

What is the COMPANIONS Befriending Scheme?

Loneliness, anxiety, fear, and a loss of self-esteem are some of the feelings reported by people with mental health problems. These difficulties can often make everyday life a struggle, leading to isolation and a lack of social contact.

Getting out, making friends, enjoying activities and sports, attending college classes are part of recovery, but can be difficult especially when faced with the stigma which is often attached to mental illness.

COMPANIONS Befriending Scheme, matches caring, reliable and well-trained volunteers, with people who need support and encouragement to lead a fuller, happier social life. You need to be 18 years old or more to use the scheme.

Is it a confidential service?

You can rely on your Companion to respect your privacy. Our training lets volunteers know how important confidentiality is. Usually, the only person other than yourself and your volunteer who will be involved is your Co-ordinator. This is to make sure that you are happy with the service and you are getting the best from the scheme.

How much does it cost?

We can provide a COMPANION for you free of charge. The only cost to you is your own expenses if, for example, you go out with your Companion to an event or place that charges for admission. The Companion will be able to claim their expenses from the scheme.

Who are the COMPANIONS volunteers?

Companions are ordinary people who come from different backgrounds and age groups. They have volunteered to visit people in the local community because they care and they want to help. Every one of them is trained before they visit someone. We like our volunteers to have some experience of life, so we have a minimum age for a volunteer of 18 years, and we welcome people well past retirement age.

Will I be matched with a Companion who has the same interests as me?

As far as possible, yes, we try to match people with similar interests or hobbies. It is important that you like your Companion and that you share some interests and values.

How often will I see my Companion?

We usually arrange a visit or outing each week for around one hour. However, you can discuss this with your Companion and Co-ordinator, and changes may be made to the schedule accordingly. We appreciate that there may be times when you cannot meet your Companion, and this is always taken into consideration. Visit arrangements are reviewed each year.

Who can use the service?

COMPANIONS support people who are currently, or have been in the past, clients of the Community Mental Health Team, or Old Age Psychiatry Team. If you have contact with a CPN or other mental health professional you can ask them to help you join the scheme. Alternatively, you might like to contact COMPANIONS yourself at the addresses and telephone numbers, which are on the front page of this leaflet. We are always pleased to hear from people to answer their questions or tell them more, however, there is no obligation to join the scheme.

What is COMPANIONS?

- ✓ For people with mental health problems
- ✓ Offers support and encouragement
- ✓ For 18 years old and above
- ✓ Volunteers accompany you on outings or visit you at home
- ✓ Help to overcome feelings of isolation or loneliness
- ✓ Well trained volunteers will visit regularly because they care
- ✓ Confidential service
Free of charge
- ✓ Assists Recovery



I really look forward to seeing my COMPANION, I don't have much company otherwise, so their visit is important to me.



it's company

I have a severe mental illness and sometimes I find it difficult to leave the house. My COMPANION helped me to get out and meet people again...and the service costs me nothing!



no charge

COMPANIONS has helped build up my confidence again, I'm looking forward to going back to college and getting those qualifications I missed first time.



new confidence

Having a COMPANION could make a big difference to your life too.

Why not give it a try?

What people say about COMPANIONS

- I have more confidence
- I enjoy visiting new places
- I don't panic in crowds anymore
- I can go to an evening class now
- I enjoy the company
- I feel more cheerful
- I look forward to a visit

What COMPANIONS can offer you

- Confidentiality
- A listening ear
- A well trained volunteer
- Company and social contact
- No charge for the service

COMPANIONS is committed to Equal Opportunities and welcomes applications from all people regardless of age, social background, religion, gender, sexual orientation, race or disability.

COMPANIONS is based on the principles of recovery and social inclusion.

This leaflet is available in large print, and on computer disc. Other formats can be supplied on request.

www.companions.org.uk

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Changing the
face
of Mental Health

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