

Vintage Vibes helps the elderly with Biscuit and a Blether

An Edinburgh charity has begun a phone-based service to help vulnerable adults over 60 to cope with self-isolation.

The charity has VIPs – pensioners who normally meet each month with a dedicated volunteer – who will now get a phone call instead.

Vintage Vibes, the charity which is a partnership between LifeCare Edinburgh and Space (The Broomhouse Centre and Enterprises), will also extend the service to anyone over 60 who has not yet been matched with a volunteer, but who has been referred to them as someone needing company.

The phone calls are part of the Biscuit and a Blether service which Vintage Vibes has started up.

The charity's Marketing and Development Manager, Georgia Artus, said: "Our long term aim is to create lasting face to face friendships between vulnerable over-60s and a dedicated volunteer. We have a very successful track record creating meaningful matches based on shared interests, from cooking to canoeing, with some friendships lasting over 4 years so far.

"However, due to the coronavirus and self-isolation guidance, we've had to innovate and adapt quickly to ensure the wellbeing of local over 60s, and 'Biscuit and a Blether' is the result of that.

"It's a temporary service for the moment, and we're planning

on running it for at least two months. We wanted to bring some positivity and joy to a challenging time – and what’s more joyful than enjoying a good biscuit and a blether?

“What’s great is that due to the passion of our trained volunteers, we’re able to extend our service to include more over 60s than just those we have already matched, and so folks on our waiting list are getting much needed companionship too.”

As some over 60s will be talking to their volunteers for the first time, Vintage Vibes is offering a conversation starter by providing both parties with packets of biscuits donated by The Shortbread House of Edinburgh. Almost 300 packs will be sent to seniors and volunteers over the coming week.

In addition, volunteers will receive additional training and regular updates ideas for conversation topics and activities from the Vintage Vibes team.

The main goal of ‘Biscuit and a Blether’ is to maintain a sense of community in difficult times, and the conversations are also intended to be an early warning system.



Heather Allan, Service Co-ordinator, explained: “We will be checking in with our volunteers to get an update on the health and wellbeing of our VIPs and all the over-60s who are part of this initiative.

“If there are ‘red flags’ and people need additional support such as a broken appliance or difficulty accessing shopping, our team will aim to signpost to those that can help.

“Essentially, we are hoping to provide a connection that will help vulnerable people living alone through a time where they may feel even more isolated.”

Christopher Laing of Shortbread House of Edinburgh said: “We are delighted to work with Vintage Vibes on their Biscuit and a Blether campaign. During this difficult time of isolation for older people we understand the importance of looking after people’s mental well-being and we hope our biscuits will give a helping hand to start people blethering.”

Vintage Vibes is part funded by the Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership and Comic Relief.

Started in 2015, Vintage Vibes tackles isolation and loneliness among over 60s (called our VIPs) in Edinburgh by creating long lasting one to one friendships offering support, companionship and the opportunity for VIPs to be more socially connected and active in their local community. www.vintagevibes.org.uk

