



Setting Up a Befriending Training Course

FIRST THINGS FIRST...

Recruit Trainers – Your training course co-ordinator/lead should have experience in the local Mental Health system – do you have someone with this knowledge in your group? It is also helpful to share delivering the training between members of your group to spread the load and make things more varied for trainees. You may know people with experience in a certain topic are who are happy to speak to a small group.

Course Programme - Form a planning group to decide times and dates for training sessions, topics to be covered, session leaders and the length of each session. Allow time for breaks. Once the time necessary for the course is confirmed, possible dates can be considered.

Funding - Set course budget. Set up costs will be highest for the first course you run. You may need to allow for a flip chart, stand and pens; equipment to show video clips and/or PowerPoint slides; costs of producing hand-outs; advertising costs. Make a list of items for future reference. Will you need to pay for hire of the venue? You are also likely to need to provide tea/coffee and biscuits for breaks. You may consider providing meals as groups 'gel' better if eat together. Do you have access to crockery and cutlery? Do you need to apply for funding? (Being Alongside currently offers a grant scheme, inviting bids for up to £2,000 – see our website for more details.)

Venue - You need to consider how many people you expect to attend and the maximum number of participants you can accommodate. Ensure your venue is accessible – both for those with mobility or other issues and for public transport/parking. Research what is available locally and check costs and availability.

GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS...

Recruit Helpers - Decide who will welcome the trainees to the venue and how to record attendance. Where will trainees need to register on arrival? Will they complete an application form in advance or will they do this at the first session? Who will be responsible for refreshments/hospitality? Who will provide any meals you offer? Ensure this is clear to all helpers.

Advertise to attract people. Who will do this and what help will they need? The reason for the course, dates and venue all need to be clear on any publicity material. Consider where and how you will advertise. Consider posters/flyers in local shops, surgeries, Post Offices, libraries, CAB, or churches/other faith community spaces. Use your website and any other social media you may be linked to for promoting the course. Some of this may have a cost attached. Brainstorm for other ideas.

Venue Information: Make sure you are familiar with the venue. Everyone needs to know the location of the toilets, fire exit(s), kitchen, light switches and power sockets. Do you have a First Aid box? Ensure you are aware of the cleaning requirements.

First Session: Include information about the venue and the importance of being non-judgemental and confidentiality. Setting some group "rules" with the group can help.

All Course Sessions: Beware of jargon and abbreviations that can be divisive or alienating. Inclusive language is vital. We all have mental health needs; it is not about "them" and "us". Gently challenge comments about "them" and what "they" do that may promote stigma. Ensure your own language is not inappropriate— asking people to be non-judgemental, inclusive, to speak up or be punctual will do no good if you are not demonstrating those qualities yourself.

Topics should include understanding mental health; what the role of the befriender is/is not; safeguarding; DBS checks; what is meant by 'spiritual' and 'pastoral' care; support for befrienders, e.g. mentors, support groups/meetings where the befriender can find help or advice. Talks by experienced befrienders are always popular and helpful.

Other Potential Topics. These might include 'Pastoral Care', 'Spirituality' or what we mean by pastoral care. What do trainees understand by the word 'spiritual'? We all have spiritual needs as well as mental and physical needs. What are they? How do we meet our own? How do they relate to mental health? How do we ensure they are not neglected?

Styles of Training. Consider using role play, listening exercises, setting tasks for small groups and/or the whole group (helping to recognise both our own and others' strengths and weaknesses), using short videos on a relevant subject which could promote discussions over lunch. Try to include an 'active' exercise after lunch to re-focus everyone's attention. Are there any useful case studies to assist trainees' understanding?

Course evaluation. Consider whether you would prefer a simple course evaluation/feedback form at the end of the course or at the end of each day. Evaluations let you know what has been successful and what might need to be changed in future. How can you value achievement and commitment? Recognise that different groups of trainees might have differing needs.

AFTER THE COURSE

Check in with trainers and helpers for their feedback. Remember to thank them for taking part. If anyone has doubts about any of the trainees, this is a good time to express them or share any anxieties. If a trainee is unhappy to continue, try to explore this further with them too. Maybe they can help the group in another role.

Plan the Matching Meeting. A small group of training facilitators or those involved in the course can be involved in meeting to decide on matching befrienders with 'befriendees'. Consider whether you wish to have received the trainees' references and DBS checks ahead of this meeting.

Disclaimer: Information provided on this factsheet is given in good faith based on the experience of Being Alongside and is not legally binding