

# NEWSLETTER

2020/21 - Issue 24



## Chairman's Introduction

Writing this introduction to our newsletter a year on from the first COVID-19 lockdown it would be remiss of me if I did not pause and acknowledge the challenges and losses suffered by our volunteers, trustees, operations team, friends and supporters, and at the same time to thank all those key workers for their ongoing efforts to mitigate and combat the impact of this disease on everyone. Hopefully, with the vaccine roll out, this will bring some semblance of normality for all later in the year, and an improved outcome for many.

**May 2021 is our 35<sup>th</sup> "Coral" Anniversary**, and we are looking to celebrate this, as much as we are able. More will follow on this once we have a clarity of the "roadmap" being implemented. It seems almost surreal that just over twelve months ago we had our party for the presentation of the Queens Award together at the Tennis Club in Leamington Spa and having such a happy time. We do plan to return to holding collective events as soon as it is allowed from a government perspective and safe to do so. A proposed diary of events will hopefully be published in late Spring/early Summer.

During the lockdowns we have had to suspend face-to-face meetings, in accordance with government guidance, and these have been resumed as soon as we have been able, subject to COVID-19 risk assessments being undertaken. I would like to thank our team and our volunteers for their patience and support with this process so that we could resume face-to-face meetings

when able to. The resourcefulness of our team and volunteers in undertaking activities remotely with our younger friends, and the ongoing support they have provided online, via telephone, WhatsApp, and as pen pals has been brilliant to learn about. Additionally, regular meet ups of volunteers including wellbeing and online craft events has helped to keep everyone together. Some of the activities are featured in this newsletter, alongside some case studies. We have adapted to include online safeguarding training, and interviewing of new volunteers, and also introduced a pen pal support for children who we have not been able to match face to face face-to-face.

From a financial perspective we are fortunate that in the two years preceding the pandemic we had surplus income to expenditure, though we are now moving to use reserves in 2021, and I feel that the fundraising challenges will be even greater this year than in 2020. **We have launched a fundraising challenge to raise £35,000** for our 35 years of being established, outside of grant awards for 2021, and if anyone has any ideas of ways to help participating in doing we would love to hear from you.

Last year we held our AGM and volunteers get-together on Zoom which was well attended, and it is planned to do the same again this year, on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> June at 7.00pm. Further details will follow.

I would just like to give a big thank you to our older friends, group supporters, operations team, trustees, volunteers, supporters and funders for their contributions to helping young people improve their self-esteem, confidence and have some fun, when they would not otherwise have these opportunities.

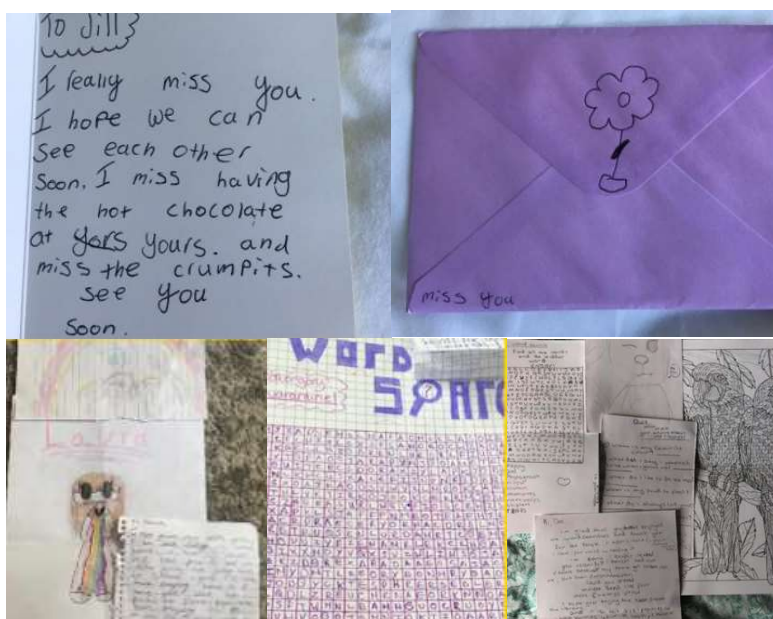
**Cheryll Rawbone – Chairman**

For more information please contact:- [cheryll.rawbone@friendshipproject.co.uk](mailto:cheryll.rawbone@friendshipproject.co.uk)

## The children that we support

We have continued to support our Younger Friends throughout the last year, and the challenge of many restrictions has meant that we have had to adapt. Letters have been written, video calls made, zoom crafting sessions have taken place, socially distanced walks have been enjoyed (with A LOT of hot chocolate to warm cold hands), but most of all, the children have still felt that there has been someone there to support them through this difficult time.

