have completed their training.

There can be issues around retaining volunteers. Some projects are looking at new sources of befrienders, for example, linking with universities and local colleges to recruit health and social care students and offering them the opportunity to be a befriender for a shorter period of time. The Eric Liddell Centre found success advertising with the Volunteer Centre and via networks with the MSc in Dementia at the University of Edinburgh.

Newer projects could benefit from the experience of projects that have been working in befriending for many years, linking up with other non-dementia-specific befriending organisations and using resources from the Befriending Network.<sup>8</sup> With the help of a project that has years of experience in befriending and managing volunteers, The Life Changes Trust is compiling a Top Tips leaflet that can be shared with others. The Trust will also bring project leaders together this year to attend a session on volunteering which will focus on addressing any issues around this theme.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.befriending.co.uk/>

The Eric Liddell Centre highlighted a particular barrier to carers taking up a befriending opportunity. Carers involved in their Lunch Breaks programme, which carers attend together with the person they care for, have commented that they would be unable to take up befriending for themselves if there is no one to care for their partner/family member/friend so they can be befriended.

This has led to the project sourcing funding to provide a befriending service for people with dementia alongside the service for carers. This will enable carers to benefit from befriending, happy in the knowledge that their partner/family member/friend is also being supported.

## Supporting and Training Volunteers

The befriending projects have developed excellent induction training for their volunteers but they are also keen to develop their volunteers so that, in time, their volunteering experience can lead to further education, training or employment. Alzheimer Scotland's 'Knowing Me, Knowing You' project is keen to develop an accreditation pathway in volunteering and is hoping to do this in partnership with the local council.

Whilst out and about raising awareness of the befriending projects, it has become clear that there is a need for more dementia-specific training for volunteers of other befriending organisations and projects have been willing and able to share their knowledge and experience.

Projects are aware that volunteer befrienders require an enormous amount of training and support to feel confident in their role and as dementia progresses in the person that they befriend. This could be a concern as the project and, therefore, the number of befrienders grows and steps are being put in place to ensure that this is manageable going forward.

At Town Break the Befriending Co-ordinator has learned that keeping working hours flexible brings benefits to people with dementia, carers and volunteers and that **“there are certain aspects of the job that need a bit more time and attention and it is not conducive to stop after the 15 hours and not work again until the following week as this can halt momentum”**.

When Quarriers realised that travel constraints, availability of volunteers and training courses were preventing volunteers from accessing training at their headquarters, the Volunteer Co-ordinator completed a Train the Trainers course enabling her to deliver training locally.

It has also been very encouraging to see that the Volunteer Co-ordinator at the Eric Liddell Centre has engaged in further training and is working with partner organisations to provide a range of supports, such as Mindfulness taster sessions, poetry writing, life story work and more practical support to carers around welfare rights and other information.

Town Break recently introduced their befrienders to life story work to equip them with the skills to encourage the person they befriend to reminisce about their childhood, their working life, family, holidays, hobbies etc.

**“This life story booklet can then be shared with family members, friends and future caregivers which gives them relevant information about how to best care for the individual.”**

### **Gathering the views of someone with dementia**

As mentioned previously, it has sometimes proved challenging for projects to gain feedback from the person with dementia where the dementia is more advanced or where a volunteer befriender has been placed with a care home resident who has no family contact. The Forget Me Not project has persevered to find the best way of capturing the impact of the work that their befrienders are doing.

**“We have tackled this by seeking feedback from those who care for people with dementia, including our volunteers, the staff and the families.”**

The Haven at Home project has considered a variety of ways to record impact for people affected by dementia using their volunteer therapist service, including the use of dementia diaries to record immediate impact following a befriender therapist visit.

Projects are trying different methods to elicit evidence of the impact of befriending. Involving people with dementia and carers in developing ways to record and feed back their experience is a process of trial and error but more likely to yield information.

