Older people

Research summary 3
A list of key findings from research studies and evaluations that show the positive impact of mentoring and befriending
General summary

There is a wealth of evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of befriending and mentoring interventions with older people and this is demonstrated by the research gathered together in this document. Befriending schemes with vulnerable older people, particularly those who are socially isolated, socially excluded and at risk of depression are shown to have a positive impact on their health and well-being outcomes. With an increasingly ageing population, the need for greater investment in a range of befriending schemes to meet the support needs of older people, is also demonstrated through this body of research.

Alongside befriending, there is growing evidence that mentoring can also play a part in addressing some of the additional factors associated with successful ageing such as increased physical activity and better health with some examples included in the pages that follow. Both interventions can expand the ‘social capital’ of older people through helping to expand the networks available to them and the impact on reducing loneliness and its commonly related effects of depression are documented here.

The research also demonstrates the important value placed by many services users on the voluntary nature of the befriending service highlighting how this distinguishes the support offered by a volunteer who has ‘chosen to come’ from that of statutory professionals. The cost-effectiveness of schemes as a part of preventative measures is also recognised.

The research as a whole shows that befriending has a valuable part to play in supporting older people and we strongly recommend that health and social care commissioners invest in preventative community services such as befriending and mentoring schemes and that it is recognised as a suitable part of an integrated package of care and support for older people at all levels of vulnerability.
A list of key findings from research studies and evaluations that show the positive impact of mentoring and befriending

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Research details with main findings</th>
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| Befriending  | **Dignity in Practice: An exploration of the care of older adults in acute NHS Trusts**  
This study sought to explore the experiences of service users and their carers plus interviews and observation of the behaviours and practices of providers, from which explicit recommendations and guidance on the provision of dignified care can be developed.  
  
- One of the key findings was that an enabler of dignified care was the use of volunteers to assist staff and that this could be used to great effect to reduce the social isolation of many older people on acute wards. The use of volunteers, whilst in no way compensating for experienced staff can help to improve patient dignity, by ensuring people’s calls for assistance do not go unanswered, ensuring patients are served promptly, running errands and providing companionship and social engagement.  
  
Source: Win Tadd, Alex Hillman, Sian Calnan, Michael Calnan, Tony Bayer, Simon Read; Cardiff University / University of Kent, 2011  
Report: [http://www.netscc.ac.uk/hsdr/files/project/SDO_ES_08-1819-218_V01.pdf](http://www.netscc.ac.uk/hsdr/files/project/SDO_ES_08-1819-218_V01.pdf) |
| Befriending  | **How can local authorities with less money support better outcomes for older people?**  
This paper draws on evidence and includes befriending as one of the valued interventions that older people like. It argues that local agencies should work together and with community and voluntary sector groups and providers shape a local market and networks of self-help and support, thinking beyond conventional ‘social care’. Central to this is a sharper focus on the assistance that older people need and choose, on their experiences and on involving older people in designing support. |
### Befriending (to improve health, well-being of vulnerable people at risk of social isolation or exclusion from society – including older people among other groups)

### Befriending works: building resilience in local communities

A report into befriending, an intervention to help improve health and well-being at all levels of need. It provides an overview of how befriending can contribute to improving the health and well-being outcomes of vulnerable people at risk of social isolation or exclusion from mainstream society. It sets out the need for befriending services as an effective service in many ways and includes a range of case studies that demonstrate how this is happening in practice.

**Key recommendations:**

- For the Department of Health to advocate for befriending as an effective intervention in social care planning so that it is recognised and adopted as part of integrated packages of care and support for people at all levels of vulnerability.
- Commitment by health and social care commissioners at national and local level to investment in preventative community services such as befriending schemes, in recognition of their particular effectiveness at times of fiscal constraint.
- Local Authorities and health commissioning bodies to identify and include representation from befriending schemes in the development of joint strategic needs assessment and preventative commissioning strategies, at an early stage of planning.
- Local Authorities and health commissioning bodies to continue the capacity for direct contract or grant funding third sector organisations providing befriending services in their local communities to help them achieve local early intervention and prevention targets.
- Befriending to be recognised by commissioners and care managers as a legitimate activity that can be purchased by individuals eligible for social care budgets.