We introduced a new **Pen Pal / FaceTime Friendship** between Younger Friends and Older Friends which has meant that new matches have still been possible. Many of these friendships have now evolved to face-to-face outings now that restrictions have been lifted.



## Feedback from the carers of some Younger Friends

*'My daughter received her letter and sweets today. She's been hiding herself away in her room a bit recently, and it really put a smile on her face and gave her something to do, so thank you so much!' said a Mum about her daughter who is a Younger Friend.*

*'We just wanted to say thank you - what a lovely surprise to get a fruit box this morning. M eats so much fruit daily (we call him the fruit monster) we reckon he has pure orange juice for blood!! M is keeping in contact with his Older Friend weekly. He's the best friend we could have hoped for for M. It's just wonderful what this project has done in helping him and our family'.*





## Events

Unfortunately, although we had several exciting outings planned, we have not been able to hold any face-to-face events for the children due to COVID-19 restrictions. We have continued to engage with our volunteers by arranging many informative and fun zoom get-togethers.



## 2020 Events

Here are some of the Zoom Events that we held for our volunteers throughout 2020. We tried to make them engaging and interesting and had some great feedback!

**February** – *when we could still meet in person!*

- Queens Award Presentation and volunteer get-together

**March** – *the last month of us being able to meet in person.....*

- Safeguarding Training
- Volunteer get-together

**May**

- Volunteer Zoom get-together with wellbeing speaker Lisa Whittleton

**June**

- AGM via Zoom

**July**

- Volunteer Zoom get-together

**September**

- Volunteer Zoom get-together

**October**

- Volunteer Zoom get-together with wellbeing speaker Lisa Whittleton
- Safeguarding Training on Zoom

**November**

- Volunteer Zoom get-together with a craft theme

**December**

- Christmas Zoom get-together – a quiz night

## Could you be an Older Friend?

We have many more children on our waiting lists needing an Older Friend. It could be you helping one of them!

If you are thinking of volunteering for us, here are some words from current Older Friend Clare to inspire you:-

*"I find the Friendship Project such a professional charity to volunteer with. The support they offer to volunteers and the systems they have in place are really second to none. Given the nature of the work with young people, this gives me so much confidence to get out there and have fun with my Younger Friend."*

Please contact:

[Karen.Hoy@friendshipproject.co.uk](mailto:Karen.Hoy@friendshipproject.co.uk) for more information.



## Younger Friend numbers

The number of children that we support is constantly changing. As of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 the numbers are:-

12 in North Warwickshire

16 in Rugby

13 in Stratford

36 in Leamington/Warwick



## What others have been doing for us



At the start of lockdown, two local children – Grace, 9, and Sam, 7, started a 350 mile cycle challenge to be completed by the end of May with the aim of raising £500 for The Friendship Project for Children. Little did they know it was going to be the sunniest month since records began and they would be battling the heat too!

The children had ridden 324 miles when Grace had a spectacular fall off her bike. She was shaken and had lots of cuts and bruises. Determined to carry on cycling, she got back on her bike the next day with little brother Sam and they completed the remaining 26 miles. When asked what was the hardest part of this challenge Grace said: "It was getting back on the bike after my fall" and Sam said: "The steep hills!"

We would like to say a huge thank you to Grace and Sam who completed this cycling challenge of 350 miles and raised a huge £2067. Area Coordinator for Warwick, Fiona Roche, presented them with special certificates of achievement from The Friendship Project for Children. The money raised will enable over 160 outings to take place for the children supported by their volunteers.



Procure4 have selected @The Friendship Project as their chosen charity for 2020/21 and have some fun, fundraising activities planned for the coming 12 months. It's great when a local business recognises the work we do and supports us in this way, as now more than ever, we all need the power of friendship. @Procure4 have always been passionate supporters of local charity projects around Warwickshire so we are delighted to have them get behind us.

You can help by visiting their fundraising page at:

<https://www.sponsorme.co.uk/sophiecoghlan/procure4-fundraising-page-for-the-friendship-project.aspx>

We cannot list everyone that we need to thank on here, but we are grateful to every one of you that helps us out in any way.....



With grateful thanks to local company CALLUM, who donated 100 Hot Wheels Cars for our Younger Friends.



