

Referral Guidance for the Love Your Neighbour programme July 2022

PLEASE KEEP FOR YOUR RECORDS

Thank you for your interest in the Love Your Neighbour programme. We've compiled some guidance for referrers of older neighbours, to help you understand a bit more about the programme, our referral criteria, and what happens next.

If you have any further questions, you're also welcome to get in touch with Love Your Neighbour Coordinators on 0207 118 3838 (option 3).

Islington Coordinator: maisie.mannering@northlondoncares.org.uk

Camden Coordinator: bouchra.aitlkaboud@northlondoncares.org.uk

What is Love Your Neighbour?

Love Your Neighbour is our one-to-one friendship matching programme, which pairs up older and younger 'neighbours' for company and conversation through weekly visits, meet-ups or phone calls. We match based on location, so that they're able to get to know a real 'neighbour' in their local community, as well as interests or other things in common, so matches have something to chat about.

The aim is to create mutual, long-lasting friendships, where both parties are up for getting to know one another, chatting and getting something out of the match. This is why we don't refer to the programme as a 'befriending' programme, as we believe the programme supports both older and younger people to feel less isolated and more connected to their community.

Who are our older neighbours?

All older neighbours referred to North London Cares **must be over the age of 65 and live in the boroughs of Camden and Islington**. For the Love Your Neighbour programme, we look for older neighbours who are interested in getting to know a younger person through building a friendship, and who are able to hold a mutual, two-way conversation.

Many of our older neighbours may have reduced mobility which makes getting out of the house and attending social events more challenging. They might be dealing with a number of different things, like declining health or bereavement, which also means they're missing the face-to-face connections they previously had, and therefore be looking for more company. However, we also have older neighbours who have lots of social connections but are still looking for a new friend from a different generation, which we also welcome.

Who are our younger neighbours?

Younger neighbours on the Love Your Neighbour programme are people who are under 65 and who live, work or study in / near the boroughs of Camden and Islington, who sign up to us as volunteers. Generally they tend to be people in their 20s, 30s or 40s. Recent research has shown that younger people in this age group are most at risk of chronic loneliness, so our younger neighbours may similarly be getting involved to feel less isolated, more connected to their community, and to build a friendship with an older north Londoner.

While our younger neighbours are kind and empathetic listeners, they are not trained in counselling or first aid, and so the programme should not be used as a substitute for adequate physical and mental health support. They are also unable to provide any practical support that a carer, cleaner or support worker might do, eg. do their shopping. We aim for them to have an enjoyable and safe experience. We do give them a DBS check, a basic induction and offer support along the way..

Are there any referrals you cannot accept?

While we try to be as inclusive as possible on the programme, there are cases where Love Your Neighbour may not be the best fit for an older neighbour. In these instances we try to signpost people to more appropriate organisations.

Therefore, we cannot accept referrals for older neighbours with the following circumstances:

- **Older neighbours with a diagnosis of dementia** - For safeguarding and practical reasons, older neighbours on the programme need to remember who the younger neighbour is, when they are coming, and be able to tell us how the visits were going. Our younger neighbours also aren't trained to support older neighbours with significant memory challenges and therefore we've found that visits can end up causing distress or confusion for both parties.
- **Older neighbours with an unmanaged or complex mental/physical health condition** - We would class 'unmanaged' as when there is evidence of inadequate support being in place, and the older neighbour is unwilling to pursue support with or without signposting/referrals from us. This also includes complex mental health issues, such as psychotic disorders, where it would make them unsuitable for an untrained volunteer to visit them.
- **Older neighbours who are very unwell or in receipt of palliative care** - We've often found older neighbours struggle to build a friendship with a younger neighbour during periods of severe ill health. Our volunteers also aren't trained to support older neighbours receiving end of life care, with the emotional and practical implications this has. The expectation we give is a sustainable and mutual friendship between older and younger neighbours, which sadly wouldn't be possible in this situation.
- **Older neighbours who speak little or no English, or have a severe hearing impairment** - We have to make sure our older neighbours have a full understanding of the programme before they're matched, and that we're able to keep in touch with them over the phone during their match for safeguarding reasons. Therefore if there are communication barriers such as language or hearing which would make this unfeasible, we're unfortunately unable to match that older neighbour. We can however suggest other programmes for those who speak other languages, and are still working on how we can include older neighbours who speak little or no English in the programme in future.
- **Older neighbours who don't agree to or follow our anti-racism and inclusion policy** - All older neighbours must agree to follow our anti-racism and inclusion policy before being matched on the programme, so that we're ensuring our community remains a safe and welcoming place where everyone can be themselves. If they refuse to agree with the expectations set out, or breach the policy during the course of the assessment or matching process, we may not be able to match them on the programme. You can read more about our policy [here](#).
- **Older neighbours with an unsuitable home environment** - Older neighbours' homes

