



Safeguarding & Good Practice Guidelines for those offering Drop-In or Befriending Services

Being Alongside's work is based on Christian values. As Jesus commanded his followers to walk with the needy, the vulnerable, the sick and the isolated, we aim to do the same. What we do for them we do for him (Matt 25:40).

In terms of general safeguarding protocols, those with poor mental health are considered "Vulnerable Adults". Their ability to protect themselves from violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation may be impaired by physical or mental disability, illness, old age or emotional fragility. It is therefore imperative that all drop-ins or befriending relationships operate within strict guidelines to protect the vulnerable as well as those who work with and alongside them.

Being Alongside promotes support of vulnerable adults in drop-in or befriending contexts and in doing so seeks to work in ways that empower those with specific vulnerabilities, so that they are able to maintain control of their own lives and decisions. A focus on fostering their gifts and abilities rather than simply addressing their needs is encouraged. We believe all are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26) and are therefore to be honoured and respected.

Recommendations for One-to-One Befriending Schemes

- By the nature of their relationship, Befrienders are likely to have unsupervised contact with vulnerable adults. Every Befriender must therefore possess an Enhanced DBS Check before any befriending relationship can commence. This check should be repeated every 3 years.
- At least two written character references should be obtained for a Befriender before any befriending relationship commences.
- 'Same gender' befriending relationships are advisable in many cases.
- All Befrienders should receive training before establishing any befriending relationships. Training should cover expectations around risk, lone-working, signposting to other services, confidentiality and record-keeping. It is important that all Befrienders understand what is expected and acceptable in terms of befriending relationships in order to create a safe environment for both parties.
- Accountability, transparency and good record-keeping are essential for all befriending relationships.
- All Befrienders should be given access to some kind of monitoring/"supervision" from a Befriending Supervisor or another Befriender.

Recommendations for Drop-In Services

- All Drop-In groups should be overseen by a “Supervisor” – a person (or persons) who will assume supervisory responsibility.
- “Supervisors” must hold a valid Enhanced DBS Check which should be renewed every 3 years.
- At least one “Supervisor” must be present at all meetings of the group.
- There should always be a minimum of two volunteer staff present at any session.
- It is recommended that all sessions take place in a public space with good phone reception and easy entry/exit access.
- Sessions should run at advertised and specified times.
- A “Supervisor” should be involved in the planning of any ‘official’ group organised events to be held elsewhere.
- All volunteers involved in Drop-In Facilities should hold a valid Enhanced DBS Check, renewed every 3 years. If a volunteer does not have this certificate, they should not have any one-to-one/unsupervised contact with a vulnerable adult.
- It is recommended that volunteers avoid being on their own with vulnerable adults.
- A Risk Assessment should be completed in advance of setting up a Drop-In, to include contact points within local statutory services for the raising of any concerns about individuals’ welfare. The Risk Assessment should be reviewed at least annually. A copy should always be available at Drop-In Sessions.
- All volunteers should receive training before commencing volunteering and have read the Risk Assessment.
- All volunteers should be aware of the group’s procedures for dealing with those in distress or crisis situations.
- Private meetings between individual volunteers and members of the group are discouraged. Any that do take place are considered to be outside the remit and regulation of the Drop-In. All members should be made aware of this. Group supervisors are not liable for any issues arising as a result of private arrangements which are conducted outside the agreed structure of the group.

Useful Contacts

If you are operating under the umbrella of a faith organisation, their Safeguarding Officer will be able to support you with the necessary safeguarding/DBS checks. This will include advice on obtaining references and safe recruitment of volunteers.

Alternatively, please visit the following websites for information about DBS checks:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1059974/Quick Guide to DBS Checks.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1059974/Quick_Guide_to_DBs_Checks.pdf) or

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disclosure-application-process-for-volunteers/disclosure-application-process-for-volunteers>. An umbrella organisation will carry out checks on your behalf. Companies that do this include

<https://www.ukdbschecks.com/>

Disclaimer: Information provided on this factsheet is given in good faith based on the experience of Being Alongside. It is not legally binding and we recommend consulting the Disclosure Barring Service with individual concerns relating to befriending and drop-in initiatives