



# Recovery and Reintegration

## **STAYING TOGETHER**

## **RECOVERING TOGETHER**

Survey responses from  
Time to Talk Befriending  
scheme members. [May 2021](#)

**Time to Talk**  
**Befriending**  
[in the heart of the community](#)

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## Introduction →

Time to Talk Befriending is a relationship-centred, excellence accredited befriending service supporting older people living in Brighton, Hove, Adur and Worthing in Sussex.

As the Government begins to ease the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, Time to Talk Befriending is beginning to consider how best to support the needs of our scheme members now and in the future. Speaking to our scheme members on the phone throughout February and March 2021 it became apparent that while some wanted to socialise again, others were more hesitant. We therefore wanted to explore the barriers to becoming socially included and respond to our scheme members wants and needs as we transition from the reactive responsive phase of the pandemic and move into the new recovery and reintegration phase.

A survey consisting of nine questions was posted to a large cohort of our scheme members in mid-March. A stamped addressed return envelope was provided. The surveys were completed by 98 scheme members (25%) and returned by mid-April 2021. The average age of participants is 83 years, and the majority are living alone in the community with at least one long term health condition. This report 'Recovering and Reintegration' is informed by the findings from these surveys.

## Summary →

What our short survey has shown is that many scheme members have been adversely affected by the extended Covid-19 Lockdowns with feelings described as “unmotivated”, “lost confidence”, “isolated and lonely”. Scheme members have however really appreciated the telephone befriending calls, which have provided a form of social connectedness.

There is a wealth of evidence confirming how loneliness impacts on a person’s health and wellbeing, so the level of self-reported physical health deterioration of scheme members within the surveys, due to less exercise and cancelled or postponed medical appointments, is concerning.

Many scheme members self-reported that their emotional and mental health has deteriorated due to having to self-isolate or shield, not seeing family members or being able to spend time with friends.

Currently, 66% of scheme members have stated they are not yet ready to begin face-to-face meetings.

*“Loneliness can be part of a cycle of negative outcomes, since experiencing mental and physical health problems can also lead to feelings of loneliness. Feeling lonely can also affect how we perceive others and view our place in society, causing us to withdraw even more.”*

‘A brief guide to measuring loneliness: What Works Wellbeing’ [whatworkswellbeing.org](http://whatworkswellbeing.org)

## Q1 WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST CONCERN RIGHT NOW?

Scheme members reported that their main concern at this moment due to the Covid-19 pandemic are: **Health related** – *cancelled health appointments, increasing mobility issues*. **Feeling isolated and alone** – *especially as everything has been closed down*. **Loss of motivation** – *indifference to everyday chores*. **Worried about Covid-19** – *hope there will be no more lockdowns*. **Social** – *not being able to go outside and meet family, friends*. **Economic** – *paying bills*.

However, a few scheme members stated they did not have any concerns.

### Health

Concern regarding increasing health needs.	
Mental and physical health.	
Feeling lightheaded and falling over.	
Mobility.	Going into hospital.
Weight gain.	
Anxiety and recurrence of mental health issue.	

### Isolation, loneliness, confidence, and motivation

Easing loneliness.	No contact, isolation.
Not being able to go outside.	
Being able to cope with these changes.	
Lack of motivation.	
Being lonely in the evenings.	
Lack of confidence.	



## Economic

Paying bills.

Money.

Economy.

Need support with shopping, and cleaning.

## Concerns about Covid-19

Getting back to 'normal' – as going too quickly may increase infection rates.

Hoping there will be no more lockdowns.

Being in lockdown for over a year.

Not being able to meet my befriender.

## Social

Getting out into the world again.

That I have the ability to communicate after shielding for over a year.

Meeting people face-to-face.

I don't have the right approach in finding a friend.

Cannot go out with friends and family to socialise.

## No concerns

I have no big concerns; I can deal with any daily routine stuff so am not worrying.

## Other comments received in more detail include:

Getting my house in order before I have my knee operation.

Been in my home for three years and because of illness have not yet unpacked things, but I am getting there.

Loss of use of both arms above chest level makes tasks impossible.

Keeping well enough both physically and emotionally so that I can keep looking after my husband.

Cancelled operation.

Ability to walk far as legs are weakened because of not going out regularly.

Health problems which I feel unable to cope with and depression caused by this.

Miss visiting my children and grandchildren.

I like living alone and have no relations – what will become of me?

Being able to walk as I did before Covid-19.

40 weeks wait for eye operation.

Not getting enough exercise.

