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**Community Companions Guidance**

**Be patient**

Your befriendee will probably have hundreds of stories to tell you, stories that they may not have been able to tell in years, so you might end up hearing the same ones again and again, or a few to which the end might have been forgotten.

But try not to finish the story for them, or hurry them along - one of the huge benefits of your company is that it's a reason to remember and discuss their past with a new person, which is thought to help stave off dementia.

Additionally, they might forget when you last phoned and berate you for not phoning more often, but remind them pleasantly when you last phoned and remember, they’re only grumpy because your company means the world to them. But on that note...

**Keep your promises**

Think seriously about what you'll be able to offer.

Don't get carried away with the novelty and promise five hours a week, when realistically you'll only be able to phone twice a week for half an hour.

 - the person you're befriending will probably come to rely on your calls and you don't want to let them down.

Be honest from the start with what you're able to offer, and you'll both know where you stand.

Remember, for you an half an hour speaking with your new friend is just one element of your busy week; for them it could be the beacon of hope they wait for every day.

**Commit... but don't overcommit**

Remember that your reason for phoning is to chat and keep them company, no more.If they require odd items of shopping or a prescription to be collected refer them to the other volunteers in place to do those jobs.After all we don’t want either of you to blur the lines between 'befriender' and 'helper'!

**Interact**

You aren't supposed to sit quietly whilst your befriendee waxes lyrically about the good old days - it's supposed to be a conversation, not a monologue or a therapy session.

Share as many details about your personal life as you're comfortable doing; that way you might end up getting good advice, or at least a different perspective on any issues troubling you, as well as someone who'll rejoice in your good news.

That said, it should go both ways - make sure you leave having listened to them tell you about their week.

And if conversation takes a while to start flowing, ask questions that will get them talking. Like what jobs did you do? Where were you born? What school did you go to? Do/did you have any hobbies?

**Get ready to feel good**

You might not expect just how fond you'll get of the person waiting for your calls.

Odds are you'll quickly develop a routine with them - or discussing the news, or joking about a sports team - but that routine will become as dear to you as it is to them.

Taking a moment out of your life to be truly altruistic and help a fellow human in need with something as simple and basic as companionship tends to have far-reaching benefits that extend beyond the phone call.

You'll feel better, and they'll feel better, and because of you, the world will be a slightly better place.

**Safeguarding**

If during your phone conversation you become aware of any safeguarding issue it is important that you share you concerns with the Community Warden Richard Sinden either by email Richard.sinden4@kent.gov.uk or by phoning 07969583920. He will pass on this information to the relevant authorities.

Domestic abuse can take different forms, including:

physical abuse

sexual abuse

financial abuse

coercive control / emotional abuse

digital / online abuse

You are not breaking your confidentiality with the client as welfare issues override data protection laws. Please also find attached the Our Place Wye Safeguarding policy.