 **Friends of the Elderly – Home Visitation Service**

 **Eligibility Criteria and Referral Procedures**

Welcome to our referral page. Here you will find all the information you need to know about our referral system. Our Visitation Service aims to alleviate loneliness amongst isolated older people throughout the Dublin region. The programme is supported by a committed and trained group of volunteers with their core activity being to provide one to one friendship to our older members.

Friends of the Elderly welcome referrals from health workers, family/friends and self-referrals. Consent MUST be given from the potential service user before a non-self-referral is submitted.

Please note that our Volunteer Befrienders are not unpaid carers. They will not provide any intimate or personal care. They will not assist with any medication.

**Initial Criteria for matching with a volunteer**

* Older person must be over 70 years of age (please note that this age is not absolute and extenuating circumstances may take priority)
* They must have expressed having feelings of loneliness and or isolation to some degree
* Their cognitive ability must allow for a friendship to foster between themselves and the volunteer

Due to the high demand on our services and resources it may be necessary to prioritise those in greatest need of befriending and potential service users will be assessed against the following categories of need

**Category 1 - High Priority**

* Older person lives alone
* Complete absence of or very limited friend or familial support
* No community support e. g attendance of day centre facilities or local clubs and groups
* Recently discharged from hospital and experiencing difficulty reacclimatising or loss in confidence due to a decline in previous abilities
* Does not receive a home care service
* Mobility issues resulting in the inability to get out without support
* Over 90 years of age
* Recently bereaved

**Category 2 – Medium Priority**

* Lives alone
* Limited friend or familial support (weekly or less)
* Attends Day Facility less than two 2 days per week
* Has some home care service?

**Category 3 – Moderate Priority**

* Living with someone or has regular support from friends and or family
* Has the ability to access a range of community supports and or social activities and has supports in place
* No significant life events or changes

Potential service users living in Sheltered Housing will be assessed against similar criteria that will also be dependent on the ‘in house’ support available where they reside.

NB: These guidelines are not absolute and there will be instances when the particular circumstances of a potential service user outweigh their domestic situation or the above criterion.

Friends of the Elderly seek to match volunteers with similar interests or background to the service user however, on the occasions that there is a delay in finding a suitable match for the older member, volunteer matches are normally allocated on a time weighted criteria. There may be occasions when the Programme Coordinator may judge that a particular service user’s needs would be better met if they were placed at the earliest opportunity.

**Potential Service Users who may not be suitable for our service**

* Older person who experiences moderate to severe mental health issues and are considered to require more specialist support then the Friends of the Elderly are able to offer
* Older person who experiences short-term memory loss, dementia or Alzheimer’s disease *may* be considered unsuitable for our visitation programme because of the progressive nature of the condition and the lack of appropriately trained staff and volunteers. This will be assessed on a case to case basis
* Older person with drug or alcohol addictions who are considered to require more specialist support then Friends of the Elderly are able to provide
* Older person whose home is insufficiently safe or considered hazardous for a volunteer to visit
* Older person who is insufficiently mobile and unable to answer the door to the volunteer or if their hearing does not allow them to hear the door or the telephone.
* Older person whose preference for age, gender, ethnicity, interests, time and or frequency of visits cannot be accommodated by Friends of the Elderly as it is too inflexible
* The visitation service is not suitable for anyone who wants help with household chores, physical care, respite care, a sitting service, shopping, banking or DIY

**The Referral Process**

On receipt of a referral form, the Programme Coordinator will make an initial assessment as to whether the needs of the older person concerned are appropriate to our service and the support that we are capable of providing. In a small number or cases, the referral will be rejected at this stage as the needs, risks or services required are judged to be beyond the resources which Friends of the Elderly can provide.

Referrals which are deemed appropriate will be formally logged and at this stage the Programme Coordinator will initiate contact with the older person and send receipt of referral to the organisation or individual who sent the request. An appointment will then be arranged between the older person and the Programme Coordinator to meet and an assessment visit will take place where by the Programme Coordinator will ascertain which, if any of our services best meet the older person’s needs.

Please note that we advise it may take between 3 to 6 months for a successful match to be made but we do offer a Friendly Call service to all our older members so that they will have constant interaction with us until a suitable match can be found.

Friends of the Elderly asks that both referrers and service users keep the Programme Coordinator informed of any changes in the service users circumstances post submission of initial referral. Specifically changes which could compromise the safety of the volunteer or when a service user is no longer eligible to receive the service.

**All information provided in the referral form will be treated with the strictest of confidence.**

Please fill in as much detail as possible on the referral form as only supplying limited information may cause a delay in the process of the referral.

Please complete the referral form and send to info@friendsoftheelderly.ie

Or please send a hard copy to Friends of the Elderly, 25 Bolton Street, Dublin 1