

About Linking Lives UK

Our Aims

Our primary aim is to inspire, equip and resource churches and Christian organisations to develop effective responses to loneliness and social isolation in local communities which impact the lives of older people. This is achieved by enabling churches to set up local befriending projects in which volunteers regularly visit or telephone older people on a regular basis. This contact has a significant impact in addressing loneliness and social isolation and there is evidence that such activity can improve physical, mental and spiritual health as well as self-confidence. We are also very much aware that older people have much to offer to the rest of society, and we encourage our projects to value and celebrate the contributions and experiences of older people.



We believe that the church has a key role to play in addressing these key issues of our time, and that many are recognising the need to respond in their local communities. This was highlighted recently in a report produced by AllChurches Trust which found that ***'58% of churches consider loneliness and social isolation will be the biggest issues in their communities during the coming year'***¹. We are excited at the prospect of continuing to support churches in this way, and this role will be a key one in supporting isolated older people in the Devon region.

Who we are and what we do

Linking Lives UK has emerged from the initial work of a church-based community project in Berkshire which began in 1998. The approach that we take involves regular visits and phone calls being made by volunteers and typically last for between one and two hours. Those receiving visits are also encouraged to attend local social events and activities where possible, or visit places of interest with their volunteer. We began working on a national level in 2012, so that this model could be replicated in other areas, and in 2016 Linking Lives UK became registered as separate charity to focus on this national work. There are currently 32 visiting projects operating ranging from Aberdeen to Guernsey, each of which provides crucial support to those most in need of company. Our main role is to provide the necessary training, advice, documentation and ongoing support to partner churches as well as sharing good practice.

Following the commencement of lockdown in March 2020, all previous home visits were converted to regular telephone calls, and volunteers have been providing much needed support during the Covid-19 pandemic in this way. We have also set up an exciting and brand-new model called Two's Company which has been made available to 18 churches and Christian organisations wishing to support socially isolated people during lockdown. This model is an 'off the shelf' telephone befriending project which can be set up quickly, easily and safely in local communities and we expect this to continue to be a key aspect of our work in the future.

¹ 'Hope Beyond', AllChurches Trust, July 2020

Regional Development Officer – Devon

Role Description *

Based: Home-based and able to travel across selected parts of Devon

Status: Self-Employed

Hours: 8 hours per week

Hourly rate: £15.00-£18 ph (according to experience)

Contract: One year initially

This is an exciting opportunity to join an innovative, national Christian charity working to combat loneliness and social isolation. We work with churches and Christian organisations across the country to support them in establishing befriending schemes. This role is an opportunity to develop the work of Linking Lives UK specifically within the Devon region in order to build effective links between churches and socially isolated older people.

Summary and Main Purpose of Role

To:

- Build and develop relationships with new churches and Christian organisations across Devon with the target of:
 - Initiating eight new 'Two's Company' telephone befriending projects in the region
 - Initiating two new visiting projects (subject to lockdown measures and guidelines)
- Build regional partnerships with key agencies in the area where appropriate
- Follow up interest from existing Linking Lives contacts in the region as necessary.
- Assist with training and maintenance of quality standards in the region.

Specific responsibilities

1. Researching and networking

As a charity, we recognise the importance of encouraging partnerships and avoiding duplication of effort and, as a result, cooperation with relevant local organisations form a core element of our local expressions. For this reason, the role will involve:

- Carrying out research into existing services, projects and activities focusing on social isolation and loneliness among over 65's with a particular focus on befriending projects. Identifying those communities less well-served and which would benefit from a Linking Lives befriending project
- Consult key local and regional agencies including churches, local authorities, emergency services, health bodies (including GP surgeries, clinical commissioning groups and social prescribing bodies), adult social care teams, charities and other relevant organisations.

***All elements of this role will be subject to any ongoing changes to lockdown working practices**

2. Profile-raising

- Actively pursue possible sources of interest in running Linking Lives projects in the region through meetings and other forms of communication with the aim of achieving the targets mentioned above
- Write articles highlighting the aims of Linking Lives for regional publications
- Explore possible partnerships with local and regional churches, statutory agencies and voluntary/ community sector organisations
- Coordinate and deliver Taster Sessions, by video conferencing or face to face where permitted, in areas with a concentration of interest (training will be provided)

3. Training

- Participate in the coordination and delivery of the Two's Company and Visiting Project training sessions as required across the region in conjunction with the Two's Company Coordinator

4. Quality Standards & Reporting

- Carry out 6-monthly and annual reviews with existing partner projects either by video conference call or face to face
- Participate in occasional Regional Development Officer meetings
- Submit reports as required to funders of the project

Other features of the role/ special requirements:

- You will need to be able to work on your own initiative as well as operating effectively as part of a wider team.
- Contribute appropriately to the advancement of the Christian faith in all aspects of the role and personal conduct
- Contribute positively to regular team meetings including prayer times.

To apply, please send a CV and covering letter explaining why you wish to apply for the role to Jeremy Sharpe at recruitment@linkinglives.uk by 5.00pm on Wed 23rd September 2020. Interviews: Monday 28th September by Zoom.