

Bilingual Telephone Befriending Monitoring Report

2022-23

Social Isolation is an intrinsic part of the migrant experience which, depending on the reason for migration, also comes along with other associated and multiple challenges. Bilingual Telephone Befrienders work with the scheme members giving moral support, encouragement and motivation which boosts their wellbeing and enables them to tackle other practical and social issues.

“Supporting befriending networks is very important. In my experience it provides people with a new direction, opens up range of their problems and leads to increased self-esteem and self-confidence. I especially found that it can also reduce the burden of loneliness and anxiety to mentally help people who are dealing with stressful situations.” Arabic/Farsi BTB Volunteer

Matches

on-going matches from 2021-22	21
new matches 2022-23	14
Total matches	35
Closed or finished in 2022-23	18
Total active matches	17
Waiting list	9

Of the closed matches, there is a 50:50 ratio BTB:SU initiating the end of the match.

“We stopped having calls because the service user gradually did not need befriending calls anymore. She started to make new friends and connections.” Polish BTB Volunteer

When the volunteer has needed to withdraw, many scheme members have asked to be rematched with a new volunteer BTB.

Matches have an average duration of 13 months (up from 9 months in 2021-22)
45% of matches have lasted for longer than 12 months (up from 27% in 2021-22)
The 4 longest matches are approx. 36 months (since the start of the scheme)

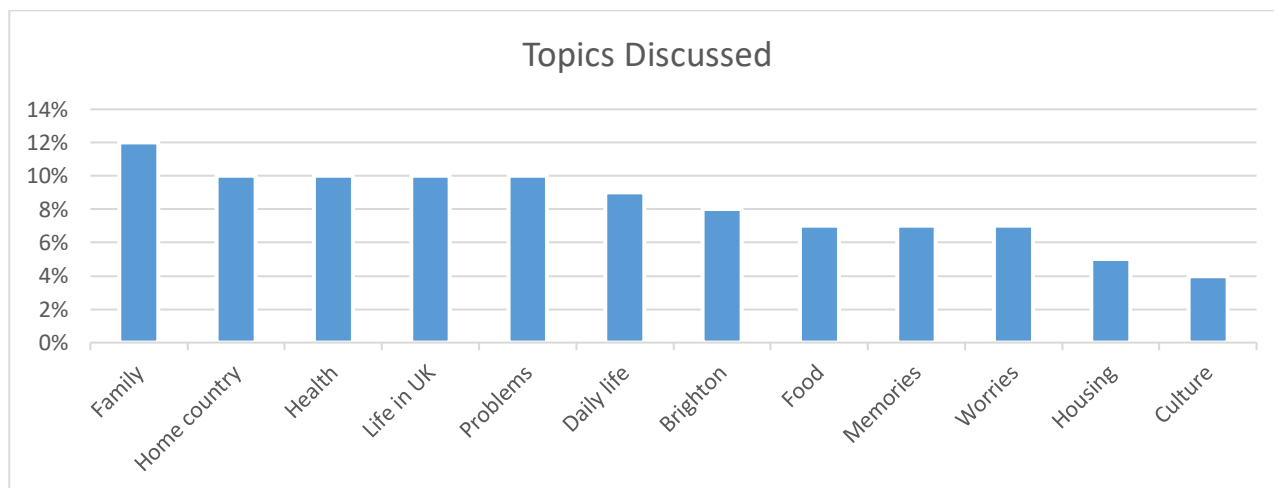
BTB matches are on the basis of a weekly phone call. Most BTB report speaking with their match weekly or fortnightly but sometimes this is more ad hoc and is dictated by the needs of the scheme member. 60% of BTB report the call being over 30 minutes duration.

