

LASSN's Guide to



Befriending (in a pandemic)

**Learning
from the
last 6
months –
preparing
for the next
6 months**

Since the beginning of lockdown in March 2020, LASSN has been responding to the changing and emerging needs of Befrienders and Befriendees. This booklet is a way of capturing the key things we have learned during this time and to pass on ideas and suggestions.

LASSN would be nothing without YOU and the time and care you give. As we prepare for a COVID winter we are really aware of the extra challenges this will present for us all; thank you so much for all you do and we hope this resource will help you in your Befriending role.

Managing Expectations

Befriending is very different at the moment - not only is the ability to meet face-to-face restricted but communicating solely via phone/Whatsapp/Zoom is really hard.

It is important to note that

- We are still all getting used to this new normal so don't be hard on yourself.
- Regular weekly contact might not be as possible at the moment – routines are very different to how they used to be and that's ok.
- Technological issues will arise – please ask for help if you need it
- While this resource is full of ideas and suggestions you are under **NO** pressure to do any of it.
- Just being kind and being alongside your Befriender so they still feel supported and remembered is hugely significant – that's all we ask.



Top tips for remote Befriending

- Agree a time and day of the week when you and your Befriender are both free e.g. every Tuesday at 11am. Repeatedly missed calls mean people lose interest. Agree whether you will call/Skype/Zoom.
- If it has been a while since you have been in touch then try starting off with a short conversation. You can always extend it if the conversation is going well.
- Try to ask open questions e.g. instead of ‘does your little boy like school?’ try ‘what does your little boy like doing at school?’ . Don’t be afraid of silences.
- Always end your conversation by asking if it would be O.K. to phone the following week and reinforce the time and day.
- Finish the conversation when you still have things to say rather than let it peter out.
- It is human nature to try to make things better but be appropriate to what your Befriender needs. Providing a safe, caring listening space is really valuable.
- Speak slowly and clearly. If you are on Skype/Zoom remember to smile!

Having remote conversations

Try not to:

- Reassure that everything will be alright. This IS a worrying time – help people instead focus on the positive where they can and on things they do have choice and control over.
- Divert the conversation away from what your Befriender is saying
- Assume you know everything about the situation
- Tell your Befriender what to do

Examples of open/helpful statements/questions:

- “Perhaps you can tell me more about that?”
- “Can you tell me what happens when you are unable to leave the house?”
- “What sort of things can you do to help when you are worried?”
- Asking questions that begin with ‘What’ or ‘How’ can encourage people to consider options and help to prompt positive action e.g. “How would it be if you tried a short walk round the block tomorrow?”.

Supporting Someone Remotely - Technology

There will be issues – we are all struggling with such reliance on technology! Don't feel alone and do ask us for help if you need it. There's some excellent resources on the LASSN website about technology and using zoom that our wonderful English at Home colleagues have made- definitely worth looking at if you are a bit unsure. Follow [this link](#)

The screenshot shows a webpage with a green header bar containing the title 'Teaching Remotely' and a breadcrumb trail 'Home > Teaching Resources > Teaching Remotely'. Below the header is a paragraph of text offering support. At the bottom, there is a grid of six orange buttons with white text, arranged in two rows and three columns.

Teaching Remotely
Home > Teaching Resources > Teaching Remotely

Teaching remotely can feel quite daunting, especially if you have not had any experience of doing it before. We are here to help offer support if needed, so just contact english@lassn.org.uk and we will assist in whatever way we can.

Delivery & Technology	Ideas & Activities	Read Along
Useful Websites	Activities & Learning for Young People	Resources

Stuck for things to talk about?

We know its hard at the moment – everyone’s days are different to what they used to be and it can be hard to know what to talk about. Follow the [‘Ideas and Activities’](#) on the LASSN website - there’s some excellent resources that our wonderful English at Home colleagues have made to give you some ideas.

Sharing Photos

A good way to finish each lesson can be to set your learner the task of taking a picture. You can use this to increase positivity by making it something which makes them smile. It could be something they find interesting, or it could be on a theme linked to your lesson.

You can then start the following lesson by asking them to send you the picture. This can prompt some great discussion at the start of the session, especially as people are not out very much so conversation about what you have done is more difficult at present.

As an extension task, they could write about the picture, saying where it was taken, how it makes them feel, why they like it etc.. With a lower level learner they could name all of the things they see in the picture, or write any words they connect with the image.