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**Source:** Centre for Policy on Ageing, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2011

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| Befriending | **The role befriending can play in older people’s well-being**  
An article which looks at the findings of research into the importance of prevention work with older people and suggests there may be a case for expanding befriending interventions.  

*Source:* Martin Knapp, Margaret Perkins; Community Care Magazine, Issue 8, July 2010  
|---|---|
| **Befriending and mentoring with Older People** (reducing depression, rural isolation, increasing physical activity, reaching out to BME elders) | **LinkAge Plus national evaluation: End of project report**  
Final evaluation of the LinkAge Plus Programme pilots which aimed to improve outcomes for older people and activities and includes information about the effects on the lives of older people, on how care and support can be provided and on costs. Some of the pilots included mentoring and befriending activity:  

**Examples and key findings:**  
- **Healthy Hips and Hearts** was a general physical fitness programme in Salford. This is a series of predominantly chair-based exercises, devised by a physiotherapist but delivered through volunteer mentors, around activities of daily living. The aim is to encourage older people to participate in the exercises so that they will remain as independent as possible. Exercise sessions have been delivered in various locations across Salford including community rooms, day centres, residential/care homes, hospital units and sheltered housing schemes. By the end of piloting, LinkAge Plus had supported the training of 119 mentors between them running 64 groups. Almost 1,000 older people in Salford had attended Healthy Hips and Hearts classes and... |
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<th>over 3,600 were in receipt of a regular Healthy Hips and Hearts newsletter (pilot data).</th>
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<td><strong>In Nottinghamshire</strong>, an Activity Friends scheme has been established, which works with volunteer senior peer mentors, to reach out to the over 50s and encourage them to take part in physical activity. The scheme has a social dimension, which also helps reduce social isolation and is an important factor in people keeping up their new activities.</td>
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<td><strong>In Devon</strong>, a new style of deep outreach service was offered for older people who were experiencing a downturn in their lives. These individuals were at higher-than-average risk of isolation, social exclusion and poor health. Mentors visited people and prompted them to become involved in stimulating creative and social activities, either in small, informal, friendly groups in local community venues or in their own homes. Among other findings there was a significant reduction in the number of older people with depression.</td>
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<td>Devon has also worked to establish specialist <strong>community mentors</strong> to meet the needs of BME elders and to provide culturally specific information events. They report (Devon, 2008) that the fact that they come from similar ethnic backgrounds with knowledge of religious, gender and ethnic issues makes them much more acceptable to community elders in a way that outsiders are not. Recruitment from BME communities has also enabled the development of skills and a greater degree of understanding between different community groups.</td>
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<td><strong>Rowlands Gill and Chopwell Live at Home schemes</strong>: an existing scheme which was intended to combat rural isolation through ‘low level’ activities such as befriending, advocacy, and home visiting and run by local volunteers in the rural west of Gateshead. The pilot funding enabled evaluation of the existing provision with a view to extending it further across the borough. A new group developed in Blackhall Mill, a very rural area, and focused on specific hobbies.</td>
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*Source: David Howard, Katrina Ritters et al, Research Report No 572, Department for Work and Pensions, 2009*  
### The business case for LinkAge Plus

This research presents the business case for LinkAge Plus and brings together key costs and benefits from across eight pilot areas.

*Source:* Peter Watt, Ian Blair, Department for Work and Pensions, 2009  

### Befriending (to improve health, well-being, independence and general quality of life)

**National Evaluation of Partnerships for Older People Projects (POPP) – Final Report**

Evaluation report of the 29 POPP pilot sites funded by the Department of Health to develop services for older people aimed at improving their health, well-being and independence. Each pilot site set up one or more local projects with befriending and mentoring part of some of the pilot sites.

