

NEWSLETTER

2023/24 - Issue 27



Chairman's Introduction

Our newsletter gives a great flavour of the young people that are being supported in Warwickshire. We have some lovely stories from our Older Friend volunteers, and some extremely positive comments from the young people they have been matched with. We have included photos of our volunteers demonstrating the valuable work they do and showing the fun they have been able to have, as well as helping their Younger Friends to improve their self-esteem and confidence. Our collective activities have included Moreton Morrell Animal Centre, Craft Event, and Christmas Party. The last twelve months have seen various historical events, with King Charles' Coronation, and the nation celebrating this in various ways. A focus during the Coronation weekend on the voluntary sector, and what people can do for others in their community, being a positive highlight for me. Unfortunately, there has been more challenging news with the ongoing war in Ukraine and the various atrocities suffered by many in the Middle East. There is particular concern for the innocent children caught up in these conflicts and the impact and damage on their young lives and futures. Given our support for local children in need, albeit not in such war-torn situations, we can empathise and help where we can. From a personal perspective, we have a young person from Ukraine living with us, along with her Mum. It has both brought us closer to events there and given us greater insight into the lives and the suffering of children and families, as well as an opportunity to learn and enjoy

their traditions and celebrations. Regrettably as I write this there is no end to war in sight.

We are continuing to see that local children and their families have been impacted from a mental health perspective following Covid. We are seeing an increasing number of referrals from local schools and social services as a result. Recruitment of extra volunteers remains as one of our key focuses for 2024, and any way you can give publicity to help us to achieve this would be helpful. There are posters and promotional materials available, both in hard copy and electronically. We are happy to engage and give talks to organisations too, daytime or evening, across Coventry & Warwickshire.

Funding is increasingly difficult. Grant funding bodies are seeing more applications, as more charities turn to them. Corporate and charity fundraising/donations have not yet returned to pre-Covid levels. This means that application rates of success reduce. We are keen to connect with organisations that would like to engage with us as part of their CSR/ESG activities.

Unfortunately, we have again had to dip into reserves and these are fast diminishing. We have registered with Easyfundraising, meaning that if you shop online from over 7000 retailers (including travel agents), we receive donations at no extra cost to yourselves. Please do encourage your friends, families, and colleagues to also register. **The link to register is:**

<http://efraising.org/rtPKzAh2X9>

For the last three years we have held our AGM and Volunteers' Get Together on Zoom. This has resulted in a higher attendance than previous face-to-face meetings, and it will be on Zoom again this year. It is on Thursday 6 June at 7.00pm. Please contact karen.hoy@friendshipproject.co.uk to register to attend and you will be sent a Zoom link.

I would finally like to give a massive thank you to our Older Friends, Group Supporters, Operations Team, Trustees, Volunteers, Supporters and Funders for their contributions.

Cheryll Rawbone – Chairman

For more information please contact:- cheryll.rawbone@friendshipproject.co.uk

The children that we support

Our Younger Friends are referred to us via a professional body, such as their school or social worker. This can be for a variety of reasons ranging from having a limited friendship group, or perhaps coming from a very large family where it's difficult for them to have one to one time. Our volunteer Older Friends take them out regularly for friendship and fun! Often, our Older Friends say that their outings become just as important to them as their Younger Friend as it's a way of exploring new things to do. It is very rewarding for them when they can see first hand when the child flourishes during the time that they befriend them.

We have regular Safeguarding check ups with the Younger Friend and their family/carers which is a wonderful way of finding out how their friendships are making a difference to them.

Feedback from some Younger Friends and their Carers

"If I've had a bad day at school we talk about it. She always asks me how things are."

"My Older Friend is so kind, she's lovely, and we talk a lot."

"I feel more confident and happier now. It's nice to have time away."

"Seeing my Older Friend takes my mind off things, especially my anxiety. I like that I have something nice to do."

"It gives me a chance to get out. It is a privilege, and I am grateful. I feel special and happy."

"I like it that the focus is on me. She is doing it for my benefit."

"He always listens to me and helps me to concentrate. It's good to have peace away from the house."

"My Older Friend listens to me, he just understands me. He is so nice."

"M used to play in the playground at school by herself before getting her Older Friend. Now she feels more confident and has friends."

"She really enjoys her time with her Older Friend and feels involved, safe, happy and content with her."

"The friendship has had a massive impact. A has grown in confidence and is much happier. She used to go to her bedroom all the time but now she comes downstairs and talks to me, the outings have given us a conversation point."

