

The Companionship Scheme.

What exactly is a Companion?

The Companions from the Linden Centre volunteer their time to give informal support to people across the Fylde who are living with Cancer or a life threatening illness or who are bereaved.

All of the volunteers have had personal or professional experience of similar situations and these experiences help them to understand the unique situation you are in. They have regular support and training from Trinity Palliative Care Services and are expected to work to the same high standards as any paid staff.

Companions are not counsellors, carers or nurses but someone who will build an informal relationship with you to offer support that may not be available from anywhere else, for whatever reason.

Your Companion will meet with you for 8 sessions initially, but under special circumstances they can support you for as long as is necessary. You may get to know them very well, although it is not possible for them to form a 'personal' relationship with you.

What will they do?

Their role is predominantly a listening role, or to offer company to someone who feels isolated, perhaps following bereavement, or due to their own serious illness, or the illness of a relative. They will not undertake personal tasks, such as shopping or administration on your behalf. However they may be happy to support you with specific tasks that you are finding difficult to do alone, such as the necessary administration following a loss.

Where do Companions meet clients?

Our Companions visit you in your home, provided this is private enough for you. Or you could meet them at the Linden Centre in our purpose built rooms. Some people like to meet their Companion in a public place. The Companions, in some special circumstances may be able to take you out by car or accompany you on public transport.

When will my appointments be?

When you first contact the service you will have been offered an initial appointment with a senior counsellor who will have explained all the different options for support. They will have asked you when you would

like to meet your Companion. We will then choose someone who is available in your area at that time. We have a large team of Companions who offer their time daytime, evenings and weekends so we can normally manage to arrange a time that is as convenient as possible. Appointments with clients generally last about 1 hour and visits are usually weekly.

How will you decide who my companion will be?

We tend to match people according to who we feel they will be able to form a trusting working relationship with. Sometimes we don't get the match right and if we don't, please do let us know. The Companions won't take it personally! As far as possible we send males to visit males and females to visit females.

How confidential will sessions be?

Naturally, nothing that is revealed to a Companion should be divulged elsewhere, including your family. However, we have a duty of care to our Companions, and regular meetings will be held at the Linden Centre with small groups of colleagues where they will have the opportunity to discuss the work they are doing, without mentioning their clients by name. It is a support mechanism for the Companions.

How much does the service cost?

Using the service will not cost you anything. The volunteers give their time for free and Trinity Palliative Care Services meets the other costs associated with delivering the service.

What happens if I need another type of help?

Companions have access to all the resources at the Linden Centre. If you need information or additional support we will be able to assist you to find the appropriate help or information. If the Companion feels that they are not trained to meet your particular needs they will suggest that you arrange to meet with one of the senior counsellors again.

How many times will my companion visit?

Your companion will initially arrange 8 visits with you. You may feel that this is too much or too little. After the 6th visit they will talk this through with you and if you like we can extend the support if this feels appropriate. You can also request that your Companion visits weekly, fortnightly or monthly-whatever suits you best!

If at any stage you wish to withdraw please just phone the staff at the Linden Centre and they will contact your Companion on your behalf.

What happens if I need to cancel an appointment with my Companion?

If you need to cancel, please contact the office at the Linden centre as soon as possible. Giving us plenty of notice means that we can inform your Companion as soon as we are aware and save them an unnecessary journey.

What do I do if I have further questions or am unhappy with the service?

Please feel free to contact the team at the Linden Centre on 595552 during office hours and we will do all we can to answer your questions or respond to any difficulty. If the situation is urgent then the telephone is staffed outside office hours 24 hours a day by a nurse who will try to help or who will take a message so we can call you back as soon as we can.