Matches have had the option to meet Face to Face this year if both parties are amenable. A small group of Farsi speaking SUs attended the Together Co seasonal celebration

<https://sussexinterpreting.org.uk/news/everyone-should-have-someone-to-talk-to/>

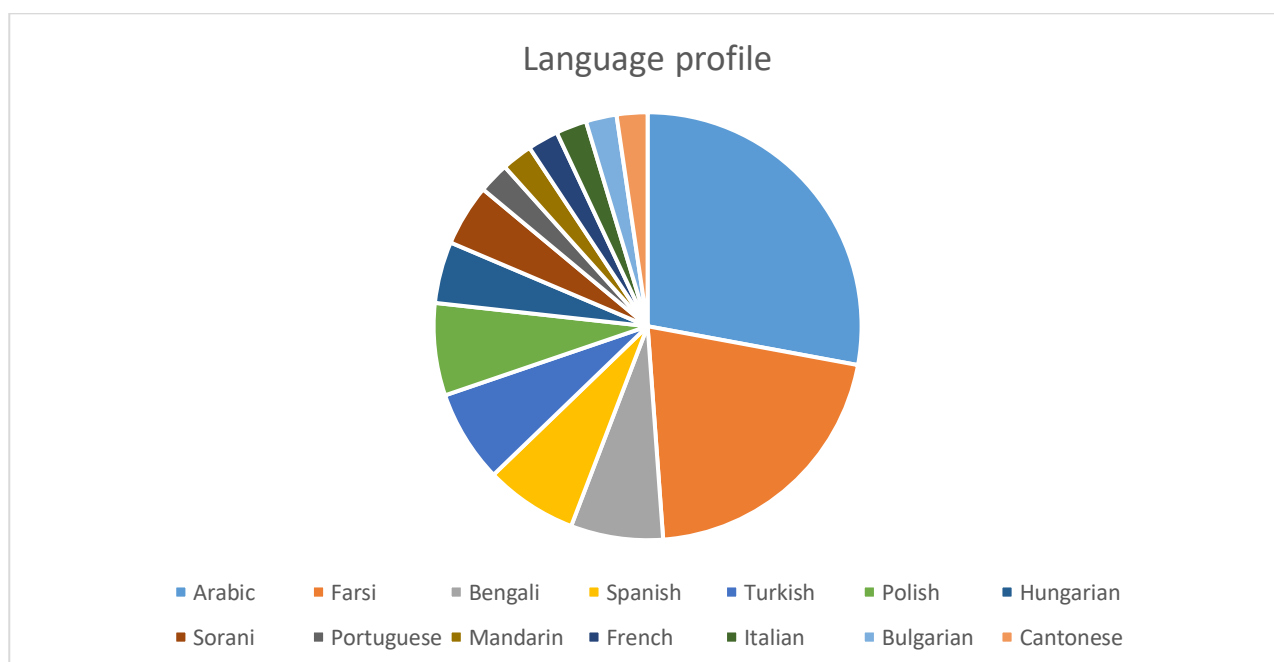
“For me, it's a great way to meet new people and help those who are isolated, less active or lonely. Befriending is simply a handy way of reaching out with those people struggle with isolation and lack of meaningful social contact especially that she has been through a lot before she come to the UK, that is why building a trust and keeping In touch with someone she gradually can trusts to meet, chat with, share stories, and even enjoy activities together.” Arabic BTB Volunteer

