



VOLUNTEER ROLE DESCRIPTION

Telephone Befriender

Tower Hamlets Friends & Neighbours

Reports to: Designated THFN coordinator

Time commitment: 1 hour per week (one weekly call of 20 – 45 minutes)

Minimum commitment: 6 months

Location: From your own home, workplace, or anywhere quiet with a phone signal — no need to be in Tower Hamlets

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

Telephone befriending is one of our most powerful services. A regular weekly phone call — same person, same time — gives an older neighbour something to look forward to and someone to be missed by.

As a Telephone Befriender, you are matched with one older neighbour and call them once a week. Calls are typically 20 to 45 minutes. You can volunteer from your own home, your workplace, your kitchen table — anywhere with a quiet phone signal.

We have telephone benders who do their calls during their lunch break, after the school run, on the train home, or in the evenings. The role is unusually flexible. The only fixed thing is the same time each week — that consistency is what makes it work.

Crucially, you do not need to be in Tower Hamlets to be a telephone befriender. We welcome volunteers from anywhere in the UK who can commit to a weekly call.

What you'll do

- Call your matched older neighbour once a week at an agreed time
- Listen well — most calls are mostly listening — and chat about whatever they want to talk about
- Log a short note after each call
- Flag any concerns to our coordinator — changes in mood, health, isolation, safeguarding worries
- Attend a peer support session once every couple of months (online)
- Let us know promptly if you'll miss a call so we can phone them in your place

What we ask of you

- A warm telephone manner and the ability to listen well
- Reliability — the same time each week matters more than the length of the call
- Discretion and respect for confidentiality
- A quiet space and a reliable phone signal for the duration of the call
- Comfortable with pauses, repetition, and conversations that meander
- A 6-month minimum commitment

What you get from us

- Make a meaningful difference in just one hour a week, from anywhere
- Free training in safeguarding, dementia awareness, active listening
- Online peer support with other telephone benders
- One-to-one supervision from our coordinator
- A reference after six months
- The flexibility to volunteer around work, study or caring responsibilities
- Phone call costs covered if you ask — we do not want this to cost you money

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.