



## How we can help

### About Bridging the Gap Islington



Bridging the Gap Islington recruits trains and supports volunteers to help people at risk of homelessness, offending and addiction. We match volunteer mentors with service users who have self-referred or have been referred through an agency. We encourage self-referral, but will also ask for supporting information from an agency, to ensure the suitability of the partnership and the safety of volunteers.

Our policies and procedures meet the Approved Provider Standard for mentoring and befriending administered by the National Council of Voluntary Organisations.

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Freephone number 0800 488 0746

## Who can we help?

We encourage self-referral, because this is an entirely voluntary process. Service users will need to meet their volunteer mentor regularly at agreed times and places. This can be any public place at any time that is convenient for both service user and mentor. This usually works well. Anything that helps the first few meetings to go smoothly will help to build a relationship which is essential for the success of the mentoring partnership.

This is a mentoring relationship. It is more structured than be-friending, but less structured than training or teaching. It will suit people who wish or need to make a change in their life. For example:

- Moving into a flat
- Sorting out benefits or budgets
- Getting training or employment
- Leaving prison

Note that it is important that the service user believes that they need to make a change. This might be because they know they need to get a job or leave a hostel. If a worker believes that a change is needed but the service user has not come to that opinion themselves, the mentoring partnership may not be successful.

## How do we help?

Our volunteer mentors meet service users regularly, once a week. They provide a single consistent relationship, which can be important for building up trust and developing a better understanding of the problems which a service user faces.

Volunteer mentors meet people in any convenient public place. This is usually a coffee shop, but it can also be at a library or they may go with the service user to an office or an appointment.

Every volunteer mentor has an experienced supervisor who will phone them every week and meet them once a month. This ensures that volunteers feel supported and that mentors are encouraged to respond appropriately to any issues that arise.

If a service user already has a caseworker/ key worker/ advisor why refer them for mentoring?

- a) If the user needs consistent support to fill in a form/ get information beyond the support that a single advisor can give
- b) If a user would benefit from a single consistent relationship which the existing service cannot provide
- c) If the advisor/worker feels that they are not getting a full understanding of the users problems and thinks that a consistent separate relationship might help the user to say more
- d) If it would help for someone to go with the service user to official appointments
- e) If the user needs help to get out and about and participate in social events
- f) If the user needs specialist help – i.e. has difficulty speaking English.
- g) If the user needs consistent support through a process, like getting a job or starting a course.

### **Who we may not be able to help**

We help people who are over 18 years old and under 65.

We cannot help people who have been violent or threatening (There may be exceptions if we can arrange meetings in a supported environment or the violence is connected with drinking or is in the distant past)

We can help single adults or small families (adult and child) but not families of two adults and children

We cannot help people we cannot contact regularly (e.g. who do not have a phone) – but we have a freephone number for people who have a phone but no credit.