

## Connections Volunteer Role Description

Loneliness affects tens of thousands of people across the RAF community. Whether it's a veteran struggling to adapt to life after service, or a family member facing difficulties alone, loneliness can be devastating to people's mental and physical health.

The Connections For Life service offers friendship telephone calls to anyone in the RAF community who needs it, and matches caring, friendly volunteers, with those beneficiaries who are experiencing isolation. The RAF community is made up of both veterans and serving personnel, and their respective spouses, partners, widows or widowers.

As a volunteer, you can offer a listening ear, help someone regain their confidence, share discussions around their interests and help them reconnect with the wider world.

## How does it work?

Not having someone to talk to during these challenging times can be lonely, particularly if the person is used to social activities and spending time with others. The Connections Volunteer role would involve contacting a beneficiary over the phone on a regular basis. A friendly, 30-minute chat that a volunteer can offer will make all the difference, providing a vital link for someone who is lonely and isolated.

## What will volunteers be doing?

Providing regular social interaction and support to members of the RAF community via telephone contact

- Checking on a beneficiary's welfare and alerting them to available support if needed
- Relaying any concerns to their Connections Coordinator
- Regularly submitting an activity log summarising their interactions so we can make sure everyone is receiving the help they need

We appreciate that for some beneficiaries and volunteers, telephone contact is not always suitable. In instances where an individual's hearing, speech or confidence affects their ability to communicate and interact over the phone, the Connections For Life service also offers a **Pen Pal** service. This allows beneficiaries to remain connected through exchanging regular written letters with a volunteer.

## What training will volunteers be given?

All training will be provided so volunteers will be well prepared to take on the volunteer role. Connections Volunteers are required to undertake an online training course, which can take around two hours, and can be completed at a time to suit the volunteer. The training course is certified through AIM, and carries the Investing In Your Future excellence kitemark.

Connections Volunteers will have the whole support of the Association behind them and a designated coordinator as their point of contact, to offer support, advice and guidance.



### **What skills will volunteers need?**

- Patience and empathy, with the ability to build a rapport with others and put them at ease, through a friendly and sensitive approach
- Good listener and communicator
- Reliable and dependable, with the ability to maintain appropriate boundaries
- Volunteers should also be able to work confidentially, in a non-judgemental manner and in line with the RAF Association Volunteer Agreement

Connections Volunteers will also need access to a computer, smart phone or tablet and access to the internet. This is to allow volunteers to access the required training, which is available online, and to access and submit activity reports via the Connections For Life online portal.

### **What skills will volunteers develop?**

Connections Volunteers will develop a wide variety of skills, including:

- Listening and communications skills
- Building relationships with a wide variety of people
- Research skills (depending on the beneficiary's requirements, volunteers may research ways to integrate beneficiaries into the community or local groups who may be able to offer support)

### **Why is it rewarding?**

Connections for Life is the RAF Association's welfare service that fights loneliness with friendship and creates a resilient, empowered and thriving RAF community who are able to remain independent.

A telephone call can be a lifeline for many, as the volunteer could be the first person the beneficiary has spoken to in some time. Our Connections Volunteers offer the vital connection and support our beneficiaries need.

### **How will volunteer applications be assessed?**

Volunteers will be asked to complete an application form to express their interest in the role. Following receipt of a completed application, volunteers will be invited to speak with a member of staff. This will enable both the volunteer and the Association to find out more about each other, and to discuss the volunteer role in more detail and assess whether the role will be suitable for the volunteer.

Connections Volunteers will also be asked to provide two satisfactory references in support of their application, as well as proof of identity (in the form of a copy of photographic ID). If the volunteer meets the criteria required they will then be referred for training. Once a volunteer successfully completes all elements of the application and training process they will be confirmed in the volunteer role.

An RAF or forces background is not essential, and we welcome volunteer applications from all areas of the community.

**Note:** This volunteer role profile is not a job description and is not intended to be a legally binding contract of employment with the RAF Association. It is a role profile of one of the volunteering roles on offer with the Association, detailing the tasks we would ask volunteers to carry out and the skills and commitment we are looking for; as well as what to expect and gain in return for a volunteer's generous offer of time.