Things to be Thankful for



In these uncertain times, it is very easy to focus on negatives and to be overwhelmed by constant bad news. Why not try and encourage positive thinking by asking your learner to share with you 3 things they are thankful for.

One way to increase the learning opportunity is for you each to choose 3 objects. Do not tell them what you have, but instead prompt them to ask you questions to discover what the object is. You can do the same for their object.

Once the object has been guessed, they can explain why they chose it and why it is something that they are thankful for. The activity can be extended by asking them to write about the object after the session. Depending on their level of English you can make it easier by giving them sentence starters, or more difficult by challenging them to use new vocabulary in their writing.

News Articles and Stories

Using the news can keep things very current in your lessons. You can find material appropriate to your learner’s level of English to read and to discuss.

Unless you have been specifically asked by the learner, it is probably best to avoid subjects which may be very emotive such as around Covid 19 or issues from their home country.

Finding a positive or entertaining story can lead to interesting discussions and probably a few laughs too. You can use these to address new vocabulary and can also set a number of questions alongside the article to check comprehension.

For work after the session, you could ask the learner to find an article for next lesson.



Bring me a...



Many learners will be at home with a number of children to entertain and educate while the schools are closed. By adding games to the lesson which the children also take part in could be a winner with parents!

One game that can work well is called 'Bring me a...'. You can set up the children against their parent or delegate teams depending on the number who will be involved. As the referee you then ask them to bring you an object, such as banana or pencil (make sure they are objects your learner will have in the house). The first person to show you the given object is the winner.

The learner can then use this as an activity with their children during the week to help keep them amused.

Letter Writing



Writing letters to your learner can be a brilliant way of staying in contact as well as improving their English. Also, I am sure most of us enjoy receiving something in the post which is not a bill or junk mail! It is worth alerting your learner that you have sent a letter though, especially if they have limited English just to make sure they understand its purpose.

This is a task which you can easily grade to your learner’s level, using simpler language or more advanced language.

Please make sure you write as neatly as possible. If English is not your native language, hand written script can be very difficult to decipher! Also, we recommend including a stamped addressed envelope to make replying as easy as possible. Expenses can be claimed for these in the usual way for LASSN volunteers.

Instructional Session



This is a fun way of doing something together while you are apart. You can choose a subject that is of interest to you both, food probably works for most people! However, it could be Origami, gardening or learning to dance!

Make sure before the lesson that you both have the equipment you need. If you are making food together, be sure it is a simple dish they have the ingredients for. You can even check this in the previous session by asking them to show you the ingredients to check understanding.

In the session, you can then talk through the instructions for creating your desired master piece. You can use sessions leading up to teach key vocabulary they may need, e.g. cut, fry, fold. The learner can then teach you how to create something. Depending on their level of English you can work together to help them prepare the instructions.

Quizzes



Not only are quizzes great fun, but they can be extremely useful for checking learning. There are numerous places that you can find quizzes, or you can write your own tailored to what you have just covered in the session. This will let you know what might need more attention in the next session and build the learner’s confidence by seeing what they now know. They can also be a good way to start a session and revise what you covered previously. Question difficulty can be graded from closed ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answers, to multiple choice or the learner having to come out with the correct answer independently. You can just ask them, have a PowerPoint, or create a quiz online through a site such as Kahoot. Using this platform means you can set a quiz as homework for your learner.

Language Exchange

A great way to put your learner at ease is to ask them to teach you a few words in their home language. Not only is it nice to be able to greet them, it can also be a great reminder for you as to how difficult it is to learn a new language and can give a lot of laughs as you try and pronounce words incorrectly! This will help them at ease and show that it is fine to make mistakes.

Learning a new language (even if it is just a few words) can help you see what techniques aid your learning which might then be useful for your learner. This is can be especially helpful if the language has a different script. It also gives you more of an idea of what is achievable in your sessions.

This is also very useful for changing the dynamic in your relationship. By having the learner teach you, it empowers them and can increase their confidence by seeing the skills and knowledge which they possess.





There are also lots of other ideas online too. We've included some that we like – have a look and let us know if you find any others that you think are worth sharing.

Starting conversations can be difficult.

However, this brilliant resource from [The Learning and Work Institute](#) has 15 different topics to choose from and many intriguing questions you can discuss with your Befriender to delve a bit deeper.



Interesting Images



[The Guardian](#) have fascinating images from around the world, providing great conversation starters.

Don't forget to look after yourself too!

[Befriending Networks](#) has some well-being tips for people that volunteer as Befrienders.

