

## Reminder of guidelines for phoning an older person

Please note these are *reminders only* from the introductory session to Kissing it Better (Mondays at 5pm)

**Safety note a)** If you are under 18 it is important that your parent/carer is within earshot when you make a call. Note that everyone under 16 needs their parents/guardian to sign a consent form (found on our newsletter as a link) before undertaking any Kissing it Better activity.

**Safety note b)** If at any stage you feel uncomfortable, worried or unsafe please hand the phone immediately to a parent/guardian.

More general guidance

- Ensure you can concentrate – choose a quiet room at a time when you can focus and are not rushed, stressed or distracted. Also, any background noise (music, TV, other talking, dogs barking, traffic noise etc) will make it much harder for an older person to hear you.
- When calling, clearly introduce yourself and check that you are speaking to the right person.
- Ask if this is a convenient time for the older person to talk, and offer to ring back if not (ask them to suggest *the best time(s) for them*).
- Ensure you can hear one another well – if not, make adjustments (call back on a different line/ speak more slowly/ suggest adjustment to their volume etc).
- Don't say you're ringing as part of a volunteering award as they may think you are simply doing this for your own benefit.
- Start by asking how they are but be aware, you may have the short answer 'fine' – even if they're not. Your conversation might depend on how well you know them, but the most important tip is to listen with care. This will help the chat flow on naturally.
- Many older people don't remember a lot about recent events but might like to reminisce on their younger days, especially the fun they had – be guided by them and what seems to interest them. Find common interests if you can!
- You can share your own stories too – but if they are lonely, don't bombard them with all the excitement of *your* life.
- Make a few notes during or straight after the call to reflect on in your volunteering log. (If you plan to write stories/memories up to share more widely, please ask their permission as some memories may be personal.)
- At the end of the call, thank the person and reflect something of your enjoyment of the call (eg *I really loved hearing about your school days and I'd love to chat more about that next time...*)
- If you choose to phone an isolated older person regularly, do make a commitment if they'd like that too. If you need to change the arrangement, give plenty of notice and check that the older person is happy with that.
- Above all, *enjoy the experience* – it is a privilege. Listen, and be yourself. You will be showing the older person that they are valued and you will gain so much from these conversations.