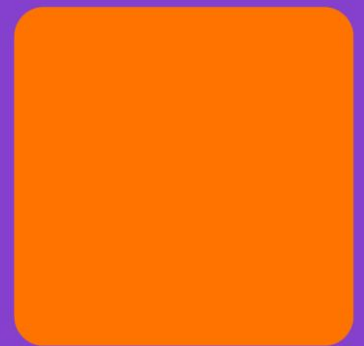


Befriending Statistics Report



October 2023



**Befriending
Networks**

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Introduction

Befriending Networks offers support, training, and guidance to hundreds of befriending projects across the UK and beyond. We are a membership network supporting and connecting 383 befriending organisations. Each year our members self-report data related to their befriending services which informs this Befriending Statistics Report.

The befriending sector, through our membership, tell us of the challenges they face, and this year's befriending statistics report reflects some of these challenges. The most notable challenges experienced by our membership are:

- Sustainability or security of funding
- Recruiting volunteers
- Managing referrals – including those which are complex and those which are inappropriate for a befriending response.

This report sets out the methodology we utilise for collecting and analysing befriending statistics, presents the overall findings and then provides regional breakdown data.

On average, a befriending volunteer provides 51 hours of befriending support each year.

The average size of a befriending service is 52 volunteer befrienders.

The economic value of befriending is at least £16.3 million.



Methodology

Membership data is collected using the Befriending Networks website. Each member has an online account which they can update at any time and which all new membership applications can complete. 100% of our members are offered the opportunity to provide data. In 2023, 67% of our membership provided data, a slight decrease from 69% in 2022.

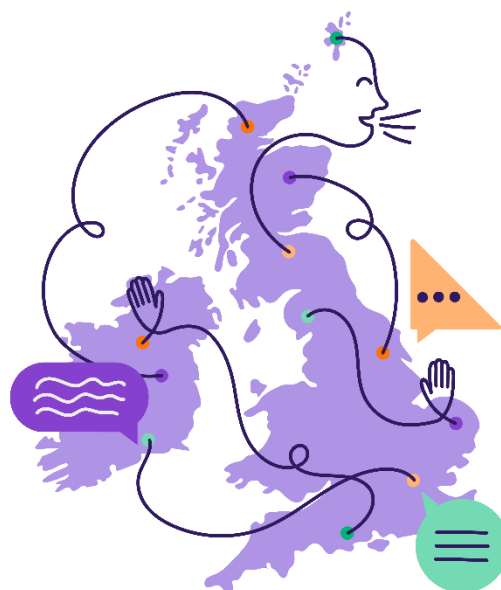
The data requested includes responses to the following questions:

- How many 1:1 face-to-face befriending matches have you supported?
- How many people have you supported through group befriending?
- How many people have you supported through telephone befriending?
- How many active volunteers have you used?
- How many hours of befriending have been delivered by your volunteers?

We check and cleanse the data for any zero responses, negative values, or data entry errors. We are unable to check the validity of the data provided by our membership.

We collate the data available to us and produce an overall data set of the quantity of people or hours based on actual responses. From this data, we then calculate an average per organisation who has responded. We then use this average data to scale up to the size of our overall membership and to infer an estimated size of the befriending sector that is supported by Befriending Networks.

There are regional breakdowns contained in this report. Our members self-report their operating areas within their website profiles. These locations are then used to produce the regional breakdowns. A member's data may appear in more than one region if they are operating nationally or across countries.



Limitations

- Services which are new or in their first year of operating when they join our Network typically provide zero values as their operational data is not yet known.
- The framing of questions related to the number of people supported may result in some individuals being double or triple-counted if they receive multiple befriending inputs e.g., telephone, face-to-face, and group.
- The framing of questions does not include hybrid or other digital models of befriending.
- Data provided by organisations may be historic if they use reflective tools such as annual reports to complete their data i.e., in 2023 we are collating data provided by our membership based on 2022 activity.
- Validity errors may occur in organisations either over or underrepresenting their geographic location and coverage due to the design of the data collection platform.

It is our intention to review the methodology and data collection methods of this report for future years to increase validity and be more inclusive of our membership demographic and delivery models.

Findings: Highlights

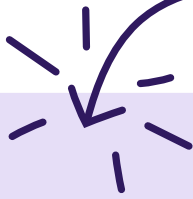


Findings: Overall Statistics

	2023	2022
Number of Befriending Networks Members	383	367
Number of Members Providing Data	258 (67%)	255 (69%)
Average Number of People Supported	145	178
Average Number of Befriending Volunteers	52	64
Average Number of Befriending Hours	2634	2968
Volunteer:Befriending Hours Ratio	1:51	1:46
Estimate: Number of People Supported	55,391	65,204
Estimate: Number of Befrienders	19,981	23,665
Estimate: Number of Befriending Hours Provided	1,008,987	1,089,249
Value of Befriending Hours (based on £16.20 median hourly rate, ASHE, 2023)	£16,345,585	



Discussion



Reflecting on membership data and befriending statistics from 2023 we see stability in the overall size of our membership – with an increase of 16 organisations. Our records indicate that some organisations have ceased to operate or have stopped providing befriending services due to either loss of funding or strategic re-prioritisation.

