

# Putting Life in Years (PLINY): a randomised controlled trial and mixed-methods process evaluation of a telephone friendship intervention to improve mental well-being in independently living older people

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## Plain English summary

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## Plain English summary

Older people can become isolated as a result of factors such as access to transport, illness, disability or bereavement.

This study aimed to answer the question, 'Can telephone friendship (TF) improve the well-being of older people living in their own homes?' The first part of the study was a pilot. This pilot aimed to recruit  $\geq 68$  participants in 95 days and see whether a voluntary sector organisation could recruit enough volunteers to deliver a TF service. Only when these aims were achieved would we carry out the full study, which would require us to recruit 248 participants in a year.

General practitioners in one UK city informed people aged  $\geq 75$  years about the study. Participants had a 50% chance of being in the TF group and a 50% chance of being in the control group. TF consisted of short one-to-one telephone calls for 6 weeks followed by 12 weeks of 1-hour calls in groups of up to six participants. Calls were facilitated by trained volunteers. Participants were asked about their quality of life at the beginning of the study and 6 months later.

The pilot study met its recruitment targets but an insufficient number of volunteers was recruited to deliver the service. The trial closed early.

Small voluntary sector organisations may be unable to recruit, train and retain adequate numbers of volunteers to implement services for the numbers of people who might benefit. For research, these risks might be managed by using several geographical sites and by using multiple providers to recruit and manage volunteers.



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