

Volume project has ended and Professor Stefan Priebe is happy to have a pared back version of the VOLUME microsite including basic information and publications. They want information below to be migrated to the new ELFT website.

About Us

VOLUME Research Programme

The website has been set up as a part of a research study on befriending in mental health, funded by the NIHR. The research is carried out at the Unit for Social and Community Psychiatry, WHO Collaborating Centre for Mental Health Services Development, Queen Mary University of London.

What is befriending?

Befriending is a commonly used term referring to a relationship between two people, often a person with mental health problems (AKA a befriender) and a volunteer (AKA a befriender). As the term suggests, the aim of befriending is to gradually develop a close relationship, friendship even, between the befriender and befriender, with the benefits of natural friendships such as having someone to talk to, do fun activities with, and having someone to trust. Befriending is used for individuals who are socially isolated with limited social contacts and engagement. The pair meets regularly and how they spend their time together varies from scheme to scheme depending on the overall aim and nature of the scheme.

Why has this research been carried out?

Although befriending schemes have recently become very popular both in the NHS and independent sector, little evidence is available as to their effectiveness.

The VOLUME (Volunteering in mental health care for people with psychosis) programme, funded by the NIHR (Reference number: RP-PG-0611-20002), aimed to systematically evaluate the benefits of befriending schemes for both patients and volunteers.

The programme consisted of a number of studies, focused on providing information on existing schemes, identification of best practice in one-to-one volunteer input for patients with psychosis, and finally evaluating evidence in a randomised controlled trial.

Within the programme we identified mental health volunteering schemes in the NHS and in voluntary organisations across England, their policies for recruitment, selection, training and management of volunteers. We also interviewed a number of patients and volunteers to understand their subjective experience and opinions about befriending.

Finally, we designed a best practice befriending scheme for patients with psychosis and tested its effectiveness and cost-effectiveness in a randomised controlled trial, the main results can be found [here](https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.2019.42) (<https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.2019.42>)

This website has been designed to make our findings widely available to both NHS and independent volunteering organisations, as well as those who are considering volunteering in mental health.

Publications

<https://volume.elft.nhs.uk/Publications> All 7 PDF publications with descriptions from this page to be migrated. “ new publications (below) to be added.

- Effectiveness of a volunteer befriending programme for patients with schizophrenia: randomised controlled trial. <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.2019.42>

- Patient and befriender experiences of participating in a befriending programme for adults with psychosis: a qualitative study.
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-020-02776-w>