Thank you to our Older Friend Kerry, who decided to raise funds for us by covering 300 miles during the 30 days of November by cycling, and a further 26.5 miles running. She raised an amazing amount for us - £700.



What lovely little hand knitted dolls, donated to us by wellwisher Ann.

Ann-Marie from [www.get-cooking.co.uk](http://www.get-cooking.co.uk) gave our Younger Friends the opportunity to attend her Zoom cooking classes for free.



# Donations over £1000 made to The Friendship Project in 2020

*With grateful thanks to those who donated any amount. It is always greatly appreciated.*

We received a total of £9,350 through the following donations over £1,000 in 2020.

- Village Voices £1,350
- Bodies & Co £4,000
- Barratt Homes £1,000
- Three separate anonymous donations of £1,000 each.

Like all charities, The Friendship Project relies on donations from the general public for a significant amount of its income. If you can spare even just a pound or two, or perhaps help to organise a fundraising event to help towards our valuable contribution to society, then please do feel free to contact our trustee Fundraiser, Richard Barrett ([richard.barrett@friendshipproject.co.uk](mailto:richard.barrett@friendshipproject.co.uk)).

Thanks also to **Gallagher** – Insurance Risk Management and Consultancy, for their ongoing support in providing postage, office services, photocopying, mail shots, printing, plus meeting facilities free of charge.

**Leamington Lawn Tennis and Squash Club** regularly allow us to use their meeting space free of charge – thank you.

## Charities Trust

The Friendship Project have partnered with The Charities Trust, a leading donations management company established in 1987, in order to provide opportunities for payroll giving, sponsorship, and credit card payments. Our website, [www.friendshipproject.co.uk/fundraising](http://www.friendshipproject.co.uk/fundraising) includes details of the following, via partner

**Payroll Giving**

**Sponsorship – Online Fundraising – Sponsor Me**

**Match Funding**

**One off Card donations**

**Shopping on Amazon Smile** and selecting us to receive money on each purchase you make.

**Cheques** can be made payable to The Friendship Project for Children and posted to:

Cheryll Rawbone – Chairman, c/o 20 Northumberland Road, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, CV32 6HA.

We would like to say a huge thank you to those individuals, companies, and other organisations – some of whom are annual donors – who have given and continue to give so generously to The Friendship Project to support our valuable work in the community.

# Older Friend Maja's Story



## A hundred ways of navigating through the lockdown

One would have thought that Younger Friends and Older Friends, 'YFs and OFs,' would be veterans after negotiating a path through a year of lockdowns..... This was certainly not the case for me. I had eased myself into a socially distanced walking routine with my YF in between lockdowns until the end of December 2020. Although we had some really freezing cold days in December, we were looking forward to our favourite takeaway hot chocolate and cake and we had plenty to chat about.

As the new school term tried to get under way in January 2021, everything was put on hold again. Like other OF's (I am sure), I had to get onto the phone with my YF to talk about possible online activities. This did not prove easy to start with, as she and her siblings had to find a way for everyone in the family to use the phone and online facilities and we all know that an unstable internet can make things challenging. Thankfully, my YF was patient until I got my act together. We were soon reading and crafting once a week. I usually walk on Friday or Saturday to my YFs house to drop off some craft materials and books from the library. Whenever possible, I try to borrow two identical books so that we can take turns reading to each other. My YF is nine years old and she loves the character and the stories of the 'Truth Pixie' by Matt Haig. She wowed me with some very insightful observations about the unusual main character.

Here are some of the craft projects she worked on. She made a 'magic star display' (lots of colourful stars suspended from ribbons that are tied to a box). On another occasion we each drew a picture then showed it to each other. Recently she made a lovely Mother's Day Card. Coming up for the next two meetings, we are going to paint an Easter Bunny figure, that's going to be one of my opportunities to let the inner child out, because I will definitely join in by painting my own little figure.

Somehow, things have worked out really well despite the lockdown. We still managed to have fun and had lots to chat about.

