

## **Bilingual Telephone Befriending Monitoring Report** **2024-25**

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.

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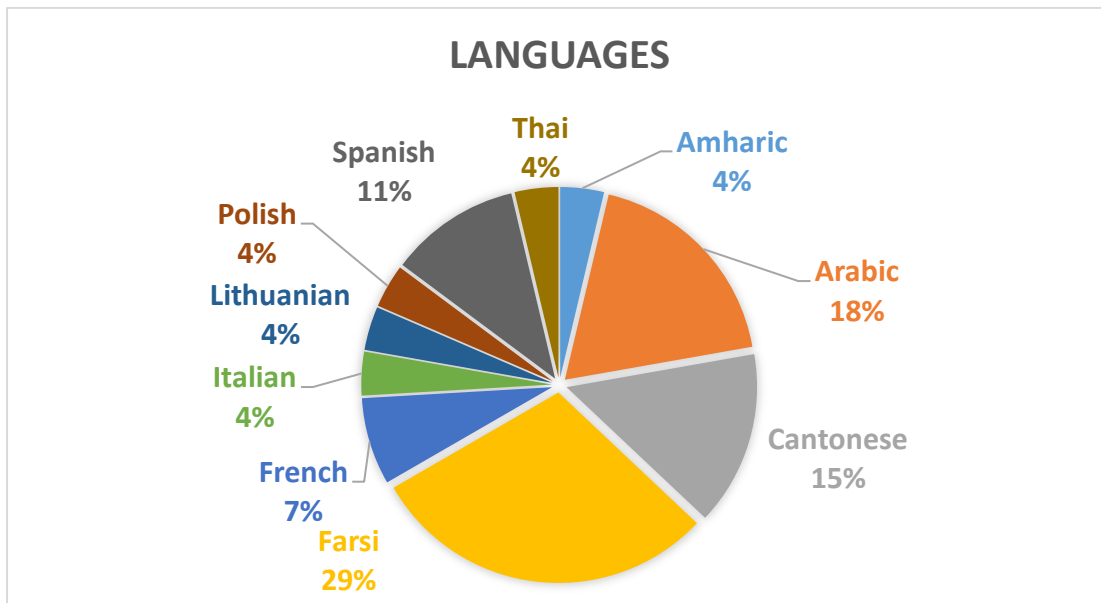
### **Scheme Members**

***Individuals engaged with SIS Befriending***                      **32**

• on-going matches from 2023-24	11
• new matches 2024-25	4
• finished matches	5
• inappropriate referrals*	6
• withdrew before matched	4
• unable to contact Service User	2

\* *lived out of area, wanted F2F, mental health concerns, no language match with Volunteers*

