Two's Company Befriending Edinburgh -

Admissions Policy

(Last reviewed May 2026)

Introduction:

Two's Company Befriending Edinburgh is a befriending service run in partnership between Edinburgh City Mission and Linking Lives UK to help those facing loneliness and isolation and to actively bring community, connection and care back into their lives. We seek to unleash the volunteering capacity of the local church but provide our services to all who meet our criteria.

Aim:

Two's Company seeks to eliminate chronic loneliness for older people in Edinburgh and envisions a city where older people have a meaningful connection to someone else, to a community, a church and ultimately to the closest friend we can possibly have, Jesus.

People typically access the service by being referred. Referrals come by a variety of means e.g. family, health and care services. The initial aim is to break this cycle by having a trained Befriender visit them in their home, to offer a 'listening ear', time and encouragement through a weekly/fortnightly befriending visit (1-2 hours). The aim is to bring the lonely older person eventually to a place of social engagement in their community, returning them to a degree of independence, where possible. We aim to have a *collaborative* approach to our befriending, seeking to work with other agencies and referrers to support our scheme members in the areas which befriending cannot, including personal care, specialist support i.e. dementia/mental health or practical support shopping/cleaning.

We ask that when you are referring you have considered these things and they are either in place or in the process, so our befrienders are able to fulfil their role most effectively.

Criteria for Admission to the Service:

The service is open to any adult over the age of 65 regardless of gender, ethnicity, beliefs or circumstances. However, we recognise that our Befrienders are not trained professionals and as such there may be people referred to the service who fall outside of the remit of those who can safely be taken on. The safety of our Befrienders and Scheme Members is paramount, and this consideration greatly influences our decision as to

whether we take a person into our service. We primarily receive referrals for in person befriending, however, if volunteer capacity allows, we can also offer telephone befriending services.

<u>As a guideline we accept:</u>

- Those who feel lonely and socially isolated
- Those aged 65+
- Those who appear safe to visit (i.e. do not display aggressive or threatening behaviour).
- Those who are able to form friendships
- Those who live within the City of Edinburgh and Musselburgh.

We prioritise those who are lonely due to being socially isolated because they have limited social connections or opportunity to leave their home for social activities/connections.

Please note that it may be necessary to place a referral on to our waiting list until a suitable Befriender becomes available.

<u>Criteria for refusal to the service</u>:
Typically, on referral, a person will be contacted by the Befriending Service Coordinators who will go through an assessment process and risk assessment. At the end of this process, a decision will be taken as to whether the referred person would safely benefit from the service.

Issues that may result in a referral being refused include:

- Those who are unable to form friendships due to perhaps, dementia or other complex needs – unless we have 'specifically' skilled Befrienders available.
- Those with current drug and/or substance addiction.
- Those with medical conditions that would make it unsuitable to be part of our Befriending Service (i.e. needing specialist skilled and trained staff).
- Those with severe, ongoing mental health issues (i.e needing specialist skilled and trained staff).
- Any other issues that the Befriending Service Coordinators feel may pose a risk to the Befriender or Scheme Member.
- Those in a Care Home.
- Those who have a strong social network already in place.

Reviews:
The Befriending Service Staff Team will undertake a review every 3 months of the pairings between the Scheme Member and Befriender by way of phone call or 'face to face' chat to ensure that things are working well between both parties.

Feel free to contact us to discuss why we have refused the referral and we will give reasons for our decision in writing or a phone call if necessary.

Befriending scheme coordinators:
naomi@edinburghcitymission.org.uk
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We reserve the right to terminate or exclude from the service, based on judgment of circumstances or change of circumstances.

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