My Younger Friend has recently taken up creative writing. Here is one of her stories:-

*There was a mini theme park, trees and a playground. I went there one day. We got some food and tokens to go on the rides.*

*Two minutes later I got the tokens. I went first on the train and it was fun. Then I went on the water ride and after that a balloon ride and the teacup ride.*

*Now I went back on the roller coaster train and it flew off the track. I wished to have some candy floss so I said 'magic train' three times. So, the train took me back where I wanted to go: to the station. I told my friend about it all and she believed me. We left the park and took the bus back home.*

*Four minutes after I arrived back home it turned night and it was 11.59. I woke up and I asked myself if the train would work again. So I opened my window and shouted 'magic train' and it came right up to my window. I asked it whether it could take me somewhere and it did.*

*I woke up the next morning and saw my friend: only me and her knew about the magic train. So we called the train and went back to the park and investigated the park. Then, on that day the mini wheel came off. That day we had to say 'Magic Wheel' and it spun around.*

*24 hours after that we kept going back to the park and the rides came off their stations and so did the mini golf course.*

*The whole park was ruined....until...Me and my Older Friend saved everyone in the park and put everyone and everything back to normal until it all went back to a mess and everyone got completely stuck. My aunt tried to save the day but it didn't work because evil people were taking the ride too far, like, way too far so we had to fight the bad people. Now we saved the day and got everyone back to normal. The End.*

# Older Friend Pat's Story



## Adventures in Lockdown

I had been partnered with my Younger Friend for just under a year when we were placed in the first lockdown. Both of us found it difficult I think, but I stayed in touch via weekly cards and letters as she didn't seem keen to communicate via phone or FaceTime. I also sent her a stamped addressed envelope if she wanted to write back to me. She is a keen reader (we usually visited the library every week) so I also sent her books a couple of times, as the library was closed.

Finally, we were able to meet up again in June, and I tried to dream up a few exciting activities that we could do outdoors when the weather was nice. We had an outdoor nail salon where I showed her how to do her nails, with glittery varnish and lots of laughing. One week we made loads of "slime" in different colours, and most weeks we also played card games, board games and worked puzzles. Some weeks her Dad brought her to the local park where I set up an outdoor table and chairs, other weeks I parked around the corner from her house and we went to a local park.

Sometimes, I bought a picnic from the local Coop and we went exploring around her town or the local parks, as well as whatever activities I provided. She also enjoys art, so I bought some inexpensive pens and a Spirograph and we made patterns and did drawings several weeks. As she really likes cooking (and making a mess!), I bought fairy cakes, readymade icing and decorations so she could decorate cakes a few times. That was a real hit, I could see her confidence improve with each cake she iced and decorated.

As a celebration for the end of school, I went to McDonalds for a takeaway and put it in a heat proof bag before driving to her to meet up for an outdoor meal and games – definite seal of approval! In October, we made a Halloween paper chain for her to use for decorations at home.

As the days grew colder, it became more difficult to meet up outside so, at the end of October we took the bus into town for a stroll around and shopping/lunch.

During the next lockdown we did a bit more talking via Messenger as she became a bit more used to using it (although she is not a big conversationalist), and I also sent regular letters or postcards. I discovered a FreePrint App that I could send her a postcard every month for just 85p with photos, so I have been using that pretty regularly. She seems to enjoy getting a postcard with a photo of herself on it, and I felt it was important for her to keep remembering our lovely times together and that I would still be here at the end of lockdown.

As we were in lockdown on her birthday, I baked a giant chocolate chip cookie and did a doorstep socially distanced drop off which seemed to go down very well. We are both really looking forward to meeting up again, her first request was for takeaway McDonalds and lots of games which we will be doing the end of the month. Hooray, we're nearly there!



## Older Friend Judy's Story

I had been matched with my Younger Friend for just under a year before the first lockdown was announced. Prior to lockdown, we used to go out every week and always had lots of fun and enjoyed ourselves, so both of us have really missed our face-to-face outings over the last year. We have found many new ways to keep in touch throughout lockdown, and I have also spoken with my Younger Friends step-mum regularly to check up on how the family were coping. I spoke to my Younger Friend on the phone and via WhatsApp throughout. I took part in the Zoom sessions set up by the Friendship Project and we laughed so much when we had to draw each other! During the warmer summer months, I went over to her house several times and we talked at a distance in her front garden. It has been difficult at times, as she is a teenager and has been required to do a great deal of schoolwork during lockdown. I ordered a set of books that she likes and we have talked about them. We have got through everything that life has thrown at us over the last year, but it has been a challenge and was certainly easier to communicate when we were out and about, as I think teenagers find it harder to talk over the phone!



We are both looking forward to our outings together again, and since restrictions have lessened, we have already met for a chat and a walk around the area near to her house.



# Older Friend Sam's Story



It's 1st April 2021 and I've just arrived home after spending three hours in the company of my younger friend 'D'. Our first outing since 23<sup>rd</sup> December and it was wonderful to actually be in her company again. We talked non-stop as we walked to what has become one of our favourite spots – Cock Robin Woods, Rugby – where we sat and enjoyed some snacks and she got excited about the coming Easter break as she looked through her Easter gifts. Nothing special on the face of it but I think this will continue to be a go-to destination long after the restrictions have lifted.

