

Glens Befriending - Boundaries & Signposting Guide

A practical guide for volunteers - Boundaries protect you, your befriender and the befriending relationship.

1. Your role as a befriender

Befriending is about offering friendship, companionship and a listening ear. Your role is to help someone feel less lonely or isolated and to encourage connection, confidence and participation in their community.

You are not expected to fix problems or provide professional care. If something falls outside your role, it is okay to say no and speak to the Befriending Coordinator.

I can...	I don't...
Listen, chat and offer companionship.	Provide personal or clinical care.
Support social connection and confidence.	Act as a counsellor, nurse, carer or therapist.
Go for agreed walks and outings.	Take on a professional caring role or become someone's sole source of support.
Encourage activities and community involvement.	Give medical, legal or financial advice.
Signpost to appropriate services.	Lend or borrow money.
Raise concerns with the Coordinator.	Promise to keep safeguarding concerns secret.

2. Healthy boundaries

A good boundary is kind, clear and consistent. You do not need to feel guilty for maintaining one.

Area	Good practice
Time & contact	Agree a regular pattern of visits/contact. You do not need to be available outside agreed arrangements.
Phone & messaging	Use contact methods agreed for befriending. Avoid becoming someone's 24/7 source of support.
Social media	Keep personal and volunteering lives separate where possible. It's ok to politely decline requests to connect to personal accounts.
Money & gifts	Do not lend or borrow money. Avoid accepting significant or inappropriate gifts. Ask the Coordinator if unsure.
Home visits	Follow agreed arrangements and service guidance. Don't make unplanned visits because someone has not replied. Contact the Befriending Coordinator if concerned.

Soirbheas

Area	Good practice
Physical contact	Respect personal space, consent and comfort. A friendly greeting is fine only when appropriate and welcome.
Errands & shopping	Only do tasks agreed as part of the service. Do not become a domestic helper. Keep receipts for any shopping.
Personal care	Do not provide bathing, toileting, medication administration or other personal/clinical care.
Transport	Only transport clients once the required driver checks and documents are complete. Follow the Driver Policy and Risk Assessment. Your motor insurance must include business use and cover voluntary client transport.
Advice	Listen and encourage; don't diagnose or tell someone what medical, legal or financial decision to make.
Confidentiality	Respect privacy but never promise absolute confidentiality where safety or safeguarding is involved.
Friendship	Warmth is encouraged; becoming someone's sole or private support network is not.

3. What would you do if...?

"Can you lend me £20?"

Say no kindly. Explain that volunteers cannot lend or borrow money. If money worries are involved, discuss signposting with the Coordinator.

"Don't tell anyone I told you this."

Don't promise secrecy. Explain that you respect their privacy but must share information if you are worried about safety or serious harm.

"Can you just give me some medical advice?"

Listen and encourage them to contact an appropriate health professional. You are not responsible for diagnosis or treatment.

"Can I add you on Facebook?"

You can keep personal and volunteering contact separate. A simple, friendly explanation is enough.

"I need you to come over tonight."

Unless there is an emergency requiring emergency services, don't become an on-call service. Follow the agreed contact arrangements and speak to the Coordinator if needs are increasing.

"You're the only person I need."

Acknowledge the importance of the relationship while encouraging wider support and community connections. Tell the Coordinator if dependency appears to be developing.

They tell you about abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Listen, stay calm, don't investigate and don't promise confidentiality. Record the facts you need and contact the Coordinator promptly. If there is immediate danger, call 999.

They say they are thinking about suicide or are in immediate danger.

Take it seriously. If there is immediate danger or an emergency, call 999. For urgent health advice in Scotland, call NHS 24 on 111. Contact the Co-ordinator as soon as practical.

4. Looking after yourself

- You are a volunteer, not a professional crisis service.
- You can care about someone without being responsible for fixing their problems.
- It is okay to say no, end a conversation or ask for support.
- If a situation has affected you, speak to the Coordinator rather than carrying it alone.
- Keep to agreed contact arrangements and take breaks when you need them.
- Never put yourself at risk to help someone else.

5. When you're unsure: STOP • THINK • CONTACT

STOP — Don't agree to something immediately if it feels outside your role.

THINK — Is it safe, appropriate and part of befriending? Could it create dependency or blur boundaries?

CONTACT — Speak to the Befriending Coordinator if you are unsure.

Befriending Coordinator

befriender@soirbheas.org

07748 575330

Community Grants Manager: info@soirbheas.org | 07842 781986

Chair of the Board: chair@soirbheas.org

Befrienders should never feel responsible for resolving an emergency themselves.

Prioritise your own safety, contact the appropriate service and notify the Befriending Coordinator as soon as it is safe to do so.

You will not be expected to make safeguarding or professional decisions alone. If you are worried, pass the concern on promptly.

6. Safeguarding and information sharing

Report safeguarding concerns immediately to the Befriending Coordinator. If unavailable, or the concern involves them, contact the Community Grants Manager. If the concern involves the Manager, contact the Chair of the Board. Do not investigate or promise secrecy. If you cannot reach a Soirbheas contact and action is needed, contact social work, health services or the police directly. Do not delay an urgent referral.

- Record what you saw, heard or were told rather than assumptions or diagnoses.
- Include dates/times and the person's own words where relevant.
- Do not ask leading or investigative questions.
- Do not discuss the concern with friends, family or other volunteers unless this is part of the agreed safeguarding process.

- If an adult is at immediate risk of harm, call Police Scotland on 999 without delay.
- During normal working hours, safeguarding concerns can be referred through NHS Highland; out of hours, use Highland Council Emergency Social Work.

7. Emergency and useful contacts

Service	Contact
Emergency	999 (Non-emergencies – 101)
NHS 24	111
Adult Support and Protection - SPOA	Inverness - 01463 888 333 / nhsh.spoainvernesseastwest@nhs.scot
Highland Council Emergency Social Work	0808 175 3646 Weekdays: 5:00 PM – 9:00 AM. Weekends and Public Holidays: 24 hours
Highland Council Housing & Homelessness	01349 886602 - Office Hours (Mon to Fri) 01349 886691 - Evenings, Weekends, and Holidays.
Scotland's Domestic Abuse & Forced Marriage Helpline	0800 027 1234 - 24/7, 365 days a year Text / WhatsApp – 07401288595 / helpline@sdaafh.org.uk
Mental health and emotional support	Samaritans - 116 123 (24/7, 365 days a year) Breathing Space - 0800 83 85 87 (Mon – Thurs: 6:00 PM to 2:00 AM. Fri – Sun: Open 24 hours Fri 6:00 PM to Mon 6:00 AM) Mikeysline - https://getinvolved.mikeysline.co.uk/contact-us/ Text (SMS): 07786 207755, • WhatsApp: 01463 729000, Email: enquiries@mikeysline.co.uk
Crimestoppers UK	0800 555 111
Scottish Fire and Rescue	999 – emergency / 01463 240999 - non-emergency 24hrs / 01382 835804 – To report a burning
Scottish Water	0800 0778 778 (24 hours)
Gas Freephone	0800 111 999

Read this guide alongside the current Volunteer Handbook, Safeguarding Policy and driver guidance. Record receipt on the Volunteer Induction form. External service contact details should be checked when this guide is reviewed.

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