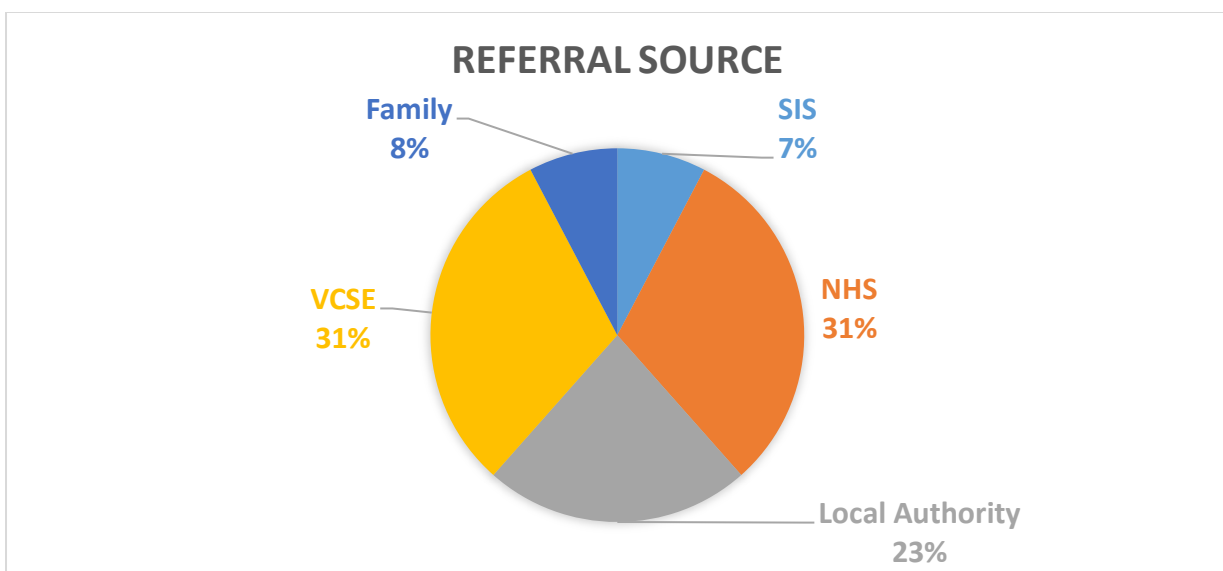
## Language profile



Finding and enrolling volunteers in the languages required continues to be a challenge. We frequently need to look further afield than Sussex, making contact with national community groups, to try and find a suitable match.

Bilingual Telephone Befriending doesn't necessitate the matches living locally to each other but matching with someone out of area does restrict opportunities to take their relationship forward and meet face-to-face.

## Referral Source



There were no requests for re-matching this year. Five matches came to a natural conclusion with the Service Users ready to move on from Telephone Befriending.

Case workers across public services and the VCSE continued to refer to SIS to support people they were working with that they understood to be socially isolated.

### **Volunteer Profile for all current befriending volunteers**

• Matched with 1 scheme member	6
• Matched with 2 or more scheme members	2
• Currently unmatched	8
• <b>Total enrolled volunteers</b>	<b>16</b>
• Waiting list need)	16 (in languages we currently don't need)

### **Referral Source for all current volunteers**

• SIS Linguists	8
• Direct application	3
• Volunteer Centre	4
• Recommendation	1

### **Delivery**

On receiving a referral, SIS asks a Bilingual Volunteer Social Prescriber to contact the individual to introduce our services, undertake a brief needs assessment and ascertain whether Bilingual Telephone Befriending is the right option for the Service User. They may discuss other options for combating loneliness and reducing social isolation such as joining a group or activity which corresponds to their interests or culture.

If the Service User would like a Bilingual Telephone Befriender, and this is considered appropriate, we will find them a suitable match who shares their language and culture. We may already have a volunteer enrolled with SIS or we may need to advertise and enrol a new volunteer. It can take a number of months to find a suitable volunteer.

Once a match is established, the Befriender is contacted by the Project Co-ordinator at regular intervals; immediately after their first contact, then a month later, then two months later and thereafter every six months. We have an open door for Befrienders to reach out to SIS at any point in their volunteering journey.

Similarly, scheme members can contact SIS at any time to discuss their Befriending match or any other needs they have. We have a fully accessible no wrong door service, people with language needs can self-refer in their preferred language through our virtual switchboard 01273 702005 or translated web forms <https://sussexinterpreting.org.uk/service-users/>.

## **Feedback**

Every six months we circulate a feedback survey to Befrienders to gather outcome and impact information and check in about any support issues.

45% chat on a weekly basis

60% chat for between 30 minutes and 1 hour

50% have also met in person

Befrienders report chatting about a wide variety of topics but FAMILY is always the most popular subject.

