



Feed the Birds befriending – guidance for clients and families

Feed the Birds was set up by Shropshire Wildlife Trust in 2017. We are now a small independent charity and responsible for raising our own funds to run the service. We employ one part-time coordinator and have supported over 80 clients since we started.

How does Feed the Birds work?

Feed the Birds is a befriending scheme for people who are socially isolated and/or lonely often due to age-related conditions such as dementia or physical limitations. We match, trained and checked volunteers with a person in their community. The volunteer visits once a week to chat with their client and to help top up the bird feeder which is provided by the scheme.

Referral: We receive referrals from a range of agencies and organisations, including Shropshire Council Adult Services, GP's and healthcare teams. Clients are generally living alone or caring for someone with a condition such as dementia or cancer. Clients are referred because they are socially isolated and/or lonely.

Assessment visit: Once we receive a referral, we arrange an initial assessment visit to meet the client and a family member. At this visit we have a chat about the scheme and find out a bit more about the client's life and how they spend a typical day. We will have a look at the garden and assess if it is suitable for a bird feeder. This assessment visit takes about 45 minutes and is carried out either by the Feed the Birds Project Manager or a trained Assessment Volunteer.

Volunteer Introduction: If everyone is happy to proceed, we arrange an Introduction visit which we try to arrange when a family member is able to be present to meet the volunteer. We will also set up the bird feeder station at this visit which generally takes about 30 to 40 minutes.

Our Volunteers: All our volunteers receive a half day befriender training and attend a half day Adult Safeguarding Awareness training. In addition, we carry out a Basic DBS check and take 2 satisfactory character references. Our volunteers are supported with bi-monthly supervision meetings and contact with the Project Manager.

Feed the Birds visits: After the initial Introduction, the volunteer will arrange with their client and their family, to visit once a week, generally on a fixed day and time, although this can be flexible. The volunteer will have the clients' phone number but we don't share volunteer contact details initially to protect their privacy. The Feed the Birds Project Manager can be contacted by the client or their family on 07497 451838 with any changes to visits or queries etc..

What we provide: We provide a start-up bird feeder kit comprising a feeder station (steel pole which fixes into the ground), a feeder and a bag of high quality bird food. We are happy to use existing feeders if they are in good condition. We will set up the feeders at the Introduction meeting. The bird food we provide will not attract vermin and we make sure we do not over feed which can cause problems.

Volunteer role – what they do and what they can't do: The volunteer role is very simple. The volunteer visits once a week to talk with their client, top up the feeder and help keep it clean. Some clients and volunteers record bird sightings either on a form or app on the volunteers' phone. We

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are very keen to enable clients to continue to do what they can, but volunteers are not allowed to 'help' clients out into the garden. They are also not able to do other befriending type activities such as shopping, cleaning, cooking etc... If these are required, then Age UK is the best contact for this, or Adult Services at Shropshire Council.

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/shropshireandtelford/> 01743 233123

<https://shropshire.gov.uk/adult-social-care/> or <https://shropshire.gov.uk/shropshire-choices>

Telephone: 0345 6789044

If you are a carer for the client, we expect you to remain in the house whilst the visits are taking place. Our volunteers cannot take responsibility for their client if they need care.

Cost: Feed the Birds is a free service for clients, but we do rely on external funding to run the scheme. The initial set up equipment and bird food is free. There are a few options available for purchasing bird food going forward which are set out here:

1. Clients and their families can purchase their own bird food – we recommend a good quality bird seed containing no wheat. Wheat is cheap and used as a filler and is only eaten by pigeons, rats and pheasants. We recommend a general mixed seed containing a range of seeds including sunflower seeds. We provide one called Wheat free No Mess and find this is the best for garden birds. It all gets eaten and nothing is left on the ground for vermin.
2. For those clients with no close family and or with a low income, we will continue to provide bird food free of charge.

We are happy to accept donations towards the costs of equipment and volunteer training and expenses. Please talk to us if you would like to donate.

Evidence of impact / evaluation: We know that having a Feed the Birds volunteer visiting weekly really makes a difference to client's lives. We are keen to demonstrate this and ask you to help us by providing some basic information regarding number of calls / visits to GP and number of A& E admissions. This information will be collected at intervals and will only be used for the purpose of demonstrating impact. We will not share any personal details with anyone.

We hope this document covers everything you need to know, but please contact us if you have any queries or concerns at any time.

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