

The Royal Free Charity support hub

The volunteer check in and chat service: Information leaflet

The Royal Free Charity:

The Royal Free Charity works in partnership with the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust because together we can do what the NHS can't achieve alone.

The Support hub:

The Support hub was set up in 2018 by the Royal Free Charity to support patients with long term health conditions; offering information and advice to patients to help them better live with a chronic condition. This includes a welfare rights advice service, peer support groups, signposting to local services, and massages for Royal Free patients.

At the start of the pandemic in March 2020, we had to close our doors to help protect our patients, and so our service moved virtual and over the phone.

In April 2020, we set up the 'volunteer check in and chat' programme – connecting our volunteers and patients who were now at home and more isolated than usual.

What is the 'volunteer check in and chat' programme and what can I expect?

The 'volunteer check-in and chat' is a Royal Free Charity (RFC) service, set up by the RFC Support Hub during the early stages of the covid-19 pandemic and is run-in collaboration with the RFC volunteering team.

It is a free and confidential one-to-one telephone service provided by RFC volunteers. The service supports Royal Free London patients who may be more isolated than usual, by connecting them with one of our friendly volunteers, who will call regularly for an informal friendly chat.

A staff member of the Royal Free London sends us the patient referral (with your consent), and we will pair you up with a volunteer 'buddy' to call you. This can be weekly, or less frequently, depending on what works for you; and it can be for 10 minutes up to 1 hour, depending on your needs, your relationship, and what you feel like on the day!

The purpose of the service is to provide a short term (3 – 6 month) buddy to phone you from time to time, to provide some companionship and conversation. Our volunteers can also help connect with other services that may support you.

What the service /calls are:

- A telephone check in and chat 'buddy'. You will be paired with a friendly Royal Free Charity volunteer who will phone you up from time to time, to check in and see how you're doing and have a chat.
- The calls are an opportunity to talk to someone new; a friendly ear to listen to you without judgement.
- An opportunity to ask for support. If you think you need more help in any way, you can talk to your volunteer and they can either advise you what might be available or will make contact with someone at the Charity who can help connect you with the relevant services.

What the service / calls are not:

- This service isn't a face to face service
- This role does not require your volunteer to go shopping or do other jobs for people.
- This is not a mental health support service, and it is important to note that our volunteers are not trained counsellors. They will listen and have a chat, but please note they are not trained to offer psychological support. We can help connect you with the relevant services and information to support you when required.

Other points to note:

- It is important for our volunteers to have some professional boundaries, to protect both the volunteer and the individual.
- Inappropriate behaviour will not be accepted; parties must adhere to mutual respect. Any behaviour deemed inappropriate may mean the calls coming to an end. We will discuss this on a case by case basis.
- Volunteers will not disclose their personal information including: surname, telephone number, email address, address, place of work, or social media account(s).
- As this is a volunteer telephone service, volunteers are also not able to visit or meet you in person (e.g. walks, parks, homes, restaurants)
- Gifts should not be given, no matter how small or large.

Frequently Asked Questions

- **Why am I receiving this information?**
 - o You are receiving this because you are part of the volunteer check in and chat programme – you will have been receiving a call (or about to receive a call) from a Royal Free Charity volunteer.

- **How long will my volunteer buddy call me?**
 - o 3 months initially, we will then review on a case-by-case basis, and can extend for another 3 months. If you'd like a new volunteer to call, we will re-pair with a new buddy.

- **How frequent are the calls?**
 - o Usually once a week, or once every 2 weeks, depending on what works for you both.

- **What is the maximum duration of the call?**
 - o 1 hour (but they can be 5 mins, 15m, 30m – depending on what you feel like!)

- **When will the calls take place?**
 - o Ideally Monday – Friday 9am -5pm, (up to 4pm on a Friday)
 - o The reason for this is so that our Charity team are on hand to support in case any issues arise that the volunteer needs to raise.
 - o We understand this may not always work, so occasionally they will be outside of these hours.

- **What do I do if I would like to stop the calls?**
 - o No problem, we understand people may not want to continue with the calls for a variety of reasons, that's fine, just **email** us at: rf.royalfreesupporthub@nhs.net, or **phone**: 020 7794 0500 ext 39963 and let us know, and we'll let the volunteer know they no longer need to call you.