BTB report discussing a wide range of topics

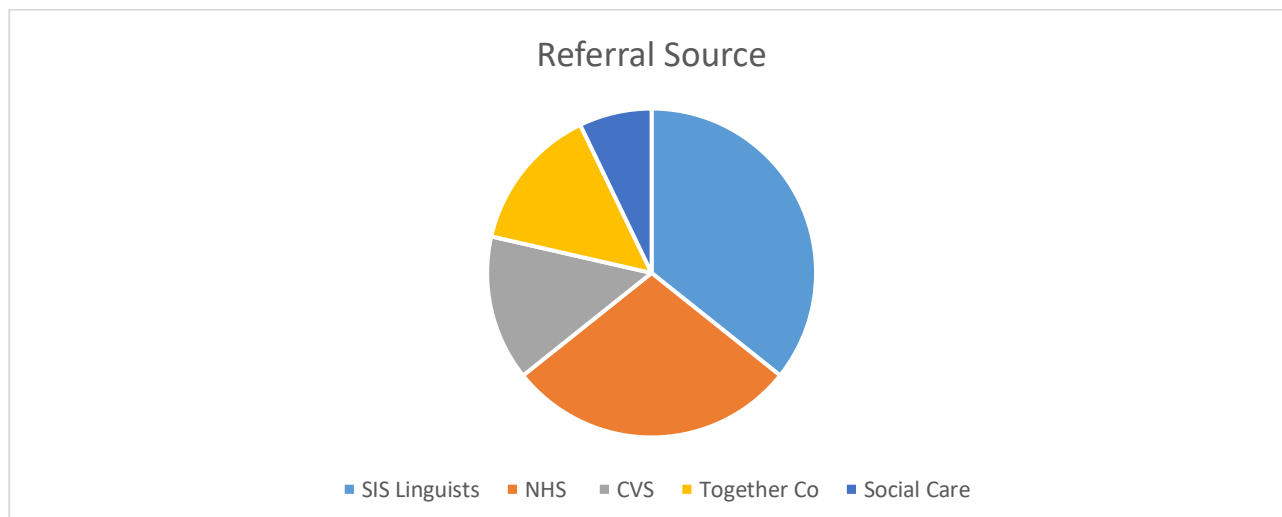


“I feel good to support and uplift others, it gives me confidence to build a trustworthy relationship. Helping others is always a pleasure to me. My scheme member seems happy when I call her and ask help or share their personal issues. She feels comfortable to share her health issues, job issues and housing problems. She asks option about going out and about different service where she might can attend. I feel that she considers SIS as a reliable organisation where she can ask for help or share her concern.” Bengali BTB Volunteer

Language profile of scheme members



Referral Source for 2021-22 scheme members



The number of referrals from through Together Co has reduced this year indicating that fewer people with language needs are being referred into that service. There is no parallel increase in referrals from public services with most referrals coming through SIS linguists. We have also not received any self-referrals from Service Users which is unusual for SIS services.

We have been cautious about promoting the service externally (to CVS partners or direct Service Users) for fear of compromising capacity. However, the referral data indicates a lack of knowledge about the service and therefore we will be undertaking promotional activities in 2023-24.

Equalities Monitoring

<u>ETHNICITY</u>			
White	Other white (please state)		10 European
Asian or Asian British	Bangladeshi		3
	Chinese		2
Other	Arab		12
	Any other ethnic group (please state)		9 Persian/Iranian 3 Turkish 2 Kurdish 2 Latin Am 3 unknown
<u>AGE</u>	16 – 24	25 – 35 3	36 – 49 18
	50 – 59 7	60 or over 10	? 6
<u>GENDER</u>	Female 30	Male 15	

Case Studies

Arabic Speaker – matched in January 2022

Referral received in December 2021 from TDC via Together Co. The scheme member is in her early 70s, she lives in a retirement complex.

In an interview conducted through a Community Interpreter she said

“I would like to thank you for this project, it is great. It came at the right time for me. I was very depressed and it really helped me with my mood.

I was referred to the Befriending Project because of my depression, anxiety and PTSD, lots of wellbeing issues going on. I didn't want to see anyone or leave the house, my mood was very flat.

I have been here [in the UK] for 5 years and only a year ago got my “leave to remain”. The long wait impacted on me. On top of that, plus physical health issues, my son had some problems too.

The calls were great for me, it was not formal, and it wasn't about asking and answering formal questions. It was informal and a real chat with a friend and we laughed together. It released the pressure and worries for me.

There is nothing to improve, you are like angels for me.”

