

Stay Connected! Reading Friends Toolkit

Thank you all so much for your hard work on Reading Friends so far. These resources are working documents and we would very much welcome your thoughts and input during this changing and challenging time.

We are all social-distancing, self-isolating or shielding at the moment and will be for some time, but please see [government guidance](#) for current advice and updates and NHS guidance regarding [medical advice](#). This is a difficult time for all of us, but especially for vulnerable groups. They may find themselves feeling very lonely as well as socially isolated. Our programme was developed to combat loneliness and social isolation and it is needed now more than ever.

We understand that there may be pressures on organisational and volunteer capacity due to self-isolation but you may want to consider the following suggested ways to continue a Reading Friends service to those who need it the most at this difficult time.

We know the [benefits of reading](#). Books, magazines, newspapers, short stories and all the types of reading in-between, both physical and digital, could be crucial resources to get people through this period of self-isolation. Also staying socially connected in any form is going to be important in keeping up morale and supporting everyone's mental health.

Please email readingfriends@readingagency.org.uk if you have any ideas or suggestions, or if you'd like to talk to us about anything including changes to delivery plans or to budgets to provide new forms of online/telephone Reading Friends activity.

Stay connected on social media

Reading Friends Twitter: @ReadingFriends_

Keep up to date with The Reading Agency news @readingagency on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)

Continuing Reading Friends

Guidance to help move to telephone befriending

Befriending Networks has [help and guidance](#) for switching from face-to-face befriending to telephone befriending. Is this possible for your organisation? It seems lots of participants have phones (landline or mobile), smart phones, iPads/tablets and/or computers so some of the below options might be possible.

Data protection

If you're worried about data protection make sure to read the [Befriending Networks guidance](#) but some important advice includes:

- Ask people for consent to share contact details.
- Be specific about what their phone number or email address will be used for.
- Keep group sizes small so people know who is in the group. This might mean creating multiple groups.
- If people don't want to join, or withdraw consent that's fine, just see if there's anything else that can be done to help – can you signpost them elsewhere or help in any other way?

Telephone group calls

A group can stay connected over the phone using a conference call system. [Whypay](#) has [different plans](#) available, including a free plan, and they are waiving their *PLUS plan* subscription cost until July 2020.

Individual phone calls

For a lot of our participants, a friendly one-to-one phone call might work better than a group phone call for accessibility. You could pair up your volunteers and participants for a regular chat and check-in.

Considerations if volunteers are using their own phones:

- Can a volunteer claim back any expenses for any possible charges?
- You must have consent from both parties if phone numbers are to be shared. Guidance around privacy of numbers can be found in the [Befriending Networks](#) guidance with the ways to hide phone numbers.

[BT](#) has a Cloud-based phone system which can be subscribed to at a cost depending on how many volunteers need the app installed on their smart phone or tablet. This system allows people to call a particular phone number and type the extension number to connect together and avoids GDPR issues around privacy of phone numbers and costs for volunteer expenses.

Face-to-face and video calls

People could be connected in the following ways over Wi-Fi or an internet connection if they have any of the following apps. Or could you stream a session over one of the following? Zoom is the most user-friendly especially for people living with dementia.

- o [Zoom](#) is a dementia-friendly online video communication which most people are using at the moment for video calling. The host sets up a 'meeting' then


shares the link with a number and pin to volunteers or participants to join. You can host a meeting lasting under 40 minutes for free.

- See the [Zoomettes Guide to ZOOM](#)
- And watch '[How to use ZOOM](#)' film here from the Zoomettes
- Or go via the '[Zoomettes](#)' page on the Dementia Voices website.
- [Skype](#) You can sign in using a Microsoft email account (Hotmail/Outlook email addresses) or people will need to create an account. You can download the


Download Skype

app or just 'chat now'.

or Chat now

- [Facebook messenger](#) video or phone chat (can be used for groups).
- [Whatsapp](#) video and phone call. You need to create a Whatsapp group with at least one other participant but then you can 'Invite to Group via link' for people to join which can help if you're worried about data protection. To start a group call click on the icon . Good for group video calls of 4 or less.
- [Google Hangouts](#) if people have gmail or google accounts. Just click on video or phone call and then put in people's email addresses to send them a link. You can also copy the URL of the call and send to anyone having difficulties joining your group call.
- [Jitsi](#) is also a free video conferencing service that's been recommended.

Other ways to stay connected:

- Closed [Facebook](#) Group: You can create a Facebook group for free and create a forum for discussions with likeminded people. A closed (rather than open) Facebook group is easier to manage, more preferable for participants and has less issues around GDPR as everyone knows each other.
- Facebook Live allows you to video yourself. Just log into Facebook and in your closed Facebook group, click on  Live video in your 'create post' options. This is the time to use Facebook for what it was create for as a platform to stay social and connected.
- [Instagram](#) Live can be used to share videos. Just log into your Instagram account and follow the instructions [here](#).
- Use www.loom.com to record videos of yourself. You can set up an account and keep all your videos in the same place. From there you edit or easily share your videos with others.

Feedback

- Is there anything we could provide to help during this time?
- What would be useful for you?
- Are there any ideas you'd like to share?
- Are you doing or planning anything which you could share with everyone?
- Does your organisation have any different or interesting ways of keeping people connected?