



## PRESS RELEASE

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### Befriending Service Connects the Community

The Covid-19 Mental Health and Wellbeing Team have worked throughout the current crisis to provide essential advice and support to those who need it. Through their work they began to engage with members of the community who are over 60, a significant number of whom have reported feeling lonely, vulnerable and isolated, with nobody to talk to.

In response, the Mental Health and Wellbeing Team have established a Befriending Service. This service will match a COVID-19 volunteer friend with those members of the community who are feeling lonely and socially disconnected at this difficult time, and enable them to connect and engage with each other through telephone calls. Follow up calls and co-ordination with the Mental Health and Wellbeing Team ensures safeguarding for both parties.

Anyone over 60 who would like someone to talk to on a regular basis can request this service using the application form available via this link: <https://bit.ly/2WKNYy4>

Alternatively, call **200 12494** and an operator will be happy to take your application over the phone.

Volunteers are fully vetted before the matching process. When it is time to make the call, a befriending service call centre operator will contact the client, informing them that they are about to be connected to their new 'friend'. Calls will be made 7 days a week from 10:00am until 6:00pm.

Minister for Civil Contingencies Samantha Sacramento said: 'Because of the lockdown and people being home for long periods of time, the Befriending Service is a valuable way of connecting people across our community and of ensuring that nobody has to feel alone at this difficult time. I'd like to thank the dedicated teams of professionals and volunteers who have worked so hard to make this unprecedented community project a reality.'