The BTB also enjoyed her relationship with the scheme member

“[the Scheme Member] was funny and an interesting conversationalist. I enjoyed her different experiences and expertises. We agreed to talk once every two weeks as she has just moved to her permanent flat and needs time to settle in.”

As a result of the befriending relationship, SIS has been able to support the scheme member with other practical issues. In particular, arranging hospital transport for a knee replacement operation that the scheme member had struggled to arrange herself and the staff she dealt with had been unpleasant. She expressed a belief that the service had been withheld because of her race.

Farsi Speaker – matched in November 2021

Referral received in November 2021 from the GP via Together Co. The scheme member is in her early 70s. She lives with her husband and has family living nearby.

In an interview conducted through a Community Interpreter she said

“Even with having four of my children and two grandchildren living nearby I can't help but feel low and lonely especially because of lack of communication with friends after the pandemic. I don't want to put pressure on my oldest daughter because she has her own family to worry about. My

lack of knowledge of the English language both for speaking and reading can make it more difficult.

My befriender was really good, very nice. We were talking about daily things, my befriender asked me about my children.

I felt like I was in a dream, it was nice talking to someone about my life. I am much better now. This is the best thing that you have done for people like myself, I don't think you can do any better. I really admire what you are doing. I am really happy and grateful that you think about people like us.

When my daughter found me an English class, my befriender told me she could help me practice English.

I was away for 3 months so we stopped the calls but I would like to start them again."

The BTB also provided some feedback

"Even though she feels lonely, this lady sounds very good humoured. She spoke about her life and her family very openly. She was so happy to be contacted by me as a friend speaking her own language."

Volunteers

Matched with 1 scheme member	13
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Matched with 2 or more scheme members	2
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Total currently matched	17
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Withdrawn from volunteering	13
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Total volunteers	32
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Enrolled but unmatched	6
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Waiting list	32 (in languages we currently don't need)
	3 (in the enrolment process)

Capacity for Bilingual Telephone Befriending is driven by the availability of suitable bilingual volunteers.

Enrolment of volunteers can be challenging.

Volunteers report finding the role very rewarding.



The BTB clearly recognise the value of the service both to themselves and the scheme members.

"I get to practice Farsi and have an Iranian friend. Good for me to be reminded of my heritage. She feels like she has a friend. Someone to talk to. I feel like it is a very worthwhile scheme." Farsi BTB Volunteer

"My Scheme Member feels happier, able to have someone to talk to and express their feeling. As a overseas student, I understand that the benefit to have someone to talk about daily life or issues, and that make me feel that someone might feel the same and need someone to talk to. For my opinion, this project is amazing and necessary. There are a lot people feel the loneliness and left out from the community that could use the service." Cantonese BTB Volunteer

However, there is quite a high turnover of volunteers. Those withdrawing usual state time restraints or wellbeing issues as being the main factor in their decision. However, there are also frustration that they can't contact scheme members.

