



VOLUNTEER ROLE DESCRIPTION

Face-to-Face Befriender

Tower Hamlets Friends & Neighbours

Reports to: Designated THFN coordinator

Time commitment: 1 – 2 hours per week (or 2 – 3 hours fortnightly)

Minimum commitment: 6 months

Location: Across Tower Hamlets — in the home of the older neighbour you visit

Expenses: All travel and out-of-pocket expenses paid

Training: Full training and ongoing support provided

Check required: Enhanced DBS check (we organise and pay)

About us

Tower Hamlets Friends & Neighbours (THFN) has been befriending older residents across the borough since 1947. We turn up — in person, on the phone, at appointments, on outings. For people who would otherwise spend the week without seeing anyone, we are sometimes the only knock on the door.

We do small things, week in and week out. A regular visit. A standing phone call. A trip to the GP that wouldn't happen alone. A monthly social where 25 to 40 older neighbours come together for tea, food and conversation.

We do what we say we will do. When we cannot help, we say so honestly rather than promise what we cannot deliver. We work alongside the people we visit, not on top of them.

We particularly need volunteers who speak Bengali, Sylheti, Somali or Cantonese. Older neighbours are waiting for a befriender in their first language.

About the role

As a Face-to-Face Befriender, you visit one older neighbour at home, weekly or fortnightly, for around an hour. We match you carefully — we think about what you each enjoy, what languages you speak, where you live, what time of day suits you both.

The visit is shaped by what the person you visit wants. Some prefer tea and conversation at the kitchen table. Some want a walk to the local shop or sit in the park if the weather's nice. Some want help reading a letter or making sense of an appointment. Some simply want company.

You are not a carer. You are a regular friendly face. Behind you is a full team — our coordinator, our safeguarding lead, our trustees — and you are never alone with a difficult situation.

Most of our face-to-face befrienders find they look forward to their visit as much as the person they visit does. Older neighbours have long, varied lives and a lot to share. It is rarely a one-way exchange.

What you'll do

- Visit your matched older neighbour weekly or fortnightly at a time that works for you both
- Spend around an hour each visit doing whatever they need — usually a mix of conversation, tea, light walks, or just being present
- Log a short note after each visit so we know how you both are
- Flag any concerns to our coordinator promptly — changes in health, isolation, safeguarding worries
- Attend a peer support session once every couple of months
- Let us know in good time if you need to cancel a visit

What we ask of you

- A willingness to listen and to turn up reliably
- Patience, particularly when conversations move slowly or repeat themselves
- Discretion — what is said in a visit stays in the visit, except for safeguarding concerns which go straight to our coordinator
- Comfortable spending time one-to-one in someone's home
- Honesty if the match isn't working — we can rematch
- A 6-month minimum commitment, because consistency is what makes the difference

What you get from us

- The chance to make a meaningful, sustained difference to one older neighbour's life
- Full induction and ongoing free training — dementia awareness, safeguarding, communication, loneliness in later life
- All travel and out-of-pocket expenses paid promptly
- Regular peer support and one-to-one supervision from our coordinator
- A reference after six months of consistent volunteering
- Connection with a wider volunteer community across Tower Hamlets
- The chance to learn from someone whose life has been long, varied and interesting

How to apply

Apply online at thfn.org.uk/volunteer-form. It takes about 10 minutes.

If you'd like to talk to someone first, or you'd rather apply by phone or email, contact us on 020 3007 9120 or admin@thfn.org.uk. We're happy to send the form by post or read it through with you over the phone.

After we receive your application we'll be in touch within a week to arrange an informal chat. From there it's a DBS check, a short training session, and a match with the older neighbour you'll be visiting or calling.