**RNA – Befriender Role Guidance**

The RNA takes pride in maintaining naval ethos, having fun with like-minded people whilst supporting the serving navy and each other when needed; in short, we thrive on delivering a ‘1,000 good deeds a day’ (in numerous guises). An arm around the shoulder to offer advice and practical support is incumbent on all RNA members, but in an official capacity, this falls to the Branch Welfare Officer.

Face to face support is ideal, however in the winter months or when travel options or mobility issues are a barrier, a phone call can be as effective.

It may be that Befrienders call at a pre-arranged time every week (or fortnight); FaceTime or Skype are free and ideal via an iPad or mobile phone.

Did you know there is a specific group call service for Seafarers, it’s part of The Silver Line? More details at the link [www.thesilverline.org.uk/seafarers-link-group-calls](https://www.thesilverline.org.uk/seafarers-link-group-calls/)

**Contact as a Befriender**

Contact the members in your area to introduce yourself, explain who you are and your role as an RNA Befriender. You may wish to include the purpose of the relationship, expectations, how you will make and maintain contact, confidentiality and boundaries.

It is extremely important that you are aware of boundaries from the outset; see Dos and Don’ts below and if in doubt please seek ask.

**Do**:

• Be prepared to listen and let the person talk.

• Always observe confidentiality; if you need to take notes, keep them safe and do not share them with anyone else. Shred anything you no longer need to refer to (See RNA GDPR guidance).

• Be helpful, friendly and sensitive.

• Raise concerns such as behaviours or deteriorating health; as much as we would like to, we cannot cure all nor take on other people’s problems.

**Don’t:**

* Become involved in family disputes or personal affairs.
* If you meet in person: don’t accept money, don’t administer medication, don’t undertake any form of personal care e.g. toileting, washing, dressing.
* Make promises that you are unable to keep!
* Enforce your own religious or political opinions on a person

**Don’t despair if you don’t get on!**

Befriending relationships can come to an end for many reasons. It may be that the relationship was for a fixed period of time, to provide help and support over a particular issue or that both members reach a mutual agreement to end contact. In other cases, endings may be one-sided and sudden; the relationship may break down for personal reasons or as a result of ill health. As with the end of any relationship, this may evoke a range of feelings including relief, distress, sadness, disappointment or anger. Please remember this is a voluntary role, change and adapt as required.

Where issues or problems arise, it’s important for you to act promptly; please seek advice and guidance from the Branch Chairman or National Welfare Adviser to agree on an appropriate solution.

There is a lot of support available to our members, both from military organisations and a range of charities listed on the RNA Welfare directory. Befriending provides the opportunity to form new friendships, encourage members into your Branch and enforce our motto **‘Once Navy, Always Navy’**.