Mental health, being alone and not able to go out since coming out of hospital.

Booked for operation at hospital, how will I get there and back twice and cope afterwards?

Lack of support from GP disappointing.

## Q2 WHAT HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST EFFECT ON YOU, FOLLOWING THE OUTBREAK OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC?

The biggest effect on scheme members during Covid-19 pandemic has been concern around *the COVID virus on self and family*. The effect of the lockdown has been huge with regards to *socialising with others*, not being able to *see partner – who is in a care home, family, grandchildren, and friends*, and being *left on one's own*. Isolation and loneliness were recurrent themes throughout the questionnaire and *members may need support from their befrienders to regain the confidence* to get back out into the wider world. Many scheme members stated that their *health has deteriorated* during the lockdown, with *less exercise and cancelled health appointments*.

### Covid-19

Panic at first but OK now. I have lived alone for years and got back into the routine.

To find the streets and parks empty, bit surreal.

None as life is much as before.

Lockdown. Staying in too much.

Loss of husband.

### Isolation, loneliness, confidence, and motivation

Loneliness. Complete isolation.

Loss of what little confidence I had.

Lack of motivation.

Depression, lack of purpose, not seeing friends.

Fearful.

### Social

Unable to meet people face to face.

Not being able to visit theatres and cinema freely.

Family not able to travel from abroad to UK.

Not seeing family. Being on my own.

Missing hugs and face-to-face contact.

### Health

Waiting for surgery. Been ill.

My health has deteriorated.

Been in hospital and lying flat on a hospital airbed.

Not being able to travel far.

Weird dreams – loss of muscle tone.

### Other comments received in more detail include:

Not being able to see my children.

Not being able to address my health concerns.

Partner's death just before pandemic and son died in January.

I feel I am a nuisance.

Not knowing someone my age to go a walk or have coffee with.

To stop worrying about the things I have never worried about before.

Things being online have been an advantage as now able to attend.

My husband has dementia so cannot be left alone.

Just so board. I have no computer, have iPad but unable to get help to use it.

Not able to see husband at nursing home.



### Q3 HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR OVERALL EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH?

36% of scheme members self-rated that their overall emotional and mental health was excellent, very good, or good. Whilst 41% of scheme members self-rated their emotional and mental health as fair and 22% of scheme members self-rated as poor.

### Q4 HAS YOUR EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH CHANGED DURING THE PANDEMIC?

44% self-reported that their emotional and mental health had improved a lot, improved a little or stayed the same. However, more concerning is the 52% who self-reported that their emotional and mental health had got worse or got much worse.

*Comments received show some of the issues and concerns scheme members have been dealing with during the lockdown.*

It (lockdown) was okay to begin with and then it wasn't possible to get a slot for (home) deliveries. It was the fact of unspontaneity that made things bad.

Made me anxious at times.

Although I do get concerned about people not observing distance.

Mobility has gone downhill.

Slightly got down because of Manager trying to boss people instead of being concerned about other issues. I live in an independent apartment block.

I used to work as a volunteer for 12 years – the communication with others was very important to me. So, I have very much missed human contact.

## Q5 HAS YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH CHANGED DURING THE PANDEMIC?

30% of scheme members self-reported that their physical health had improved a lot, improved a little or stayed the same during the pandemic. However, 70% self-reported that their physical health had got worse or got much worse.

*The following comments received gives some explanation for this.*

My joints have become very painful as I am not able to get out so much as before.

Nervous going out of comfort zone.

A little because getting over Cancer operation now needing an eye operation. Expecting a miracle from the Lord.

Because of age. I am little older than I used to be.

Fell badly and damaged both knees.

Definitely not as fit as I used to be pre-2020.



## Q6 DO YOU FEEL CONFIDENT TO GO OUT AND SOCIALISE NOW?

28% stated they felt confident to go out and socialise. However, 66% stated they did not feel confident to go out and socialise.

*The following comments go some way to explain in part the reasoning why.*

Yes, In the right situation.

I'm still a little scared.

When things reopen and have had 2nd vaccine.

I rarely socialised before but now feel I avoid more than before the pandemic.

I am unable to go out anywhere due to my disablement.

Not really, I am partially sighted and have the start of dementia.

Not on my own, but OK with company.

Not very confident.

Yes, but I would only be willing if I had easy access to the venue.

I hope so because in the past have attended things on my own.

Not to travel too far, would be willing to meet for a coffee and chat in Worthing. Have no confidence on trains and buses except to Worthing Town.

No, I have been entirely on my own for so long that I feel apprehensive about meeting anyone.