**Key findings:**

- Overall, the evidence revealed many positive achievements including improvements in quality of life and cost-effectiveness. For older people receiving what the research team called “well-being or emotional interventions” – including befriending services – fewer reported being depressed or anxious after the intervention.

*Source:* Dr Karen Windle, Dr Richard Wagland, Professor Julien Forder, Francesco D’Amico, Dr Dirk Janssen, Professor Gerald Wistow, PSSRU, 2009  
| Befriending (older people with high support needs) | Older people’s vision for long-term care  
A research project exploring the voice, choice and control of older people with high support needs commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation’s Independent Living Committee.  

**Key finding:**  
- An important theme that emerged was the importance of meaningful, empowering relationships and links with local community  

*Source:* Helen Bowers, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2009  

| Befriending (telephone) | Call in Time. Low-level support for socially isolated older people – an evaluation of telephone befriending  
The main objectives of the evaluation were to: measure and identify the effectiveness of telephone befriending services for older people with regards to their mental and physical well-being and their quality of life and the extent to which services were of preventive value; and examine the component parts of each model of telephone befriending and identify models of good practice. Found that not only did these services give participants ’a reason to get up in the morning’ but also had a profound and deep impact on their lives  

*Source:* Mima Cattan, Nicky Kime, Anne-Marie Bagnall; Leeds Metropolitan University/Help the Aged, 2009  
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<tr>
<th>Befriending and peer to peer support</th>
<th>Out of sight, out of mind – social exclusion behind closed doors</th>
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<td>A report including new research that states that over a million older people including one in five people over 80, are shut out from society and ignored by government policy. The report shows that severe exclusion is about more than money, crossing the boundaries of social class, race, gender and financial status.</td>
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<td>Indicates that the risk of exclusion increases with age leaving many older people without access to things that most people take for granted, such as decent home, close friends and regular company, stimulating activity and access to local services</td>
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<td>Recommends for people over 80 and living alone - more investment into the kind of befriending schemes and peer-to-peer telephone clubs already provided by many local Age Concerns to provide much-needed support for many isolated older people</td>
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<td>Recommends for people who have limited capacity to make their own decision (i.e., people with dementia) – befriending projects (alongside talking therapies, counselling and support groups). More of these services are desperately needed to help people retain their independence rather than become reliant on care.</td>
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Facts included in the report:

- 1.2 million people over 50 are severely excluded: 400,000 aged 50 to 64, 360,000 aged 65 to 79, and 400,000 aged over 80 (Ref: The Social Exclusion of Older People: Evidence from the First Wave of the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA), Social Exclusion Unit, January 2006)
- Women over 85 are six times more likely to be severely excluded than women aged between 65 and 69
- 56% of severely excluded people over 50 do not consider their health to be good, compared to just 17% of those with no signs of exclusion
- One in five people over 80 living alone are severely excluded, and men over 80 living alone are 11 times more likely to be lonely than men over 80 who are living with a partner (the three bullet points above from: secondary
### Older people

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<tr>
<th>analysis of the English Longitudinal Study on Ageing (ELSA) carried out by Dr Panayotes Demakakos of University College London (UCL)</th>
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<td>- The number of very old people living alone is expected to increase by 16% over the next 15 years (Calculated by Age Concern using 2003 Government Actuary Department-based population projections)</td>
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<td>- The number of people with dementia is set to rise from 700,000 at present to 1 million by 2025, significantly increasing the number at risk of social exclusion (Dementia UK, Alzheimer’s Society report using London School of Economics and Institute of Psychiatry research, February 2007)</td>
</tr>
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*Source:* ‘Out of sight out of mind’ by M Yates, A Harrop, P South, H Spinney; Age Concern, 2008

*Sample:* New research findings in this report are drawn from analysis carried out by Dr Panayotes Demakakos of University College London.


