

Further information

<i>Volunteer activity</i>	Befriending / Age Concern
<i>What I do</i>	I visit an old lady aged 83 once a week for a cup of tea and a chat. She has had four husbands during her amazing life but is now completely alone with no surviving family, and few surviving friends. If the weather is nice I help her out to the garden in her wheelchair. Occasionally, if she feels up to it, we go out for a coffee or shopping and I help her to organise her cleaners and health carers.
<i>Time commitment</i>	I see Paula every Saturday morning, but an hour a week, or an hour every fortnight or even an hour once a month can make a difference to a lonely old person. If I can't visit then I telephone her for a chat.
<i>Why I do it</i>	How many people do you know who have worked for Bomber Command, photographed 50's celebrities for Magnum, been a model and jewellery designer, lived in Paris, Berlin and New York (to name but a few cities), been married four times (including once to a Iranian Secret Service Agent) and been the illegitimate child of an Irish Opera singer and a Russian diamond dealer? Old people have fascinating stories to tell but invariably no one to tell them to. I love to keep them company and know I make a big difference to their lives by giving a small amount of my time to them. Befriending is tremendously rewarding and can be very entertaining. Also, in my hectic life, it gives me a rare chance to sit down and have a cup of tea and an interesting chat! I have been befriending old people since I was 14 and it has given me a fascinating insight into the history of our local area in recent years.
<i>Downsides</i>	Because invariably they have no one else to turn to, elderly people can become quite dependant on their befriender. This can mean that once you start visiting them it can feel like a life-time commitment and you may become involved in helping them organise their financial affairs, sorting out problems with accommodation and energy companies, and finding support services to look after their health and wellbeing. On the other hand, some old people can organise these things for themselves and simply want some company.
<i>What to do next</i>	There are a number of organisations that can put you in touch with elderly residents in the community, such as Age Concern, Andover Community Centre, Dorcas Befriending Project, the Latin American Elderly Project, Association for Veterans of Foreign Wars, Hackney Caribbean Elderly Organisation, Grau Organisation and The Peel Institute. A list of these organisations is attached with contact details. They might ask you to go through a simple vetting process before putting you in touch with residents.

Partners working with Age Concern and Help the Aged in the Highgate Area

Age Concern Islington

Carol Williams
Volunteer Co-ordinator Manager
6-9 Manor Gardens
London N7 6LA
Tel: 020 7281 6018
Email: carol.williams@acislington.org.uk

Dorcas Befriending Project

Herve Nourisson
Project Co-ordinator
Walter Sickertt Community Centre
Canonbury Crescent
London N1 2FB
Tel: 020 7226 1700
Email: dorcasbefriendingproject@yahoo.co.uk

Latin American Elderly Project (LAEP)

Ruben Segura
Administrator
Claremont Day Centre
24-27 White Lion Street
Islington
London N1 9PD
Tel: 020 7833 4450 or 020 7833 3730
Email: INFO@LAEPLATIN.COM

Community Advice & Support Scheme

Akin Romeo
Project Co-ordinator
Andover Community Centre
Andover Estate
Corker Walk
London N7 7RY
Tel: 020 7686 0049
Email: casscoordinator@aol.com

Association for Veterans of Foreign Wars

Councillor Terry Burton
President/Trustee
21 Pine Road
New Southgate
London N11 1EP
Tel: 020 3234 1019
Email: veterans_online@avfw.org.uk

Hackney Caribbean Elderly Organisation

Edward Clayton
Manager
39 Leswin Road
Stoke Newington
London N16 7NX
Tel: 020 7923 3536
Email: hackneycaribbean@btconnect.com

Grau Organisation

Mrs Marche
Co-ordinator
Whitehall Community Centre
100 Whitehall Street
Tottenham
London N17 8BP
Tel: 020 8808 0718
Email: grauorg@gmail.com

The Peel Institute

John Hayes
Service Manager
Percy Circus
Islington
London
WC1X 9EY
Tel: 020 7837 6082
Email: j.hayes@peelinstitute.org.uk