Always nothing stops me.

Slightly nervous.

No, finding it harder to go out, think I might be agoraphobic.

Yes! Yes can't wait.

My confidence has gone a little to socialise due to lack of conversation.

Able to socialise at home but not to go out.

Fairly confident but apprehensive.

No not by myself but if help to get out then yes.



## Q7 WHAT FACTORS WOULD ENCOURAGE YOU TO JOIN A FACE-TO-FACE GROUP?

71% of scheme members stated they would be willing to travel from between 1/2 mile to 5 miles from home. 70% of scheme members responded to the question, day, and time for a group, which resulted in various responses. Morning and mid-afternoons seem to be the most popular times.

Frequency also provided a range of options with monthly being the most popular.

30% of scheme members stated they have attended a face-to-face befriending group previously.

Frequency of the Befriending group.	Response Total
Weekly	27
Fortnightly	5
Monthly	34
Both weekly and monthly	5
Do not mind	4
No response	23
<b>ANSWERED</b>	<b>98</b>

*However, there were a number of factors scheme members needed to consider before joining a social event.*

Subject to safety.

This is too difficult at this time due to my physical health as I am pretty much housebound now.

I like to dance. Better after lunch.

Maybe I could join an on-line group, or I would like a visit when possible.

I am happy with present arrangement and the friends have at present are EXCELLENT.

A great organisation I have been helped, thank you.

To be able to socialise again.

I am a bit confused what actually will be discussed at these new face-to-face groups which is not otherwise discussed when people get together?

Not up to a face-face group.

I am happy with what you have already do.

A friendly phone chat to make sure I am ok, maybe some help with my shopping.

Meeting up to talk is important for mental health in all age groups. Especially for those of you who are not Brightonians and left their hometowns for various reasons. I am very surprised and concerned that in a vibrant City as Brighton that an organisation does not have anyone who would be pleased to meet up outside and with all COVID precautions. Just a walk for an hour to exercise for physical and mental benefit. It is so lonely for those of us who live alone.



## Q8 ARE THERE ANY BARRIERS THAT WOULD PREVENT YOU FROM ATTENDING A FACE-TO-FACE GROUP?

The number one barrier preventing scheme members from joining a face-to-face group was **appropriate transport** to and from the venue (68% of scheme members). The second barrier was **health problems** for 47% of scheme members. The third barrier was the **day of the week and time of day** for 21% of scheme members. Equal fourth was **not having support from home to the transport and having to go alone** for 31% of scheme members.

## Q9 IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WISH TO SHARE ABOUT ENGAGING WITH TIME TO TALK BEFRIENDING?

Feedback from scheme members in response to this question shows how the support being provided by Time to Talk Befriending is appreciated. The kind words of encouragement are valued by the team and prove just how important our 500 strong cohort of volunteers really are.

Experience - very limited.  
Very impressed with volunteer.

I enjoy the phone calls very much; we have a good conversation every time. I am not a person who like face-to-face meetings (big groups).

I am so grateful to have a call once a week because I don't hear from my family very much and due to my health and no friends.

Have really enjoyed chatting on the phone every week.

I enjoy my contact with my befriender albeit by telephone. I look forward to being able to see her when restrictions are eased. Thank you for giving me something to look forwarded to.

I have had a weekly telephone call for an hour with a lady my age. We really do have a good chat and I look forward to it. Thanks to Time to Talk Befriending.

I have really appreciated having someone to talk to on the phone each week.

My befriender, sounds very nice.

I really enjoy my phone calls with my befriender. I enjoy talking and befriending with all the ladies. I had the chance of Time to Talk Befriending.

I think it is a lovely thing. It is stimulating to talk with someone outside of the family.

I have always enjoyed it, everyone is lovely, friendly, and gentle. The activities are fun, the atmosphere is lovely. People are fun to talk to. I feel able to express myself.

I have a pen friend - which is great.

I have been satisfied with what you have organised for me and I am open to whatever may be suggested without being committed.

Yes, to Thank all of you for the very thoughtful way that you have kept a constant connection with us all.



Yes Indeed! I have to tell you I have gained greatly by my involvement/association with Time to Talk Befriending (since 2017). I am so happy to be accepted as a scheme member.

I am very pleased.

Thank you for everything.

Wonderful outings met nice friendly people. Thank you for my lovely card.

I do not feel so alone.

I would like to thank you all for your time and efforts and for arranging my befriender. I look forward to our weekly chats.

Everyone I have spoken to on the phone from TTTB have been very pleasant.