### Befriending (Older refugees)

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<th>A Working Paper for the Older Refugees Programme – A literature Review and Interviews with Refugees</th>
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<td>The Older Refugees Programme ran for two years and aimed to highlight the issues and concerns that older refugees have about their daily lives and circumstances in the UK and what would make a difference.</td>
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<td>- Befriending specified as a support required to combat isolation</td>
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*Quotes:*
| - ‘Refugees need more assistance, especially the older ones, the young ones it is more easy for them to learn languages and have places to go, and for example in the centres from agencies some one can come and offer the service, but at the moment that is not happening and it doesn’t exist in this area’ [Female refugee, West Midlands] |
| - ‘I am isolated, this is because when I came here I have no friends and can't speak English very well’ |
| **Befriending** | **Neighbouring and older people – an enfolding community?**  
A book based on research commissioned by Age Concern explains why neighbouring really matters to older people and how their lives and wellbeing are affected by differing levels of support in their neighbourhoods. It explores policy and a clear framework for thinking about the provision of social support for older people. The role of formal befriending is also considered as author asks how we can restore the sense of an ‘enfolding’ community that provides older people with both a sense of security and interdependence.  
- Clarified the extent to which older people tend to experience neighbouring as individualized, in contrast to the kind of ‘enfolding’ collective experience of neighbourliness that seems to have characterized their childhood  
  
**Source:** Kevin Harris, Community Development Foundation, 2008. ISBN: 978-1-901974-83-6  
| **Befriending** | **Successful Ageing and Social Interaction – A Policy Brief**  
This paper summarises new research into what factors are associated with ‘ageing well’ amongst the oldest old, and discusses the findings in the context of current UK policy.  
- Research has generally shown that factors associated with ‘successful ageing’ include: increased physical activity; higher self-rated health (i.e., an individual’s opinion on their own health) and increased social contact/activity/support |

**[Male asylum seeker, West Midlands]**  
*Source:* Refugee Council / Age Concern; Jan 2008  
*Sample:* 20 refugees interviewed plus three ‘listening groups’ held  
### Social Interaction

Social interaction was significantly associated with good mental health Quality of Life. Report suggests that improving social interaction amongst the oldest old is potentially a far less costly challenge than providing health services for improving physical Quality of Life.

**Source:** ‘Successful Ageing and Social Interaction – A Policy Brief’; E Grundy, A Fletcher, S Lam; International Longevity Centre, UK, 2007

**Sample:** Data collected as part of a randomised trial of health screening of older people in general practice, called the MRC Trial of Assessment and Management of Older People in the Community (Appendix 1).


### Befriending

**Real choice, real voice**

A discussion paper exploring how services for older people can be developed with them having choice, voice and control over them.

- Befriending services are included as one possible early intervention to improve health, independence and wellbeing

**Source:** Counsel and Care, 2007


### Befriending (in care homes for older people)

**Volunteers in Care Homes for Older People – An underused opportunity?**

A study based on data collected from care home providers, volunteer providers and a review of literature.

**Key findings:**

- Some evidence found of volunteering in care homes but mainly in the not-for-profit sector with a tradition of volunteering. Befriending roles are some of those carried out by volunteers. Report recommends consideration of use of volunteers in care homes by providers particularly to help tackle depression and reduce social isolation

