

Policy

Volunteer Role Profile

Role	Friendly Talker
Summary of role	To make regular friendly calls to assigned clients who have requested them, providing friendly social contact and helping counter social isolation and/or loneliness. Calls would normally be on a regular weekly basis, but timing can be flexible to meet individual client requirements.
Key responsibilities	• Provide regular telephone support to assigned individuals. • Understand and work in line with the Friendly Talk guidance. • Act in line with the values and policies of RCG. • Record brief information about each call (name, date and time of call) for your records and to feed in to RCG metrics when required. • Flag any concerns or issues to the Friendly talker and walker team leader or the RCG Office Manager or a Trustee.
Specific skills	• Confident in having friendly, social conversations on the phone with a range of people. • Able to maintain confidentiality about individuals supported during volunteer activities. • Able to seek out further information and share with client if required.
Capabilities	• Excellent listening and communication skills. • Understanding of confidentiality. • Empathy, patience and sensitivity. • Reliability. • Flexibility. • Understanding of the local community and the resources available from RCG.

This policy will be subject to review at intervals of two years.

Policy approved and adopted by all Trustees June 2023.

Guidance For Friendly Talkers

The Friendly Talker Service

Our Friendly Talkers Service has been set up to provide our clients who want them with regular friendly calls, providing regular social contact and helping counter social isolation and/or loneliness. Even with one phone call a week you can improve someone's welfare and make a positive difference in their lives.

Calls will normally be on a weekly basis for up to 30 minutes, but this can be flexible to meet individual client needs. Friendly Talkers are **not** expected to

- Provide counselling or other therapeutic interventions.
- Be a coach.
- Provide advice.
- Sort out the client's problems.

Referrals

Referrals for our Friendly Talkers service can come from the individual client directly or from family, friends, neighbours or professionals. Referrals should be made to the RCG Office. The Office will contact the individual client requiring the Friendly Talker service to better understand their needs and then will assign a volunteer. The Friendly Talker volunteer will normally phone the same person each week or other determined frequency for a period of time.

There will be the option for the RCG Office to give the volunteer a code word to be used at the start of the first call with the individual client for client safety reasons. They will inform the client of the code word that will be used by the volunteer in the first call. This option, for the RCG office to give a code word, will be based on individual client needs.

General Guidance on Friendly Talker Sessions

Do

- Give the phone call your full attention in a quiet and calm environment without distraction.
- Be prepared to listen and let the person talk.
- Be helpful and sensitive.
- Use open questions such as Who, What, When, How, to help the conversation.
- Be respectful and take an interest in listening to their stories and feelings.
- Observe confidentiality (except if there is a requirement to report a Safeguarding issue).
- Be aware of and comply with RCG Safeguarding Policy.
- Flag or discuss any concerns or issues with the Office Manager or a Trustee, whilst maintaining confidentiality.
- Let the Friendly Talker Liaison or the Office Manager know if you need some help, support or guidance.
- Follow the values and policies of RCG.
- Maintain appropriate boundaries.
- Be knowledgeable of the client group needs and about the local community.

- Look out for your client possibly needing help with things that are outside your remit or needing referring on to other support services /agencies and seek advice from the Office Manager.
- Always stick to NHS and PHE guidance on Covid-19 should this come up in discussion.
- Keep to agreed times.
- Let the person know if you have to cancel a call.

Don't

- Become involved in any family disputes or personal affairs
- Enforce your own opinions on a person, for example your religious or political opinions
- Give your personal contact details to the client (unless you become comfortable to share your phone number). Calls should be prefixed with 141 (to withhold telephone number), or you can download the RCG phone App Vonage and this would mean the client sees the RCG phone number
- Accept any money or gifts of substance from the client
- Tolerate any abusive, discriminatory, or offensive language as detailed in RCG's Fairness and Equality policy

Your First Call

- You might feel a bit nervous about you first call but don't worry, that's normal. It's a good idea to devote some thought to your first call
- To get started make yourself comfortable and ensure you're in the right frame of mind for the call
- Use your code word given to you by the RCG Office (if you have one) to open the call.
- Try to put the client at ease
- Introduce yourself and say a little bit about who you are and what the Friendly Talker Service is (and isn't)
- Use open questions to help them to talk such as "how are you today"?
- You may want to ask them about the sorts of topics they would like to chat about
- Check you both have the same understanding and expectations of the Friendly Call Service.
- Establish the frequency and timing of future calls and if you want to continue to use a code word

Reporting

The volunteer should keep a brief note of the client name, date and time of each friendly call they make for their own records and also to feed in to RCG metrics when required.

Ending of Friendly Talks

At some point, for one reason or another, regular Friendly Talks with a client will come to an end. For example, the service user no longer needs the service, or circumstances change and someone moves away, or the Friendly Talks have matured into a friendship. Endings which are planned, discussed and understood by all parties are more positive for those involved than endings which happen suddenly and whose reasons are not clarified.

Expenses

Expenses to reimburse the cost of phone calls will not normally be paid as most people have phone contracts that cover sufficient call time. In the event that this is not the case the volunteer should discuss and agree any expenses in advance with the Office Manager.

Appendix

Some Questions You May Find Helpful for Your Calls

- How are you today? How are you feeling today?
- What sort of day have you had?
- What have you been doing today?
- What have you been doing since the last time I spoke with you?
- What have you done this week?
- How's your week been?
- How are you and your family?
- Have you got any family support locally?
- What is your favourite food?
- What did you have for lunch?
- Can you tell me more?
- Have you been out today?
- What do you think of the weather today/this week?
- Have you been able to get out at all?
- What makes you smile?
- What are you watching on TV?
- What sort of things do you enjoy doing?

This guidance will be subject to review at intervals of two years.

Guidance approved and adopted by all Trustees June 2023.



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