



Good Practice Procedure - Steps for Closing Down a Project (2024)

It can be a very difficult process for all stakeholders within a befriending project when a project ends. This is commonly due to a lack of funding.

Closing a project down can bring a lot of emotions, challenges and questions from stakeholders. Befriending Networks have created these steps to try and assist staff through this difficult procedure of closing a befriending project.

If it is an organisation or charity that is closing, not solely a befriending project, then further advice should be sought to ensure all necessary steps are taken in line with good governance.

If you have any questions about this procedure, contact Victoria@befriending.co.uk

1. Discuss and Plan

Ensure your Board and Staff are aware of the situation and any decisions that have been reached before any announcement to stakeholders. Be clear of timescales for the project closing and whether this is a permanent decision or if you are seeking funding for continuation in the future. You can discuss plans to restart the project with the team but avoid setting up false hope.

2. Honesty Policy

Be transparent regarding timescales and the reason(s) behind the closure.

3. Don't Delay

Once the immediate Staff and Governance Board are notified, contact stakeholders as early as possible to allow time to plan for the end of befriending matches. These stakeholders may include service users, befrienders, referral agencies and other partnerships. Where possible, a two-way conversation is an advantage to allow discussion and questions. This can also minimise distress or upset that may be caused by a mass email or other form of general news circulation.

4. Spread the Word

Consider the additional participants within the befriending match. Are there key workers involved? Care Givers? Social work? Ensure these third parties are notified and prepared for the removal of your project and that social support provision.



5. Managing Expectations or Waiting Lists

Ensure your communication methods are in harmony. Update the website, social media, automatic replies on your email account and other elements to advertise that the project is not accepting referrals and is closing. Contact everyone who is currently on the waiting list for the befriending project, including referrers. Third parties are often forgotten during this hectic time. Being forward-thinking can help to manage expectations and remove pressure. Remove flyers, remove posters, announce the news on social media, newsletter – whichever resources you have.

6. What is possible for the befriending matches?

Explore the possibility: Are both parties willing to continue as friends outside of the project governance? If so, have each party sign a release form, freeing the organisation from association and liability, evidencing their independence moving forward.

7. Signpost your Service Users

What else is in the area? Network, make phone calls, check [Befriending Networks directory](#) of befriending services. If time allows it, reach out to these agencies to see if your service users meet their criteria. Gain an understanding of the waiting list and timeframes so you can pass on realistic information to your service users.

8. Signpost your Befrienders

Befrienders may feel lost, losing their role and connections as a project closes. What do they love about their role? Are they open to volunteering elsewhere? Signpost them to another local service or recommend they check [Befriending Networks directory](#) for befriending services with volunteering opportunities. Many projects would be extremely grateful to take on your befrienders and support them to keep doing what they love to do.

9. Don't Forget the Practical

Consider the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). What information can you share about your service users and befrienders to other agencies? Do you have consent to pass on their details? Are you archiving data or resources? For how long? Do you have consent to do so? *Storage Limitation* is one of the seven key principles of GDPR.

10. Be Realistic About Time

If time permits, invite groups of befrienders or service users to a gathering to share how they feel. People may find comfort in seeing and hearing from others who are



feeling similar. It may also allow the opportunity to create peer support and meaningful connections.

11. Say Thank You

Thank everyone concerned for their support, understanding and past commitments.

12. Give Yourself Time

Our minds may initially think of our service users losing their form of support and socialisation. Our next thought may be the volunteers and how they may feel losing their role or sense of purpose. It is important you also give thought to yourself. Acknowledge your feelings and give yourself time to process this unfortunate development and to plan for your future.

13. Acknowledge the Positive

Though it may be hard to do so, try and be positive and celebrate all the organisation has achieved and all the volunteers have achieved within the community. If possible, celebrate and thank every volunteer for their involvement and commitment over the project's time.

14. Get in Contact with Befriending Networks

We will also need to be notified to ensure you are updated in our records and remove or update the project within our directory as needed. If you are a member of Befriending Networks, we are here to support you. If you are going through the steps of closing a project and are seeking further support, please contact our team at Info@befriending.co.uk