**Source:** [Volunteers in Care Homes for Older People – An underused opportunity?](#)
| Befriending | The report of the Older People’s Inquiry into ‘That Bit of Help’  
Documents experiences of older people and professionals to identify gaps in service provision for older people living in their own homes  
- Befriending is identified as a useful service and ranked 5th in importance out of 13 useful services.  
  (See also Evidence report below)  
Source: Joseph Rowntree Foundation / Counsel and Care; 2006  
Evidence submitted to the Older People’s Inquiry into ‘That Bit of Help’  
Draws together the evidence submitted to the Inquiry. See also full report above.  
| --- | --- |
| Befriending | Growing old in a London borough; the shrinking personal community and how volunteers help to maintain it  
Aims to examine the ‘social capital’ of older people (the networks available to them for friendship, emotional and practical support) and to examine the role played by volunteers in supporting isolated seniors role. It emerged from a partnership with Age Concern Camden, which runs resource centres or ‘day centres’ for older people as well as befriending and advocacy services  
- Loneliness was one of the older people’s biggest problems. Users of older people’s day centres and befriending schemes are often childless and there is a need for institutional change to ensure childlessness does not mean isolation.  
Source: ESRC/London South Bank University, 2006 |
**Sample:** Interviews and discussions with users of and volunteers at these older people’s resource centres, and also with volunteers who visit older people in their own homes. In total, 20 volunteers and 18 service users provided information. An additional focus group was held with 10 members of the National Pensioners Convention, a lobbying group for older people.

**Report:** [http://www.lsbu.ac.uk/ahs/downloads/families/familieswp17.pdf](http://www.lsbu.ac.uk/ahs/downloads/families/familieswp17.pdf)

### Befriending (older people and depression)

‘They’re all depressed, aren't they?’ *A qualitative study of social care workers and depression in older adults*

Statutory and voluntary social services provide care and support for vast numbers of vulnerable older adults, yet little is known about how social care practitioners respond to depression in this high risk population. This study elicited the perceptions and conceptualizations of this condition among social care staff, and views on how the response of social care and other agencies might be improved.

- Depression was perceived to be remarkably common among clients, a phenomenon largely attributed to the adverse circumstances of old age, particularly social isolation. A key message from participants was that social causes indicate a need for social interventions.
- While primary care was criticised for not taking depression seriously in older people, mental health services were generally praised.
- Expansion of social, recreational and psychological interventions was advocated.

**Source:** N McCrae, J Murray et al; Section of Mental Health & Ageing, Health Services Research Dept, Institute of Psychiatry, London;

**Sample:** Qualitative interviews with 20 social care practitioners working in generic services for older adults in South London

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<th>Befriending</th>
<th>Grey Matters. Growing older in deprived areas. A guide for donors and grant-makers</th>
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<td>Describes the scale of challenges older people face in deprived areas, focusing on poverty, isolation &amp; social exclusion.</td>
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<td>• Befriending identified as tackling isolation</td>
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|                | **Source:** New Philanthropy Capital, 2004  

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<th>Befriending</th>
<th>Assisting friendships, combating loneliness: users’ views on a befriending scheme</th>
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<td>Gives details of a study which examined opinions of users of a voluntary local befriending service for frail and isolated older people provided by Age Concern Buckinghamshire. The objective of the scheme is to enhance the quality of life and alleviate social isolation by fulfilling emotional needs, and to contribute to the maintenance of mental health and prevention of mental deterioration.</td>
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<td>• The need for support and friendship to combat the effects of isolation and loneliness among older people was self-evident and all the evidence from this study attests to the value of befriending in ameliorating the effects of social isolation</td>
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<td>• Even when the older person receives several health and care services at home such as cleaners and carers, the befriender’s visit contrasted as they came solely for the purpose of conversation and companionship making it easier to build a relationship</td>
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<td>• The voluntary nature of the befriending service was an important feature for it conveyed the notion that the visitor chose to come</td>
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<td>• Users placed a high value on the reliability of their volunteer befrienders as the visit became an important feature of their weekly routine and also allowed them to plan other events and activities. Furthermore the trust that developed through the continuity and reliability allowed secrets to be shared</td>
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Appropriate matching of client to befriender was seen as an important first step in relationship building. Good matching appeared to be a prerequisite for the development of an enduring relationship and the majority of users perceived their relationships to be close.

Reciprocity in the befriending relationship was regarded by clients as important and they needed to feel that both they themselves and their befrienders were getting ‘something’ out of the relationship.

A tension is suggested between the befriender role and a friendship and the protocol around befrienders undertaking activities other than listening and talking to users.

