



MANCHESTER CARES

Referral Guidance for the Love Your Neighbour programme

Thank you for your interest in the Love Your Neighbour programme, which brings older and younger neighbours together for 121 friendships. We've compiled some guidance to help you understand more about our referral criteria for older neighbours, and what happens next. If you have any questions, please get in touch with Izzy, Love Your Neighbour Programme Coordinator on izzy.zimsek@manchestercares.org.uk or 0161 207 0800 (option 4).

Who are our older neighbours?

All older neighbours referred to Manchester Cares **must be aged 65 or over and live in Manchester City Council**. For the Love Your Neighbour programme, we look for older neighbours who are interested in getting to know a younger person through building a friendship, and who are able to hold a mutual, two-way conversation.

Some of our older neighbours are looking for more company due to being unable to get out of the house, declining health, mobility issues, bereavement or other challenging life changes. However, we also welcome older neighbours who have many social connections but would still like a new friend from a different generation.

Are there any referrals you cannot accept?

While we try to be as inclusive as possible on the programme, there are cases where Love Your Neighbour may not be the best fit for an older neighbour. Therefore, we cannot accept referrals for older neighbours with the following circumstances:

- **Diagnosis of dementia** - For safeguarding and practical reasons, older neighbours on the programme need to remember who the younger neighbour is, when they are coming, and be able to tell us how the visits were going. Our younger neighbours also aren't trained to support older neighbours with significant memory challenges and therefore we've found that visits can end up causing distress or confusion for both parties.
- **Unmanaged or complex mental/physical health condition** - We would class 'unmanaged' as when there is evidence of inadequate support being in place, and the older neighbour is unwilling to pursue support. This also includes complex mental

health issues, such as psychotic disorders, where it would be unsuitable for a volunteer to visit them, as they are not trained to deal with this.

- **Very unwell or in receipt of palliative care** - We've often found older neighbours struggle to build a friendship with a younger neighbour during periods of severe ill health. Our volunteers also aren't trained to support older neighbours receiving end of life care, with the emotional and practical implications this has. The expectation we give is a sustainable and mutual friendship between older and younger neighbours, which sadly wouldn't be possible in this situation.
- **Little or no English language level, or difficulties communicating remotely due to hearing loss** - Older neighbours must have a full understanding of the programme before they're matched, and we need to be able to keep in touch with them remotely (e.g. over the phone, by text or email) during their match for safeguarding reasons. Therefore if communication barriers such as language or hearing would make this unfeasible, we're unfortunately unable to match that older neighbour. We can however suggest other programmes for those who have barriers to communication, and are still working on how we can include older neighbours who speak little or no English in the programme in future.
- **Don't agree to/follow our anti-racism and inclusion policy** - All older neighbours must agree to follow our anti-racism and inclusion policy before being matched, so that we're ensuring our community remains a safe and welcoming place where everyone can be themselves. If they refuse to agree, or breach the policy during the course of the assessment or matching process, we may not be able to match them on the programme. You can read more about our policy [here](#).
- **Unsuitable home environment** - During our assessment visits we need to ensure that the home is safe, clean and in good repair. There must be somewhere for the volunteer to sit comfortably at a good distance, as well as a functioning bathroom, hot running water and heating. Older neighbours will be asked not to smoke during visits. If older neighbours live with another person, we'll also need to meet them before matching to ensure the safety of our volunteers.
- **Living in a care home** - We're not usually able to match older neighbours living in care homes. From experience, we've found that it's difficult for matches to build a mutual, one-to-one friendship in this environment, and limited visiting hours often don't align with our younger neighbours' schedules.

What sort of information is it useful to include in my referral?

In referrals it's great to read about the older neighbour's background, interests, and their motivations for getting involved in the programme. It's useful to mention any medical conditions, accessibility needs, communication or mobility issues that might impact their involvement, or how we get in touch with them. Please also include anything we might need to

know before visiting them at home, e.g. if they live with someone else, have pets, or have a key safe.

What happens after I make a referral?

After you've made a referral, you'll get an email acknowledging we've received it. Usually our Outreach Coordinator will contact the older neighbour directly to tell them more about our programmes and confirm their interest. We aim to do this within **two weeks** of the referral. We may contact you first if we need more information, or if we are unable to accept the referral.

A member of the Love Your Neighbour team will then call to follow up with the older neighbour, find out a bit more about them, and, if we think the programme is right for them, book an assessment visit. Sometimes there might be a bit of a delay before this call, or the visit booking, depending on the number of neighbours we have referred to us.

The assessment visit is an opportunity for us to chat to the older neighbour in person and get to know them better. The visit usually lasts about an hour; we talk about our programmes and go through an assessment form. We want to make sure we have the older neighbour's details correct, to find out more about their background and interests to ensure we can find them a suitable younger neighbour match, and to better understand their living situation, so we can make sure they've got the support in place to be able to safely and happily engage. We can refer or signpost to other organisations who can offer support if necessary.

What happens after an assessment visit?

We will update you of the outcome of our visit and the next steps. Please be aware that the time it takes for an older neighbour to be introduced to a new friend depends on a number of factors, including the number of younger neighbours available in their area, and the outcome of the assessment visit and whether they'll need any extra support prior to being matched. We try to match thoughtfully and sustainably, so that the friendships created are positive and long lasting for both parties, but it can often take a bit of time for the right people to be in the right places at the right time! Therefore we'd advise managing the older neighbour's expectations that they may not be matched for a few months. We will keep you and them updated.

If you have any updates on the neighbour referred, for instance a change of contact details or circumstances, or something you'd like to add to the referral information provided, then please contact Izzy on izzy.zimsek@manchestercares.org.uk or 0161 207 0800 (option 4).