"The twins' Older Friends are so caring and supportive. The friendship has made a huge difference to the family. I am so grateful to the Friendship Project because the twins are so much happier being able to go to places that I can't take them because of lack of money and my mental health. The children come home happy and with a better attitude."



Younger Friend Numbers

The number of children that we support is constantly changing. We currently have 70 children aged between 6 and 16 that have an Older Friend.



We would like to offer our thoughts and condolences to the many friends and family of former Younger Friend **Toby Burwell**, following his death. He was a young man with many positive attributes, who was a friend to all, talented both musically and academically, had a strong sense of fun, and was always active. He had been encouraged to develop from an initially challenging start, to become an accomplished young man.

2023 Events

We had a varied calendar of events throughout the year for both Older Friends and Younger Friends.

January

- Zoom Safeguarding Training

February

- Volunteer Zoom Get Together

March

- 2 x Motionhouse Events

May

- Zoom Safeguarding Training

June

- AGM Zoom
- Moreton Morrell Event
- Volunteer Get Together

July

- Fire Station Event

September

- Volunteer Zoom Get Together
- Craft Event
- Safeguarding Training
-

October

- Volunteer Get together

November

- Volunteer Get together
- Christmas Party



We are grateful to The Royal Pug in Leamington for allowing us to use their upstairs meeting room free of charge for our face to face Volunteer Get Togethers.

Motionhouse

The children and their Older Friends had 2 very active outings to Motionhouse in Leamington in March. The sessions were hugely successful and sparked our Younger Friends' creativity. It gave them an opportunity to grow in confidence and gave them a learning experience that they might not normally access. With thanks to all at

www.motionhouse.co.uk



Moreton Morrell

In June, we returned to the Moreton Morrell Animal Welfare Unit for the second year running, as it was so successful first time around. We had a tour of the centre, followed by a quiz and animal handling.



Kenilworth Fire Station

Kenilworth Fire Station gave us a tour in July, and the children loved being able to sit in the fire truck and even shoot the water hose! With thanks to the team at the station for giving their time to teach the children about fire safety whilst at the same time giving them a fun and hands on experience.

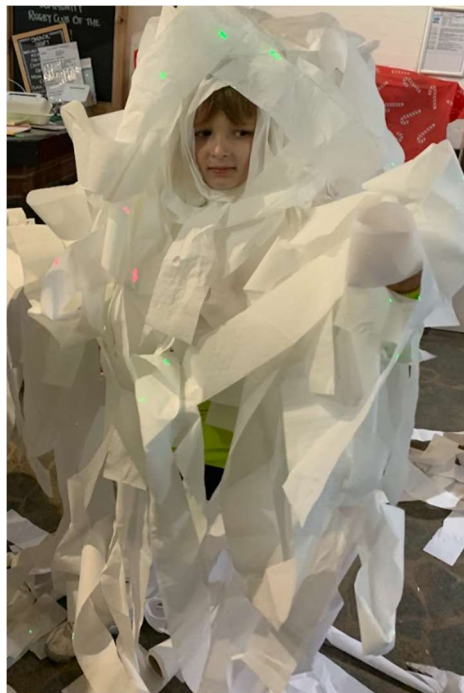


Christmas Party

Our annual Christmas Party is always a fabulous way to end the year and 2023 was no exception!

With thanks to Old Leamingtonians RFC for allowing us to use their venue, and to entertainer www.nickysfancyfaces.co.uk for the wonderful disco and party games.

We were even lucky enough to secure a visit from Father Christmas himself!



Craft Event

In September we gathered at the War Memorial Park in Coventry for our Craft Event where we made slime, decorated gingerbread men, made fortune tellers, modelled clay, painted pebbles, made rainbow pom poms, made a wishing tree and made a wintery collage.



What others have been doing for us

www.higgscharity.org.uk awarded us the huge amount of £12,000 to contribute towards the funding of our work in North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth. This will enable the children in this area to benefit from the services that we provide.



The Redrow Midlands Community Fund awarded us £795 which helped fund our Christmas Party.



Free Cakes for Kids continue to make the most beautiful cakes for many of our Younger Friends. They also made a huge amount of cupcakes for our Christmas Party.



www.thomasflavell.co.uk in Leamington have done a fabulous job of supporting us over the last year. They took part in the Leamington Santa Sleigh, as well as holding several internal fundraising events, they donated Easter Eggs to our Warwick Younger Friends, and presents for our Christmas Party.



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.....

We would like to say a HUGE thank you Stockton U12 Football Team for wearing our logo on their kits that were kindly funded by an anonymous donor. The kits will help to spread the word of The Friendship Project and the positive work that we do. We do hope that your new kits will bring you good luck!