Quotes:
One user said: “She comes all weathers, sits there and chats away. Reliability is important: she comes no matter what, and sticks to her schedule, which I think is important”

Another user: “I can talk to her about all types of things… she is different, she gives me something to look forward to. We have a nice conversation, it changes my mood and I know she is my friend”

Sample: 13 interviews with users of the service (average age 86.5 – three men, ten women)
Abstract: http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract;jsessionid=8E53F8C357882BE0C9679B98C4B0283B.tomcat1?fromPage=online&aid=151597

Befriending

The role and impact of befriending
Summary of a study exploring how befriending services are delivered as part of community care to people who are often socially isolated and lonely. Befriending was defined for this study as “a relationship between two or more individuals which is initiated, supported and monitored by an agency that has defined one or more parties as likely to benefit. Ideally the relationship is non-judgmental, mutual, purposeful, and there is a commitment over time”.

Mentoring and Befriending Foundation
Suite 1, 4th Floor, Building 3, Universal Square, Devonshire Street North, Ardwick, Manchester, M12 6JH
| t 03300 882877 | w www.mandbf.org | e info@mandbf.org
Befriending provides companionship for isolated people, the chance to develop a new relationship, and opportunities to participate in social activities

Organisations providing befriending services also offer other services, rather than being dedicated befriending agencies. They see befriending as a complement to their other services and to statutory services, and not as a substitute for home care or other ongoing support

Befrienders are volunteers. Users valued that the befriender chooses to spend time with them rather than being under a professional or family obligation to do so

One in five befriending schemes report problems in attracting users. Two-thirds (62%) of schemes report problems in recruiting volunteers

Befriending organisations, volunteers and users all considered matching volunteer and user to be a key to success. Services for older people are the most likely to perceive problems in matching

Befriending is valued in different ways by users and volunteer befrienders. Users regard the befriender as their ‘friend’ and appreciate the leisure opportunities that befriending brings. Volunteers enjoy the relationship but see differences between befriending and ‘friendship’. In particular, it is not necessarily a reciprocal relationship and they feel a sense of responsibility to see the user regularly and for a particular purpose. Volunteers report improved job prospects, new leisure opportunities and wider social networks as valued outcomes of their voluntary work

Six ways were found in which befriending services aim to help people participate in their community. These are: using local services and facilities; creating a new social link; developing wider social networks; meeting like-minded people through clubs and groups; meeting people with similar needs and supporting each other; changing social attitudes so that users become accepted and valued as full members of the community in their own right. While aspects of all these types of participation were found, the first three are particularly prominent
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<th>Befriending</th>
<th>Preventing social isolation and loneliness among older people: a systematic review of health promotion interventions</th>
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<tr>
<td>A journal article review looking at the important policy area of preventing and alleviating social isolation and loneliness among older people and aims to determine the effectiveness of health promotion interventions</td>
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<td>&quot;Suggests that educational and social activity groups interventions that target specific groups can alleviate social isolation and loneliness&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;The effectiveness of home visiting and befriending schemes remains unclear although older people responded&quot;</td>
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**Quotes:**

"I look forward to it. And when she doesn’t come… you’d be surprised what a difference it makes"

"I really enjoy having somebody who will take me out to the pub for a pint on Sundays especially"

"I’ve got to know other people through Sean. His friends that he’s introduced me to, and acquaintances… he’s like a doorway of meeting people."

**Source:** ‘Supporting community participation? The role and impact of befriending’, Jo Dean and Robina Goodlad; Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1998

**Sample:** 234 questionnaires completed by organisations who offer befriending with six case study organisations selected from survey responses. These involved interviews with users, volunteers, paid staff and managers. In total 28 users (or their carers) and 30 volunteers were interviewed.

