

Ecas Befriending Service Summary- FAQs

What does the Ecas Befriending Service provide?

- We provide 1-1 social contact for people who have become socially isolated because of physical disability.
- This takes the form of a weekly visit from a volunteer Befriender. The visit might be to the Befriendee's home for around two hours maybe to chat, watch TV or play games. Or it may be to go out and about, for example to a café or the shops, or occasionally further afield (all transport costs are covered by Ecas).
- The service is not time-limited.

Who is eligible to apply for the service?

- Anyone who is aged 18 and over, who has become **isolated** because of their physical disability can apply for the service.

Ecas follows the EHRC guideline that: "You are disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.

- 'substantial' is more than minor or trivial, e.g. it takes much longer than it usually would to complete a daily task like getting dressed.
- 'long-term' means 12 months or more, e.g. a breathing condition that develops as a result of a lung infection."

However, please remember that Ecas only provides support to people who have a physical disability. We regret that the following conditions, on their own, do not meet our criteria: psychiatric disorders, learning difficulties, behavioural disorders, developmental delay, Down's syndrome, autism, visual or hearing impairment, cancer, diabetes, epilepsy, HIV and back pain.

- By isolated we mean people who are **not currently receiving support to attend classes, access their community or participate in leisure activities** or whose social life is limited due to their impairment. They may have limited or no visits from their family or circle of friends.
- There may be other Befriending services which exist to support those who don't fit within our criteria – www.befriending.co.uk offers a comprehensive list of Befriending services that exist for different client groups.

Is my client ready for befriending?

There could be a number of reasons why a physically disabled and isolated person isn't ready for befriending. For example:

- Their personal life may be too disorganised to allow for a regular one-to-one meeting with a Befriendee.
- Their personal care needs may not be met fully. Our Befrienders aren't carers, don't administer medication, and aren't trained for moving and handling.

- Their living conditions may not be safe and clean enough for a volunteer Befriender to visit.
- They may have emotional or other difficulties that would overshadow any befriending relationship. Our befriendeds are not counsellors or advocates.
- Their social development may not be at a stage where they are ready for befriending.

The right conditions can often be established through support from other agencies.

What is the timescale for getting a Befriender?

- We will acknowledge receipt of a referral form within a few days.
- Within 6-8 weeks of receiving a valid referral we will contact the client directly to arrange a time to carry out an initial assessment at their home.
- After the initial assessment, if the client fits our criteria and is still keen to have a Befriender they will be added to our "waiting pool". The timescale at this point varies, depending on two main factors.
 - **Degree of isolation** – clients who are more isolated have higher priority.
 - **Availability of a suitable match** – we do our best to match the client with someone with whom they will get on, and who lives within a reasonable distance. The timescale at this stage can vary from a couple of weeks to months, depending upon the client's priority and availability of a suitable match.

How do I refer someone?

We accept referrals from anyone (with the client's consent), including self-referrals. Just send us a completed referral form, with your client's consent. You can email it to befriendingmanager@ecas-edinburgh.org, or post to

Ecas, Norton Park, 57 Albion Road, Edinburgh EH7 5QY.

Forms can be downloaded from

<http://www.ecas-edinburgh.org/befriending/summary> or you can request one to be posted or emailed to you.

Our phone number is **0131 475 2344**.

FACILITATED FRIENDSHIP

A 'facilitated friendship' involves 2 disabled people, often already known to each other, being supported to maintain (or begin) a new friendship as they have lost touch through housing or mobility issues.

Ecas' main role here is to provide transport to enable the two people to meet, either at each other's house or at another suitable location. Ecas can also provide a PA if necessary to provide assistance during these meetings.