Whilst the number of organisations we have data from remains relatively stable to compare 2022 and 2023 data, we do note a slight downward trend in overall volunteer numbers and the number of people being supported by befriending services.

This year we have introduced a volunteer:befriending hours ratio – and this indicates that whilst the volunteer number is reducing, individual volunteers are contributing a greater amount of time to the befriending service - a shift from 1:46 to 1:51. This may reflect experiences that our members share with us at networking events, such as challenges in recruiting volunteers, and increasing complexity and needs of people supported by befriending.

There is an opportunity for Befriending Networks to better understand if the nature of befriending delivery is changing e.g., the balance of group, telephone, face to face or hybrid models, and we will be interested to track further over time. A future methodology would also seek to include demographic information of volunteers, and to profile the beneficiary groups of befriending services.

18,504

people supported
by face-to-face
befriending



15,568

people
supported by
telephone
befriending



21,319

people supported
in group
befriending



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Regional Breakdown of Statistics

Befriending Networks has a membership covering multiple regions. Most of our members are based within the United Kingdom, but we are open to members from across the world. This section of our report provides breakdown data by regions. Regions include England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland, and Rest of the World. Data for Northern Ireland and Ireland is combined due to relatively low numbers contributing to the data. Our members self-report on their member profile their operating area. A member's data may appear in more than one region if they are operating nationally or across countries. The figures contained within these regional breakdowns, if combined, would be greater than the overall statistics on page 6.

England	
Number of Members	176
Number of Members Providing Data	117 (66%)
Average Number of People Supported	149
Average Number of Befriending Volunteers	65
Average Number of Befriending Hours	2,383
Volunteer: Hours Ratio	1:37
Estimate: Number of People Supported	26,153
Estimate: Number of Befrienders	11,366
Estimate: Number of Befriending Hours	419,363
Value of Befriending Hours (based on £16.20 median hourly rate, ASHE, 2023)	£6,793,678

Table 1: Members of Befriending Networks, identifying as operating in England.



Scotland	
Number of Members	157
Number of Members Providing Data	108 (69%)
Average Number of People Supported	125
Average Number of Befriending Volunteers	40
Average Number of Befriending Hours	2,042
Volunteer: Hours Ratio	1:51
Estimate: Number of People Supported	19,599
Estimate: Number of Befrienders	6,353
Estimate: Number of Befriending Hours	320,555
Value of Befriending Hours (based on £16.20 median hourly rate, ASHE, 2023)	£5,192,987

Table 2: Members of Befriending Networks, identifying as operating in Scotland.

Wales	
Number of Members	37
Number of Members Providing Data	21 (57%)
Average Number of People Supported	237
Average Number of Befriending Volunteers	99
Average Number of Befriending Hours	2,597
Volunteer: Hours Ratio	1:26
Estimate: Number of People Supported	8,787
Estimate: Number of Befrienders	3,656
Estimate: Number of Befriending Hours	96,087
Value of Befriending Hours (based on £16.20 median hourly rate, ASHE, 2023)	£1,556,613

Table 3: Members of Befriending Networks, identifying as operating in Wales.



Northern Ireland and Ireland	
Number of Members	27
Number of Members Providing Data	11 (41%)
Average Number of People Supported	121
Average Number of Befriending Volunteers	77
Average Number of Befriending Hours	1,981
Volunteer: Hours Ratio	1:26
Estimate: Number of People Supported	3,272
Estimate: Number of Befrienders	2,079
Estimate: Number of Befriending Hours	53,484.50
Value of Befriending Hours (based on £16.20 median hourly rate, ASHE, 2023)	£866,450

Table 4: Members of Befriending Networks, identifying as operating in Northern Ireland and Ireland.

Rest of the World	
Number of Members	14
Number of Members Providing Data	8 (57%)
Average Number of People Supported	238
Average Number of Befriending Volunteers	31
Average Number of Befriending Hours	1,076
Volunteer: Hours Ratio	1:35
Estimate: Number of People Supported	1,901
Estimate: Number of Befrienders	244
Estimate: Number of Befriending Hours	8,606
Value of Befriending Hours (based on £16.20 median hourly rate, ASHE, 2023)	£139,417

Table 5: Members of Befriending Networks, identifying as operating in Rest of the World.

