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[**www.befriendafamily.co.uk**](http://www.befriendafamily.co.uk/)

**Registered Charity No. 1082452**

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**Registered in England and Wales.  Registered office: 18 Buckingham Palace Road, SW1W 0QP**

**Family Befriending Referral Guide**

WBAF is a family befriending organisation working with families in Westminster. It was established in 1989. WBAF focuses on working with the whole family in a holistic manner to enable positive changes in social interaction in and outside the family and more awareness of community organisations via appropriate signposting.

Trained and supervised volunteer Family Befrienders work weekly for 2-3 hours with a family for six months, up to a maximum of one year.

**What families can we work with?**

* We work with vulnerable, socially isolated and economically disadvantaged families who have children in the 0-18 age range, though at least one child should be over 5 years old. We don’t usually work with families where all children are over 16 years of age.
* We cannot work with a family where an adult member is resistant to a volunteer being involved
* All families need to be resident in the Borough of Westminster

**Who can refer?**

We accept referrals from any agency which knows a family and feels that they would benefit from our service, e.g. GP’s, Health Visitors, other health workers, Social Services, Community Agencies and the Police. There is no charge for our service. We ask for a written referral form to be completed and the WBAF Family Befriending Co-ordinator will then contact the referrer to discuss the referral and the family’s needs.

**After a referral is received:**

* The Befriending Co-ordinator reviews the referral and contacts referrer if necessary.
* Befriending Co-ordinator then conducts an assessment with family.
* If appropriate, the family is matched with a suitable Family Befriender.
* Befriending Co-ordinator visits family with Family Befriender.
* Befriender then begins weekly visits to family and follows a work plan that is determined by befriender and family members.
* After six months, a review is held with Befriender, Co-ordinator and family. Future plans are made at this visit with regard to sessions ending or continuing for up to six additional months based on requirement.
* If the befriending stops after the 6 month review the family is signposted to any additional support services and the referrer is informed that the befriending has ceased.
* If the befriending continues for an additional six months a final review is held at the end of the period with the befriender, family and befriending co-ordinator.
* At the end of the befriending referrer is informed .

**What befrienders offer?**

* Befrienders develop a trusting and compassionate relationship with the family.
* Befrienders offer a non-judgemental, listening ear and work within defined guidelines.
* Befrienders help break down isolation by spending time with the family and supporting them in finding out about local opportunities.
* Befrienders may share and develop common interests, such as cooking with a parent, and spending time with the children.
* Befrienders may be able to accompany parents to appointments to offer support when appropriate.
* Befrienders may spend time with an individual child in play or other activities.
* Befrienders may discuss with parents ways of dealing with:
  + - * Behaviour issues
      * Discipline and Boundary setting
      * Relationships with other adults and authority figures
      * Being a positive role model and mentor

The kinds of help and support available are individually tailored to each family’s needs and wishes. The aim of this intervention is to empower the family to make positive choices in parenting and lifestyle issues.

**Exclusions**

* **WBAF cannot work with families who have current Child Protection issues, on-going current domestic violence issues, drug and alcohol addictions, serious mental health issues**. This is because Befrienders are targeting work with families who are not in crisis need, or very complex cases. Befriending is an ‘enabling’ role, and befrienders are not social workers, psychologists, drug and alcohol experts.
* The ethos is that families are able to benefit from the 6-12month befriending relationship in a way that they can ‘move on’ in some way after the relationship ends.
* The relationship should be viewed as a short term solution focused partnership where the family and befriender are working to improve the families’ interactions within 6 months to a year maximum.
* WBAF main principle is to ‘do with’ rather than ‘do for’ in all our interactions. In doing this we aim to promote sustainability, enabling personal growth rather than dependency.
* We cannot provide befrienders to undertake a monitoring role on behalf of the Statutory services, or send volunteers into situations where there is judged to be a risk to members of the family or to themselves. We ask that the referrer discusses our service with the family, and makes a referral on the basis that the family agrees and wants to use our help.
* Befrienders can never baby sit, act as a domestic or cook, offer counselling, psychology or other professional support.

Westminster Befriend a Family reserves the right to refuse support to a family or to withdraw the service.

**Mothers’ Social Support Groups**

Our weekly support groups for mothers are extremely popular. These last for two hours and are an excellent way for mothers to meet, socialise, share advice and learn something new each week.

They are peer support groups, in the format of informal coffee mornings. Each session has a discussion topic or a theme that is selected by the members and facilitated by a volunteer.

**For further information and sending referrals please contact:**

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