

### Purpose of the befriending service

- To provide regular friendly calls to people living with epilepsy who are feeling lonely or isolated either by phone or online.
- Help to access information about epilepsy provided on our website or signpost them to our helpline if they have more specific questions.
- Signpost them to our other services (Groups, Counselling, e-learning)
- Talk about hobbies and interests and positive things that are happening
- Provide gentle encouragement and motivation to be more open about their epilepsy and ask for support to enable them to make more social connections in their community.

### How it works

- Service users can self refer or anyone can make a referral on their behalf if they have their prior consent
- We conduct triage calls to ensure that the service user understands what the service is and meets the eligibility criteria
- We try to match service users with volunteers based on their interests wherever possible
- When matched, the volunteer will call the service user at the same time each week as agreed for 12 weeks
- Calls typically last half an hour and they can chat about anything
- If the service user is unavailable to receive a scheduled call, they can discuss and rearrange to another time/day that week if the volunteer is also able to do that. If not, they will miss their call that week
- If the volunteer is unavailable to make a scheduled call, they can discuss and rearrange to another time/day that week if the service user is also able to do that. If not, they will add an extra week onto the end of their 12-week schedule
- We will consider exceptional circumstances when applying these service guidelines.

### Eligibility criteria

Potential service users need to be

- Over the age of 18
- Be based in the UK
- Be living with epilepsy themselves or have a close connection with someone living with epilepsy
- Acknowledge that they feel isolated or lonely
- Have agreed to the referral
- Understands that befriending calls are just for regular friendly chats for 12 weeks
- Able to form a friendly relationship with the volunteer they are matched with
- Able to remember and keep appointments or have assistance available to do so
- Prepared to provide evaluation at the end of the service.

### **The service is not**

- Delivered by training mental health specialists
- A counselling service – we do have a separate counselling service available in [Northern Ireland](#) and [Wales](#)
- A crisis service – it is not suitable for people with current suicidal intent/active plan
- An advice service – although we will signpost people to our [Epilepsy Action Helpline](#)
- A specialist service for those with advanced dementia, substance misuse/addictions or those with complex mental health. Those who we assess as falling into one of those categories will be referred to appropriate support.