Befrienders report many benefits to themselves of their volunteering;

42% Connection      friendship, love, community

33% Learning      about Brighton, their culture/language, new perspectives

25% Wellbeing      feeling good about giving and helping

They also comment on the challenges;

60% Time      fitting it around other responsibilities

20% Topics      what to talk about

10% Emotions      discussing bereavement

10% Nothing

All respondents were **satisfied** with the support they received from SIS as a Volunteer Befriender

“from the bottom of my heart, this project made a lot of change for people [scheme members] – their morale, their wellbeing.” Farsi/Arabi speaking BTB

“I really enjoyed being a befriender fully. I am proud to be a part of this project and would be more than happy to carry on as I know from experience how much is needed by many people who live in isolation.” Farsi/Arabi speaking BTB

“I feel like it has been a positive experience. We have become friends. It was lovely meeting up with her. I think having a befriender might help her feel less lonely.” Farsi speaking BTB

“Volunteering is a good chance to show love and care to the needy. My Scheme Member enjoys sharing with others. I think she looks forward to my weekly call.” Cantonese speaking BTB

“We met a couple of times in the Jubilee library and it is always great meeting her. She has someone to talk to when she needs it. We both learn a lot from each other. I learn from a more experienced person about different aspects in life.” Spanish speaking BTB

“I think my befriending match and I have created a strong bond... I would like to say thank you for the help when my befriending match needed it in most difficult

times. This project has definitely made a positive impact.” Spanish speaking  
BTB

## **Case Study 1**

<https://sussexinterpreting.org.uk/news/winter-warmer-a-wonderful-experience/>

We were delighted when our lead partner [Together Co.](#) offered SIS some tickets to attend their Winter Warmer event in December at The Grand Brighton. The event brought together 160 guests and celebrated the power of friendship and community. Attendees enjoyed a delicious lunch, and were entertained by choir performances and a magician.

Two Farsi speaking Befriending Scheme Members had been matched with the same for volunteer for 12 months and 18 months respectively. They all attended this event together which provided a wonderful opportunity to forge additional connections and friendships between people of a shared culture.

“It was a great celebration for people like me who are new to this country. It made me feel like I was part of these people and gave me self-confidence and a sense of worth. It was a wonderful experience with a dear friend. I had a great time and thank you SIS for this.” *SIS Befriending Scheme Member*

“It was lovely food and friendly atmosphere. We were so grateful to be there and really enjoyed ourselves. There was also a magician who came to our table and it was so amazing” *SIS Befriending Volunteer*

## **Case Study 2**

<https://sussexinterpreting.org.uk/sis-stories/it-made-him-laugh-for-a-beautiful-second/>

SIS Bilingual Telephone Befriending has a fantastic impact on both scheme members and volunteers. A regular weekly phone call is a positive social experience that relieves isolation and other social stresses. It is distraction from everyday problems, can boost confidence, connect people with the community, help with integration and provide a sense of purpose.

One of our Befriending Volunteers shared his thoughts about being part of this project:

“I’m originally from Spain, and I have been volunteering for SIS as a Bilingual Befriender. I’ve had a really good experience because the person I was matched with was more or less the same age so we could share a lot of experiences or cultural similarities.

Sometimes it was hard, I’m not going to lie, but I felt empathy with this person because some of the problems he was having at that time, I had had them before. I could tell his reactions were like the reactions I was having sometimes. So it made sense. I was trying in a subtle manner to make sure that this person

would not repeat what I did, to take the same decisions I did because they did not lead me to the right path.

In the end this person managed really well I think, he did an amazing job, he was really brave. He had to deal with depression and sometimes we were talking and he would be on his own and for days not talking to a single person. That was quite sad. Then you realise how lucky you are and have been.

It is hard sometimes to cheer someone up, because from what they tell you, and if you have a bit of empathy with this person you will understand a bit more, or you share some cultural similarities or similar background... you can see their reactions. There was one day I just mentioned a TV advert from the 90s back when I was a child, and he caught the joke immediately. It was something that was on TV and probably all Spanish children at that time knew about that advert. And it made him laugh, just for a beautiful second in that time and situation.

Last time I spoke to him, he was doing quite well, he went back to Spain, he was getting a job and had his family next to him. What I liked the most about him is that he recognised he had a problem and looked for help, me for example I didn't have the courage to do that. That's what I should have done, and I didn't do it. I didn't want him to repeat what I did.”