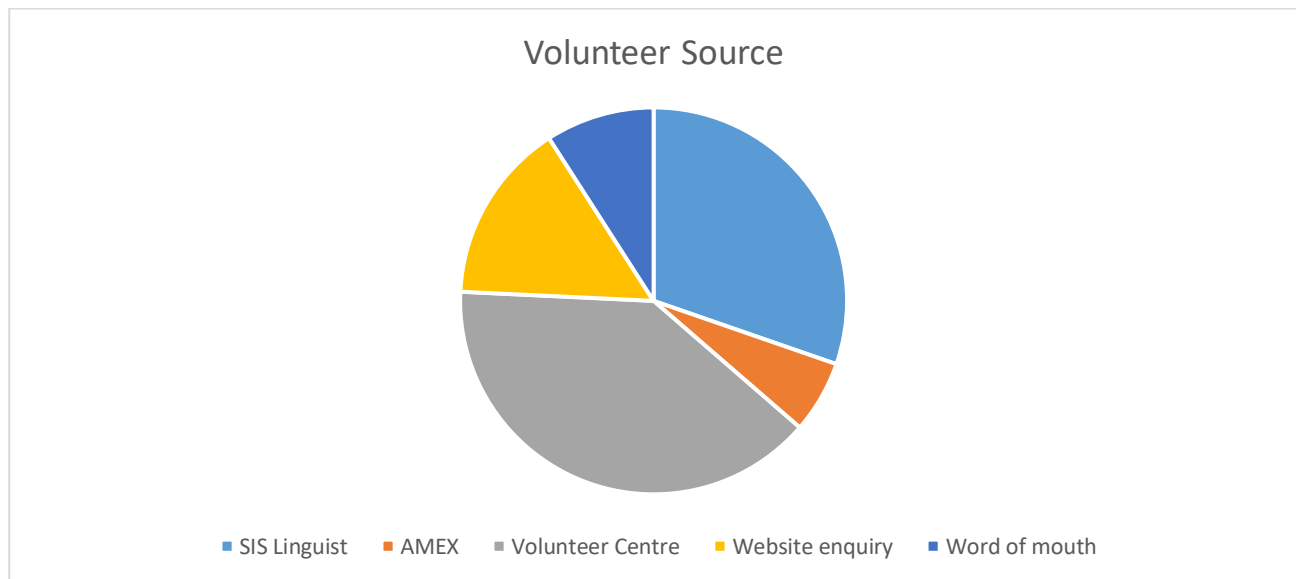
"Sometimes it is difficult to have regular calls as my Scheme Member phone is not on. I am trying to be clearer about the date and time of our next call at the end of the phone calls."

Scheme members also bring practical issues to the BTB who are unable to help and although there is a mechanism for referring these issues on to SIS it can lead to feelings of helplessness and disempowerment.

"it was nice to have a friendly conversation with someone who needed it. she probably felt there was someone she could talk to, but I think she also needed someone to help her with her problems and I couldn't :{" Polish BTB Volunteer

"It's nice to connect with someone who is new to the country and finding their feet. I think my scheme members enjoys talking to someone in their mother tongue language. It is challenging when you feel like you can't help in difficult situations." Farsi BTB Volunteer

Referral Source for all current volunteer



Feedback from BTB

"It's a mutual benefit and rewarding process. Having a Befriender who speaks your native language brings comfort and trust. The main benefit is the feeling that you are not alone and there's someone who can share and care. ... this service is beneficial to increase confidence and improve mental health of many users. I also believe there are rooms for improvements if the Befriending Networks step further toward engaging with the community and increasing activity."
Arabic + Farsi speaking BTB Vol

"My scheme member is happy. More opened up... She seems more confident and grounded."
Bengali speaking BTB Vol

"I think (as a volunteer) my listening skills have improved a lot. It is a very rewarding She has told me once that I am one of the only ones that she talks to."
Farsi speaking BTB Vol

"She can talk to me about anything and normally feels better after a good chat. I feel that I'm helping somebody to be happier"
Spanish speaking BTB Vol

“For me... Gaining empathy and satisfaction knowing I have helped somebody.”
Spanish speaking BTB Vol

“I put a smile on her face, I hope”
Polish speaking BTB Vol

“The Scheme Member feels validated and seen.. able to express themselves and be understood.”
Spanish speaking BTB Vol

“It helped me overcome my sense of low self-value and isolation and be part of a community that I wholeheartedly respect. I believe the programme has helped her with feelings of loneliness and irrelevance. I also think it gave her the support she has needed.”
Arabic speaking BTB Vol

“[for me] the benefits include a sense of fulfilment, uplifted spirits and a way of meeting new people. It can really boost your confidence when you feel like you can help someone and doing that little bit to improve their life. ... I can say she is benefiting from the communication, and the companionship, to find someone she can trust and open up with”
Arabic Speaking BTB Vol