**Report:** Full report and summary Findings at: [www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialcare/scr038.asp](http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialcare/scr038.asp)
| Befriending  
(independent living) | **Low intensity support services: a systematic literature review**  
A literature review looking at the effectiveness of low intensity support services in enabling people to live independently in ordinary housing and covered service for all groups of people with support needs. It looked at low level support in three areas: housing/tenancy support; direct practical support; emotional/social support (befriending services included here).  
- Many users felt their overall sense of wellbeing – including self-esteem, confidence and attitude to life had improved through involvement with the service  
- A striking finding was the way that users consistently valued the support of a worker or volunteer, often in preference to other more formal service interventions such as social work  
- Befriending and other services designed specifically to promote social networks sometimes had a low take-up  
- Befriending is highlighted as a service that could impact on health  
- Overall the body of research evidence on the effectiveness of low intensity support services was poorly developed and a higher priority needs to be placed on developing more robust ways of assessing their effectiveness  
*Source*: Deborah Quilgars; Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2000  
*Sample*: Literature review of 41 studies  

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**Source**: Mima Catton et al; Ageing & Society, Issue 25, 2005  
**Sample**: Literature search  
**Abstract**: [www.scie-socialcareonline.org.uk/profile.asp?guid=fb4820f6-add7-4423-ba8d-d3b5f5d41657](http://www.scie-socialcareonline.org.uk/profile.asp?guid=fb4820f6-add7-4423-ba8d-d3b5f5d41657)
## Older people

### Mentoring

| **Web I’m 64: Ageing, the internet and digital inclusion**  
Commissioned by the Post Office this report is a contribution to the debate around digital inclusion and explores what it means for older people.  
- Recommends mentoring schemes for silver surfers on the internet through inter-generational mentoring sites and digital buddy schemes  

**Source:** Demos, 2007  
**Report:** [www.demos.co.uk/projects/webim64](http://www.demos.co.uk/projects/webim64) |

### Mentoring (intergenerational)

| **A Partnership of Trust. Young offenders supporting older people in care settings – an example of social inclusion through intergenerational practice**  
A report examining a local community service scheme placing young offenders in care settings in the community with frail elderly people. The study took place at HM Young Offender Institution and Remand Centre, Onley in the West Midlands and aims to further understand intergenerational programmes as a means of addressing social exclusion.  
- It is possible to reduce the exclusion of older people, with physical frailty and those with dementia, from mainstream social networks through creative links with the younger generation  
- Older people enjoyed company of trainees because they bring different areas of interest and values to the lives of those whose social networks are severely reduced  
- Significance of gender - older men have chance to develop a relationship which is ‘man to man’ rather than age specific and can talk about ‘male topics’  
- Intergenerational programmes are able to reduce negative stereotyping and discrimination, and develop sustainable pathways towards more social cohesiveness  
- Community volunteer placements facilitate the integration of young inmates back into the community, which |

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<td>reduces the risk of re-offending</td>
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<td>• The intergenerational model, which enables the strengths of each generation to support each other, enhances the ability of young offenders to raise their self-esteem and self-worth, and can in turn make them less vulnerable to re-conviction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Gillian Granville, John Laidlaw; The Beth Johnson Foundation, 2000

**Sample:** Interviews and informal discussions with two managers and six paid staff at two voluntary organisations who acted as hosts for the placement; observation at the placements and informal talks with approximately 40 older members and volunteers; taped interviews were conducted at the community placements with seven young offenders, aged between 17-21 years of age


All Research summaries in this series are on our website
Research summary 1 – Young people in care or leaving care
Research summary 2 – Asylum seekers, refugees and migrants
Research summary 3 - Older people
Research summary 4 – Disabled people
Research summary 5 – Substance use / Homelessness
Research summary 6 – Carers
Research summary 7 – Youth violence (guns, knives and gangs)
Research summary 8 – Intergenerational activity
Research summary 9 – Mental health
Research summary 10 – Reducing offending

Go to the [MBF Research and evaluation directory](http://www.centreforip.org.uk/Libraries/Local/949/Docs/A%20Partnership%20of%20Trust.pdf) to search for more research on general issues affecting older people

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