Our friendship started over video chat as we were matched just 10 days before the first lockdown started in March 2020. I remember the first call so well - I was nervous and talked incessantly for 45 minutes whilst a reserved 13 year old nodded, briefly answered any questions and occasionally smiled at this strange lady on the screen in front of her. Those little smiles were encouragement enough and in just a few weeks the calls became longer and my monologue got overtaken by conversation.

I love being creative, so dropping off crafts at her home for us to carry out over video chat was a perfect starting place for us. Whilst I watched and chatted, 'D' created an array of bracelets, mosaic candle holders, jewellery boxes, wind-chimes and keyrings to name but a few. We had a lot of fun and there was much laughter during these calls as we learned about one another.

One of our favourite activities, which we've recently repeated, was planting seeds. This soon became a focus of our weekly calls as we discussed what needed to be done, when the seedlings were pricked out into small pots and then bigger pots before finally making their way out into the garden where they grew and grew. And with each week and each craft, the friendship also grew and I am glad to say she now matches me for chat – well almost!

Once we could meet face-to-face we soon discovered our mutual love of the natural world and walk for hours seeking out trees, woods and ponds. 'D' is a wonderful photographer and is happy to stop for long periods in one place to get the perfect shot (as demonstrated in this photo of a rain-splattered leaf) – which suits me as I love to pause in nature and simply be. A testimony to the great work of the Friendship Project's Area Coordinators when it comes to matching! We also discovered Rainbows Tearooms and a warming hot chocolate is always welcome before a visit to the park.

This latest lockdown brought new challenges so I was always there to listen and sitting in companionable silence brings its own rewards. 'D' also introduced me to Billie Eilish and we thoroughly enjoyed watching her new documentary together recently and chatting about this extraordinary young woman.

So, as I reflect upon this last year - the first of our friendship – on this April Fool's Day, I feel anything but a fool. I have enjoyed being part of the Friendship Project since 2016 as a Group Supporter but becoming an Older Friend is one of the wisest decisions I have ever made. Thank you to all who make this Project possible.

# Trustee and Operations Team News

Our volunteer numbers are constantly increasing, and this has been supported by our Operations team. Sarah Stallard, Louise Hasler and Gurmaj Dhillon are valued new members of the Trustee team.



**Sarah Stallard** joined us as our HR Trustee in June 2020. Sarah has over 12 years HR experience focussed predominantly on recruitment, retention, staff development, coaching and performance management. She has worked in the public and private sectors as well as the charity sector where she spent nearly 8 fantastic years working for another local charity, The Myton Hospices. She enjoys helping others and being able to give something back to the local community. She is passionate about personal development and is currently studying for a CIPD Level 7 Advanced Diploma in Human Resource Management. She regularly attends local CIPD events to ensure her HR knowledge is up to date and enjoys networking and meeting fellow HR professionals. Sarah has lived in Warwick all her life and is thrilled to join The Friendship Project.



**Louise Hasler** joined us as our Compliance/QA Trustee in June 2020. She had been seeking an opportunity to make a regular personal contribution to a charity when she discovered The Friendship Project. The majority of Louise's professional experience has been in the university sector, most recently at the University of Warwick, where she works in the area of educational policy and quality. She thinks most people who work in higher education have a sense of their own privilege. At Warwick they are encouraged to think beyond the ivory tower and to support the local community. There is also a strong drive to increase engagement in higher education by young people from backgrounds that are less typical than most who read for a degree. Being a trustee provides Louise with a great opportunity to be able to apply her experience to an excellent cause.



**Gurmaj Dhillon** is The Friendship Projects new Operations Trustee from early 2021. He grew up in Warwick & Leamington Spa and has spent 20 years engaged in senior management roles across HM Treasury/ Whitehall and the Bank of England. On the voluntary side, he has served as a Community Governor for 2 schools in London Borough of Brent through the period 2006 – 2015 (Queen's Park Community School and Malorees Junior School), fundraised for the mental health charity MIND in London, and also worked with the NSPCC. He has recently completed his training as a volunteer vaccinator with the St.John's Ambulance Service and is about to start work in the Warwickshire area.

**Kelly Furness** was a valued member of our Ops Team for 2 ½ years as Area Coordinator for our Rugby District. With her extensive experience we are grateful that we still have her on board as a volunteer Group Supporter.