It is an excellent service, and I am grateful for the support.

I very much enjoyed the monthly tea-party we used to have. I also appreciate the friendliness and help given by all your staff.

Have had befriender for 5 weeks now. Looking forward to each week chat to my "invisible" friend.

I already have a friend who calls me from your organisation.

I have enjoyed spending time with the group.

Yes, I'd like to say how great I think you all are and I'd like to Thank You so much for all the effort and caring you put in to all that you do.

My weekly contact with my befriender has been very comfortable (we are close in age).

Tea group at Brighton Collage - delightful. Lovely chats with visits from befriender.

I have really enjoyed fellowship by phone etc.

No. My first language was Spanish.

My "friend" would have to come here to my place.

Looking forward to talking to my befriender.

I have been so impressed with my connection with your organisation. Felt no need for such a connection at first but have found the connection so positive and enjoyable.

I love it - someone cares (I loved my card from Cardinal Newman School. I have it still - but it did not 'talk'!!)

It has been a great help. I appreciate it all and the cards from the school children.

Lockdown so soon after being widowed floored me. The phone calls from TTTB have been wonderful.

My befriender has been very good at leaving me messages when I am not there. We had a couple of walks along the seafront.

Wonderful - I was contacted by a card from little girl at Cardinal Newman School. I sent her a card. Great idea. I like the idea of telephoning contact.

The worse thing is I have lost my husband at the end of June 2020 to cancer - my world has fallen apart.

I am so grateful to you all for what you do.

Excellent service

I enjoy the telephone conversations.

I have found this befriending very helpful. The people have been very kind and understanding.

You are a blessing in our old age.

At the monthly tea parties, I found people had a friend and I did find that nobody talked to me quite a few times. Did have reservations about coming to them at times. But I do know it's much harder to make friends when older.

I really love and look forward to my weekly call. We have a good relationship on the phone, lots of laughter and banter. We plan on meeting face to face when rules allow.

I have really enjoyed the contact I have had it has really helped me during this time.



I also attended meetings on a Saturday sometimes (can't remember the name/purpose of the group) which I enjoyed. I felt valued.

I look forward to the end of this 'virus thingy' and return to normality.

Telephone calls each week is much appreciated.

It is a great help to talk to someone after sitting alone maybe 2-3 days without talking to anyone, I get very lonely.

Its been brilliant, it gave me someone to talk to and go out with once a week. Thank you to all the team at Time to Talk Befriending.

I really miss our monthly teatime meetings.

I enjoy seeing or hearing from TTTB once a week.

I love talking to you all.

I have grown in my spiritual faith and I thank God and Time to Talk Befriending for this.

A great idea.

I am enjoying my weekly chats, my telephone friend, we get on very well. I suppose I will never see her. Will I? Please tell me.

Thank you for rescuing 500 elderly lovely people and befriending them. You have transformed my life and I know you are always there for me and many others like me.

It has been a welcome.

Have really enjoyed chatting on the phone every week.

I have appreciated talking to someone on the phone on a regular basis during 'lockdown'.



## Our Next Steps

Based on the information captured from the surveys we will:

**Produce a TTTB 'Road Map'. Our phased response will also take into consideration findings from our Covid-19 academic research report 'Staying Together Recovering Together' produced in partnership with the University of Sussex (March 2021), [click here to download](#).**

Engage with our Members Panel inviting them to contribute thoughts and ideas about service provision based on the findings outlined in this report.

Contact every scheme member connected to the charity (starting with the participants from the recent survey), to discuss their individual situation and offer a range of options for support to best suit their needs at this time.

Work with our scheme members to develop a peer produced guide to building confidence as we move into this new recovery and reintegration phase. A copy of the guidance will be sent by post to our scheme members in May 2021.

Make referrals for our scheme members enabling them to access support through the local health and wellbeing teams at the Council and other community providers to begin to help improve physical mobility.

Collaborate with partners in Brighton and Hove, Adur and Worthing in Sussex to enable our members to access other groups, events, services and activities of interest including access to transport.

We would like to say **thank you** to everyone who took the time to complete and return the survey. This information will help us to understand what is needed to ensure our service and activities are delivered appropriately now and in the future.

I am lucky to talk to my befriender every week, which I look forward to.

I have really enjoyed the contact I have had it has really helped me during this time.

*With thanks to Cheryl for producing the questions and disseminating the survey responses.*



**Cheryl Berry MA**  
Self-Care Champion who is passionate about 'holistic' healthcare for all.

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**Time to Talk**  
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