need to be a suitable place for a younger neighbour to visit. Therefore, during our assessment visits we ensure that the home is safe and clean. There must be somewhere for the volunteer to sit comfortably at a good distance, as well as a functioning toilet, hot running water and heating. Older neighbours will be asked not to smoke during visits. If older neighbours live with another person, we'll also need to meet them before matching to ensure the safety of our volunteers.

- **Older neighbours living in care homes** - We're not usually able to match older neighbours living in care homes. From experience, we've found that it's difficult for matches to build a mutual, one-to-one friendship in this environment, and limited visiting hours often don't align with our younger neighbours' schedules.

Who can make a referral?

Anyone can make a referral, and older neighbours are also able to sign up themselves via our Get Involved form to 'self-refer' to all our programmes.

What sort of information is it useful to include in my referral?

In referrals it's great to hear an older neighbour's background and interests, as well as their motivations for getting involved in the programme. It's useful to mention any medical conditions, communication, mobility or accessibility needs that might impact their involvement in the programme, or how we get in touch with them. It's also good to know if they have any support in place. If you can provide information about anything our staff might need to know before visiting them in their home, for instance if they live with someone else or they have a key safe, that would also be helpful to include.

What happens after I make a referral?

After you've made a referral, you'll receive an email from us to acknowledge the form has been submitted and we've received it. Unless there's a reason we're unable to accept the referral from the information provided, or there's anything we'd like to discuss with you, the referrer, we'll get in touch with the older neighbour directly to introduce ourselves, tell them more about our programmes and confirm their interest. We aim to do this within **three weeks** of receiving the referral.

A member of the Love Your Neighbour team will then **call** to follow up with the older neighbour, have a chat to find out a bit more about them, and then, if we think the programme is right for them, book an assessment visit. Sometimes there might be a bit of a delay before this call, or the visit booking, depending on the number of neighbours we have referred to us.

The **assessment visit** is an opportunity for us to chat to the older neighbour in person and get to know them better. The visit usually lasts about an hour. During the visit, we'll talk about the programme in more detail. We'll also go through an assessment form with a few questions. These are to make sure we have all the older neighbour's details correct, to find out more about their background and interests to ensure we can find them a suitable younger neighbour match, and to find out more about their living situation, so we can make sure they've got the support in place to be able to safely and happily engage in the Love Your Neighbour programme. We can make referrals or signpost to other organisations who can offer support if necessary. We will update you of the outcome of the visit and next steps.

How quickly will the older neighbour I've referred be matched up?

On average, it takes older neighbours **2- 6 months** from the point of referral to being introduced to a younger neighbour. However, the time it takes for an older neighbour to be introduced to a younger neighbour depends on a number of different factors, including the number of younger neighbours available in their area, whether they have any specific requests for a match, and the outcome of the assessment visit and whether they'll need any extra support prior to being matched. We try to match thoughtfully and sustainably, so that the friendships created are positive and long lasting for both parties, but it can often take a bit of time for the right people to be in the right places at the right time! Therefore we'd advise managing the expectations of any older neighbors referred that they might not be matched for a little while, although we'll keep in touch with them over the phone during the process.

Who should I contact if I have any updates on the older neighbour I've referred?

If you have any updates on the neighbour referred, for instance a change of address, contact details or circumstances, or something you'd like to add to the referral information provided, then do email our Love Your Neighbour Coordinators.

Islington Coordinator: maisie.mannering@northlondoncares.org.uk

Camden Coordinator: bouchra.aitlkaboud@northlondoncares.org.uk

or call us on 0207 118 3838 (option 3).

Thank you,

Kind regards

Judy Hallgarten

Head of Programmes

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