

Project Scope

This pilot project will deliver a volunteer-led befriending service, accessible by people living across the Teesdale area. The pilot will run over an 18month period, as all partners recognise the limitations with a 12 month pilot.

The service has moved away from a name including 'befriending' as feedback from potential service users has highlighted that the term is not something that people relate well to and in some circumstances people have gone further and said that the term could cause offence.

The current working title of the project is suggested as '**Time Together**'. This has developed in response to feedback from a group of volunteers who UTASS is working with on other activities. When asked about the name they highlighted the dual benefit of the project- i.e. not only to those who receive visits but also to the volunteers involved. It is the time that the two spend together that provides company and the associated benefits, hence 'Time Together'.

The project will be led by a part-time Coordinator, supported by a part-time Administrator. The Coordinator will be employed by UTASS, with day to day line management support being provided by Teesdale Day Clubs. A small group of volunteers will be recruited (initially suggesting 8) who will provide one-to-one contact for older or isolated people. We envisage that the majority of contact will be face to face, however will also offer via phone/ digital means, should that be a preferred option.

This pilot project will begin on a small scale with a targeted client or service-user in mind: the most obviously or critically frail, elderly, house-bound, isolated and/or lonely person still living independently, or with a Family Carer.

The project will be based on national models, and we have a contact with a similar well-established rural service in Ryedale, North Yorkshire.

Aims

- Work together as a partnership to develop and deliver a pilot scheme which meets some of the needs of the most vulnerable, lonely and isolated people living in Teesdale.
- Provide one2one support in people's own homes when they are in need of companionship
- Reduce impacts of isolation (geographical, emotional) for people who are living alone, have health issues which means they are housebound, or are feeling lonely
- Provide an opportunity for family carers to take time out/have respite from their caring responsibilities
- Provide a volunteering opportunity that is varied, supported and offers an unique opportunity to gain skills and experience of working with people

In addition to these aims, we will also ensure seek to maximise the opportunity to gather evidence and learning that could further inform future projects, not only across Teesdale and the wider Durham Dales but other parts of the county.

Expected Outcomes

- People living across Teesdale at greatest risk of loneliness have the opportunity for companionship, helping them to feel less isolated and more connected with their community
- People with caring responsibilities in Teesdale feel more able to cope, thanks to having the opportunity for the person that they are caring for to have the opportunity of companionship

Sustainability

As a pilot project, one of our aims is to gather data, through real-time experience and by monitoring and analysing take-up and impacts, on the extent of need and how to take the pilot forward into an established project if this is supportable. This will determine the longer-term future sustainability.