# Social Media News

**Michelle Machin** has been our Hon Secretary for many years. Due to work commitments, she has decided to stand down, but we are thrilled that she is taking on the role of our social media posts - and this is where you can help us too.

We recognise the importance of social media. If you're not already, please help us grow our following and spread the word on the social media channels. This will help us recruit new volunteers, and to attract new sponsors and donors.

Like, share and follow us at:-

 Facebook /  Instagram /  Twitter @friendshipproj /  The Friendship Project

SUPPORT  
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the friendship project  
for children

LIKE, SHARE & FOLLOW @FRIENDSHIPPROJ



# Safeguarding

My name is Esther Jones and I took over responsibility for safeguarding within the Project at the 2020 AGM. I took over from the previous lead, John Hancock, who I had the pleasure of knowing when volunteering as an Older Friend for the Project (2006 to 2017), and while delivering safeguarding training to my fellow volunteers (on and off since 2015).

Prior to taking over, I spent some time reviewing the safeguarding practices of the project and was really impressed with how the operations team have placed the welfare and wellbeing of our Younger Friends at the centre of the Project's work. For example, the volunteer induction training session weaves important messages regarding the volunteer's responsibility to keep their Younger Friend's safe throughout, and not just as a stand-alone tick box covering 'child protection'. I will be formalising this review by using the NSPCC Safeguarding Checklist to ensure we have a recorded annual audit of safeguarding practice against best practice standards. This will help us stay up to date with current guidance and legislation.

Once I was in the role, I worked with the operations team to update the 'glovebox' guidance provided to volunteers. I wanted the guidance to be crystal clear for volunteers so that they knew exactly what is expected of them so we turned the guidance into a decision flow chart. More recently, I updated the child protection and safeguarding policy and procedure so we had a clear policy statement and the procedure regarding what to do if concerned about a Younger Friend matched the glovebox guidance.

As with almost everything over the last year, a good part of our work became virtual. We have continued to meet with Calvin Smith from Warwickshire County Council, virtually, who provides us with updates and guidance on the local safeguarding agenda. I have been able to attend the virtual operations team meetings, whose enthusiasm for continually improving practice has not been dimmed despite the difficulties of the last year. And we have successfully shifted our safeguarding training session for volunteers onto Zoom, ensuring volunteers old and new have been able to access key information regarding what safeguarding means to the project. The training has been such a success that we will be including virtual sessions within the training schedule for the foreseeable future. Over the next year I will be looking at training for the operations team to ensure they are able to stay up to date with the latest safeguarding information.

## COVID - 19

We have continued to work together and adapt over the last year, so that the valuable work that we do supporting children in the Warwickshire area has been able to carry on. We have introduced our new **Pen Pal / FaceTime Friendship** which has meant that we have still been able to match children in need during this time. We have followed government guidelines throughout and this has meant that friendships have had to pause with face-to-face contact at times. Risk Assessments have been introduced before face-to-face outings have been able to resume, and we have issued 'Emergency Packs' which include face masks and the option to purchase and claim for hand sanitiser for use on outings.

## Future Events

We really hope to see you at some point this year! **We have so far booked Den Building at Brandon Marsh on 17<sup>th</sup> July, and we will be sure to let you know as soon as we book any more!**

We are always adding new events, so we will be sure to communicate these with you when we do.

If you have any ideas for future events, please feel free to contact:-

[karen.hoy@friendshipproject.co.uk](mailto:karen.hoy@friendshipproject.co.uk)

### Younger Friend Events:-

17 July – Den Building,  
Brandon Marsh

### Older Friend Events (all Zoom):-

11 January – Safeguarding Training  
29 January – Volunteer Coffee Morning  
9 February – New Volunteer Get Together  
16 February – Group Supporter Get Together  
22 February – Safeguarding Training  
1 March – Safeguarding Training  
31 March – Volunteer Get Together  
29 April – Safeguarding Training  
20 May – Safeguarding Training  
27 May – Safeguarding Training  
15 June – AGM





the  
friendship project  
For Children

# Volunteers Wanted

Would you like to be an Older Friend  
to a child for regular outings of just 2-3 hours?

For more details and an application form, please contact:

**0845 838 2098\***

email: [info@friendshipproject.co.uk](mailto:info@friendshipproject.co.uk)

[www.friendshipproject.co.uk](http://www.friendshipproject.co.uk)

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for Voluntary Service

Registered Office:- Myton Park, Myton Lane, Warwick, CV34 6PX.

Registered Charity No.517684

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