However, not all suggestions have been embraced. For example, Town Break **“suggested that clients would keep a diary at home that was to be completed by themselves, their carer or by the befriender, however this turned out not to be such a big hit”**.

## Being flexible

In some cases, obtaining a diagnosis of dementia can take a long time. Projects have had to employ a common sense approach to delivering a service aimed at people in the early stages of dementia because not all people are in the early stages of dementia when they receive a diagnosis. A flexible approach has also been used in assessing whether to provide services to someone who clearly shows signs of dementia but who does not have an official diagnosis.

People with dementia may unexpectedly decide that they no longer want a befriender, which can be disappointing for a befriender and can knock their confidence. Town Break recently had a person with dementia who did not want to continue with befriending. Following a visit to the person, their carer and the volunteer the person now happily uses other Town Break services.

**“...sometimes things just don’t work out and we must always reflect this in our training to our befrienders as they may feel they have done something wrong when really sometimes this is to be expected with the nature of dementia and individual personalities.”**

As dementia progresses, projects will need to be flexible in their provision of befriending and the form that this takes will need to adapt over time. The Forget Me Not project discusses with the care home manager whether to involve the person with dementia in the initial introduction to the volunteer befriender.

**“What we have found is that this can be overwhelming for the person with dementia and they may refuse the service...we needed to look at tailoring the involvement on a person by person basis.”**

Town Break has also found that supporting carers requires patience and flexibility **“carers...are often under a huge amount of stress and we have learned that (supporting them) takes time to do well”**. Staff are trained to be patient and take time to listen to a carer at the initial home visit and on an ongoing basis through meetings at the carer’s home or while they attend services. Phone and email support is also provided.

## Referrals

Developing referral criteria for partners is not straightforward due to the unpredictable nature of dementia. Projects report the importance of putting in the effort to build positive working relationships with the managers of referral organisations in order to create an understanding that projects can complement each other. Project leaders have been skilled in networking locally and nationally and linking up with health and well-being initiatives, carers' organisations, Dementia Advisers and local third sector organisations. **“We had initially planned to target people in the earlier stages of dementia. However we are now realising that people's circumstances can change very rapidly in some situations, whereas other people may live well with dementia for a considerable time.”**

Quarriers had a lower level of referrals than anticipated and decided, with agreement from the Trust, to include referrals out with the agreed areas. **“We have learned that you have to be flexible as the numbers of referrals may not generate from planned areas.”**

## Benefits of Volunteer Gatherings

Town Break have held four joint volunteer meetings over the year:

**“Meetings cover a variety of topics including up to date policy and procedure information, hints and tips on communication, boundaries, timings of visits, etc. A lot of peer support takes place with befrienders sharing ideas and some of their experiences with others.”**

## Next steps

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Since submitting their first year report, the befriending projects have evolved further. A few have obtained small amounts of funding from other sources to expand what they are delivering and one project has already secured the match funding required to deliver the project from year three onwards. There is an enormous amount of partnership working happening which will add even greater value by offering people with dementia and their carers a range of activities to participate in, some of this with other Trust-funded projects. One project is considering working towards a Quality in Befriending Award.

The Trust is supporting the projects to address areas of challenge, particularly around qualitative evaluation and recruitment/retention of volunteers. We will also be helping some of them to improve their internet and social media presence.

The befriending projects keep up to date with the wider work of the Trust and many are involved with a number of projects, for example, on transport, housing and the development of DEEP groups. The projects do not stand alone but are an integral part of much that the Trust funds.

The seven befriending projects currently funded will continue to build on their progress to date, strengthening their self-evaluation processes to create a body of evidence of the positive impact of befriending for people with dementia and their carers.

Overall, the Trust believes that these projects have made good progress in the first year of their existence and are, without doubt, beginning to create better lives for people affected by dementia.

The second report from the befriending projects will be published in Spring 2018.

# Getting in touch

If you have any queries or wish to share your views and ideas, you can contact us in a number of ways:

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