- **What do I do if I would like to change my volunteer, or would like a second volunteer to call?**
 - o Just email us at rf.royalfreesupporthub@nhs.net or call 020 7794 0500 ext 39963 and let us know, and we'll sort the rest

- **What do I do if I have a problem with my volunteer or would like to raise an issue? Or if I have some general feedback about the service?**
 - o Email the Support hub Lead, Elizabeth.fowler2@nhs.net or call 07932 719176
 - o You can also email rf.royalfreesupporthub@nhs.net or call 020 7794 0500 ext 39963
 - o If you have feedback about the calls or the programme we would love to hear from you. We always want to improve what we're doing, so please do get in touch. You can contact the Support hub Lead, Liz Fowler at Elizabeth.fowler@royalfreecharity.org

- **What if I want to get hold of my volunteer buddy, so that they can phone me?**
 - o Email us at rf.royalfreesupporthub@nhs.net or call 020 7794 0500 ext 39963 and let us know, and we'll get the message to them.

- **What do I do if I need help in some way?**
 - o If you have concerns and need extra support you can escalate this to your volunteer, and ask them to pass on to our team; someone will then get in touch to support you however we can.

- **How can I give feedback?**
 - o Please email or call us, we would be happy to hear any feedback you have, positive, negative, or ideas you have to help us improve our service.
 - o The Charity is also always keen to hear peoples individuals stories where we might have made a difference. Please email rf.royalfreesupporthub@nhs.net or call Liz at 07932 719176. We'd love to hear from you.

- We may contact you from time to time to find out how the calls are going.

Privacy information

This leaflet lets you know about how we handle your personal information.

If you have any questions about this, wish to make a request to see your information, exercise any of your other data protection rights, or have a complaint please contact the Support hub Lead Liz at Elizabeth.fowler2@nhs.net or call 07932 719176.

A. What information do we hold?

We hold the information sent through by the staff referrer at the Royal Free hospital. This includes your name, mobile number and can include email address.

As of July 2021, we also ask for your address and GP information. This is in case of emergency issues raised, or any other issues which we need to get involved in. We will ask your consent before contacting your GP or anyone else. It also allows us to keep you updated with information (like this document).

B. Where is my information kept?

We record and hold your information in a secure location saved in the Royal Free Charity Sharepoint and Advice Pro. This is only accessible by a limited number of people (outlined below).

C. Do you need my consent?

We are a support service, connecting Royal Free volunteers with patients at home. We cannot run the 'Volunteer check in & chat' service or connect you with a volunteer without your contact information.

We believe both you and the Support Hub have an interest in us collecting and using your personal information in this way. We have a 'legitimate

interest' and we consider that our interests do not override your interests. If you think we have got this wrong, please let us know.

We do not routinely collect special category data (e.g. your health information) as part of this service.

D. Who can see my personal information?

It can only be accessed and used by:

- The Royal Free Charity Support Hub Administrator and Lead
- The Royal Free Charity- Volunteer team (3 members of the team involved in this project)
- The Volunteer 'buddy' who has been paired with you
 - *They will be given your name and telephone number only.*
 - *Whatever information you choose to disclose over the phone is up to you.*

Where needed, we might occasionally liaise on your behalf with third parties such as a Royal Free London medical team or a service in the community that might be able to help you.

We will only do this with your consent; this may be verbal or written (see section F below for exceptions to this).

E. Volunteer confidentiality

Our volunteers are trained Royal Free Charity volunteers who undergo training and an induction which covers topics such as data protection and safeguarding.

Our volunteers are given guidance on the check in and chat programme; they are advised to keep your information safe and confidential at all times, not writing down information or discussing confidential information.

A small number of our check in and chatters are UCL medical students who are volunteering for the service; they are also given guidance in the above areas.

F. Will my personal information always remain confidential?

We always protect your confidentiality. However, we can share your personal information in the following circumstances:

- When there is a legal requirement – because of a law or a court order
- Where there is an overriding public interest (e.g. to prevent serious crime or serious harm to self or other person)
- To prevent a vulnerable adult from abuse (e.g. physical, sexual, psychological, financial)

G. How long will you keep my personal information?

The RFC Support hub usually retains personal information for the advice industry standard of 6 years. However, for the check in and chat programme, after the pandemic or the service ceases to exist, we will delete personal information within 1 year. If you require us to delete it before this period, please email rf.royalfreesupporthub@nhs.net.

H. What if I want more detail?

Full details can be found on the Royal Free Charity Privacy Policy: <https://royalfreecharity.org/about/privacy-policy/>

If you have any other questions please email Elizabeth.fowler2@nhs.net or call 07932 719176.