

Policy

Volunteer Role Profile

Role	Friendly Walker
Summary of role	To make regular friendly walks with assigned clients who have requested them, providing friendly social contact and helping counter social isolation and/or loneliness. Walks would normally be on a regular basis (e.g. weekly/fortnightly), but timing can be flexible to meet individual client requirements. Friendly Walkers have the option to go with their client for Coffee and Cake at a local venue as part of the Friendly Walk, if the client wants to do this.
Key responsibilities	• Provide regular walking support to assigned individuals, including confirming meeting arrangements for each walk. • Understand and work in line with the Friendly Walkers guidance. • Act in line with the values and policies of Redbourn Community Group (RCG). • Record brief information about each walk (name, date and time of call) for your records and to feed in to RCG metrics. • 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 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	• Has a reasonable level of physical fitness to undertake local walks of up to an hour duration without a stop. • Excellent listening and communication skills. • Understanding of confidentiality. • Empathy, patience and sensitivity. • Reliability. • Flexibility. • Understanding of the local community and the resources available from the RCG.

Guidance

For Friendly Walkers

Our Friendly Walkers Service has been set up to provide our clients who want them with regular friendly walks, providing regular social contact and helping counter social isolation and/or loneliness. Even with one walk every week or fortnight in the fresh air, we hope to make a difference to someone's welfare and make a positive difference in their lives.

This support is being provided in partnership with Active in Redbourn (AIR), which is an exciting initiative seeking to encourage physical and mental wellbeing throughout Redbourn.

Referrals

Referrals for our Friendly Walker service can come from the individual client directly or from family, friends, neighbours or professionals. Referrals should be made in the first instance to the Redbourn Community Group (RCG) office. The office will contact the individual client requiring the Friendly Walker service to better understand their needs and then will assign a volunteer. The office will also ascertain whether the client has any specific requirements that may need to be shared with the assigned volunteer for safety reasons. The office will also make it clear that the volunteer walker has no first aid skills. The client will be advised to always have their RCG emergency card with them on all walks.

Once the office has matched the volunteer and the individual then the volunteer will contact them to arrange a date and time for the walk. There will be the option for the 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 RCG office to give a code word will be based on individual client needs.

Further walks will normally be arranged by contacting the office. It could be that the same volunteer walks with the same client so the arrangement is made between the client and the volunteer, but the office will always need to be informed of the date and time. There is also an option for the volunteers to join the WhatsApp group.

Establishing Frequency and Dates for Walks

During the first walk with the volunteer and the client, they should agree the frequency and next date(s) for their subsequent walks. Walks will normally be on a weekly or fortnightly basis for up to 30-45 minutes, but this can be flexible to meet individual client needs.

At the first meeting the volunteer may ask the office for an RCG yellow Hi-Vis vest, so they are easily recognised by the client.

If a code word has been used in the first call, then the volunteer and client can discuss if they wish to continue using a codeword for future calls.

If Hertfordshire Health Walks resume in the village, RCG will encourage clients to progress to this activity, if appropriate, so that more clients can benefit from these activities.

Volunteer Do's and Don'ts

Do

- Arrange a suitable public place in Redbourn to meet with car parking access if required
- Make sure you have your mobile phone with you during the walk, in case of emergency
- Check in with the client how far they would like to walk, any preferences for route and speed, any amends because of poor weather etc
- Check that the client has their RCG emergency card with them before the walk commences

Walk at a suitable speed for the client and on suitable terrain, stopping when needed

- Ask the client for feedback during each walk to ensure the client's needs are being met
- 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
- Respect the client as an individual
- Observe confidentiality (except if there is a requirement to report a Safeguarding issue)
- Be aware of and comply with RCG Safeguarding Policy
- Keep to agreed times
- Let the person know if you have to cancel a walk and rearrange a time/day to suit you both
- Flag or discuss any concerns or issues with the Office Manager or a Trustee, whilst maintaining confidentiality
- Follow the values and policies of RCG
- Be knowledgeable of the client group needs and about the local community
 - Always follow the latest NHS and public health guidance relating to meeting others, including wearing of masks when and where required or requested by either party
- Pay for your own Coffee/Cake if your walk involves going to a local venue, and let the client pay for their Coffee/Cake

Don'ts

- Walk in poor weather or on unsuitable terrain for the client
- Take your dog with you as this may act as a distraction from the needs of the client
- Become involved in any family issues or personal affairs
- Go into the client's house
- Enforce your own opinions on a person, for example your religious or political opinions
- Give health or COVID advice of any type
- Accept any money or gifts of substance from the client
- Tolerate any abusive, discriminatory, or offensive language
- 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
- Confuse RCG friendly walks with other activities such as Hertfordshire Health Walks. The latter are controlled and monitored by Hertfordshire County Council, which take a group of walkers (when restrictions allow on 1-5-mile walks), with trained health walk leaders, many of whom also have first aid skills

Reporting

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

Ending of Friendly Walks

At some point, for one reason or another, regular Friendly Walks with a client will come to an end (See ref. to Hertfordshire Health Walks). For example, the service user no longer needs the service, or the volunteer's or client's circumstances change, or the Friendly Walks 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 the reasons are not clarified.

Expenses

Most walks are expected to occur within the village at no cost. Travel expenses to meet outside the village will not be covered.

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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