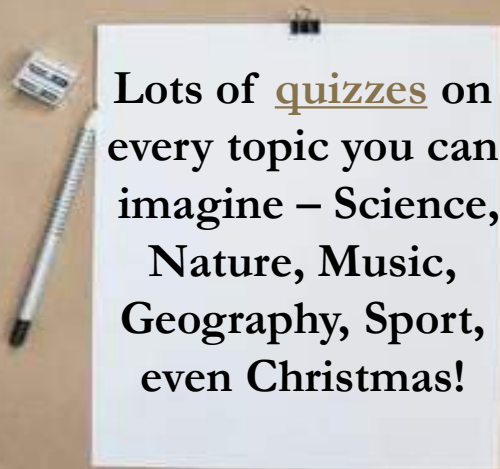
Remember.. You can't give from an empty well...



[Ello](#) have a massive catalogue of videos to watch and discuss with your Befriender They are in numerous accents too.

[Podcasts in English](#) have a great range of topics and discussions.






Lots of quizzes on every topic you can imagine – Science, Nature, Music, Geography, Sport, even Christmas!



Explore from home - virtual tours of some of the worlds' most famous landmarks. Find virtual tours of zoos, national parks, galleries, Disneyland, NASA – its all here!



The Mental Health foundation have lots of tips and advice about helping people cope with the uncertainty, anxiety and fear caused by COVID. We especially like their 'Random acts of Kindness during COVID' tips.



Place2Be has lots of great suggestions for family orientated activities – from exercise challenges to art activities and story-times....

...Lots of ways to involve your Befriender and their children.

Support – For you

- Every other month we run a Peer Support session on Zoom. This is a time for all Befrienders to come and share how things are going. Our sessions so far have been really useful – just knowing that other Befrienders are out there struggling with the same things really helps! We have shared ideas and experiences, laughed and looked out for each other. We would love you to join us (dates and zoom links are in the newsletter).
- Please read the newsletter that we send every month – we try to include a whole range of useful information, events and updates. Tell us if there are things you would like more of (or less of!).
- Keep an eye on the Leeds Migration Partnership blog – information about activities, monthly calendars of Zoom groups etc to share with your Befriender are all posted on there.
- Call/email us if there is anything you need.

Support - For your Befriender



Support – For your Befriender

The support offered by LASSN to clients in these strange times has been different to normal due to the different needs the pandemic has created. The most common difficulties have been with-

Food – If your Befriender is having any issues with food provision please let us know. There are a number of organisations offering a variety of support that is location specific.

Data and Technology – There are a few places technology might be provided from and LASSN are offering £10 a month phone credit for Befriendees to help people keep in touch.

Safeguarding – Social contact has been hugely reduced meaning that things which might be noticed by friends or professionals may be missed at the moment. If you have any concerns at all please let us know.

Mental Health - If you think your Befriender needs more support you can signpost them to [these places](#) – talk to us too.

What other support is available? (it's not everything but it's a start..)

- If your Befriender recently got **refugee status** tell them about the [Leeds Transition Guide](#). Its full of information about what to do next and is translatable. Also direct them to [RETAS](#) and their 28day Transition mentor scheme. RETAS, 233-237 Roundhay Road, The Roundhay Road Resource Centre, Leeds, LS8 4HS. 07949 796180.
- If your Befriender is an asylum-seeker and they have queries about their **accommodation, or their asylum claim** they should could contact Migrant Help 0808 8010 503.
- [PAFRAS](#) are running their drop-in on Wednesdays 10am-12pm for support with food parcels, mental-health and casework at St Aiden's Church, Elford Place, Leeds LS8 5QD.
- [Meeting Point](#) are also running their drop-in Mondays 3-6pm at Christ Church, Armley Ridge Road, Leeds LS12 3LE, UK.
- If your Befriender is new to the city and has the right to work then tell them about the [New to Leeds](#) guide – lots of information about housing, money, work, benefits etc. (oh and its translatable too!).
- If there is information you need about what services are available, then look at [Help in Leeds](#)
- If your Befriender is on **Connecting Opportunities**, their keyworker can refer them to online mental health and wellbeing workshops and 1:1 phone counselling. Talk to Emily about this.
- [St Vincents](#) are also running their drop in Thursdays 10-12. They have ESOL classes throughout the week and a great charity shop; St Vincent's Support Centre, Curtis Building, 4 Berking Avenue, LS9 9LF. 0113 248 4126

THANK YOU