Make Good Grow helped us to wrap endless Christmas presents.



We would like to thank www.aubreyallen.co.uk for their sizeable donation. Each year they donate a certain amount of their profit to worthwhile causes. They saw and recognised the contribution that our charity makes and chose us to donate to.

Widget Software supported us by donating £330.

We were gifted tickets to the Napton Cidery Festival.

With grateful thanks to those who donated in 2023

We are extremely grateful to all our grant funders, corporate, and individual donors and who supported us in 2023 through grants and large and small donations. We would also like to thank our cash donors, plus any donations not listed.

- ✓ 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust
- ✓ Amazon Smile
- ✓ Anonymous donors
- ✓ Aubrey Allen
- ✓ Bedworth Belles
- ✓ Canon & Mrs G Farran
- ✓ Charities Trust
- ✓ Claverdon Fields Charitable Trust
- ✓ Coventry & District Cricket Club
- ✓ Dulverton Trust
- ✓ BM & SJ Hall
- ✓ Easy Fundraising
- ✓ F C Stokes Trust
- ✓ Flecknoe WI
- ✓ George Pragnall
- ✓ Heart of England Community Foundation
- ✓ High Sherrif of Warwickshire
- ✓ Just Giving
- ✓ King Henry VIII's Endowed Trust - Warwick
- ✓ Kingsley Smith
- ✓ Leamington & District - Santa Sleigh
- ✓ L&Q Foundation
- ✓ Maud Elkington Trust
- ✓ Masonic Charitable Foundation
- ✓ Mr & Mrs Owen
- ✓ Mr & Mrs M Parton
- ✓ Mrs Susan Weetman
- ✓ NFU Mutual
- ✓ O'Brien Trust
- ✓ Redrow Homes
- ✓ Shipston WI
- ✓ St Margaret's Circle
- ✓ Sumo Games
- ✓ Terence Hague
- ✓ The Four Acre Trust
- ✓ The Higgs Charity
- ✓ The National Lottery Community Fund
- ✓ Thomas Flavell & Sons
- ✓ Various donations In Memory of Toby Burwell
- ✓ Warwickshire CrimeBeat
- ✓ Warwickshire Police & Crime Commissioner
- ✓ Welcome Break
- ✓ Widget Software

Thanks also to **Gallagher – Insurance Risk Management and Consultancy**, for their ongoing support in providing 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.

SSD in Stratford Upon Avon for storing our archiving free of charge.

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.

There are several methods in which you can donate to us, listed below, with further details on our website. We're now also registered with easyfundraising, the UK's biggest charity shopping fundraising website. This website allows us to receive donations directly from brands when you use the site to shop with all your favourite stores online.

It's completely free and easy to use and a great way for you to support us when you're shopping online without it costing you a penny!



Other methods to donate are:

- Charities Trust through Payroll Giving, Sponsor Me, and Match Funding
- One off card donations
- Cheque
- In person with a staff member via the Square app
- Using our QR code shown on the right



Kelly's Older Friend Story



I have been an Older Friend for the Friendship Project for almost 2 years. I have been matched with an 11 year old boy called R during that time. Before becoming an Older Friend I was the Area Coordinator for Rugby, and then a Group Supporter and so have been involved with the project for 5 years. I was also an Older Friend over 25 years ago when I was 19 to help me get experience to go to University to study to become a Social Worker. When R and I met at the matching meeting he was very chatty which his Mum thought was a good sign he liked me. We made plans of things he had wanted to do but hadn't had an opportunity to so we started with a trip to Kaspas and then a trip to Jump In the session after. We then built up a list of things he wanted to try and foods he wanted to try. R loves food, especially chicken, and likes spicy food, so food usually is part of each session. We have done some activities as one offs or seasonal activities like visiting Warwick Castle for Halloween, Warwick Castle Christmas Light Trail, Walking with Alpacas, and Tropical Birdland. Other activities are regulars like our monthly swimming sessions, trips to Pepes and other restaurants, trips to the Cinema and Trips to the quiet sessions at The Wave. We have also teamed up with another friendship to do fun activities like bowling and the Escape Rooms at Houdinis in Coventry. We had fun in the Escape Rooms but got locked in both times and there has been talk about going back to do them again now we know how some parts work. Teaming up with another friendship has added an extra dimension to our friendship and means we can take the other young person out when their Older Friend went on an extended holiday. This helps the boys build another friendship and get to know another adult and have a friend in another school.

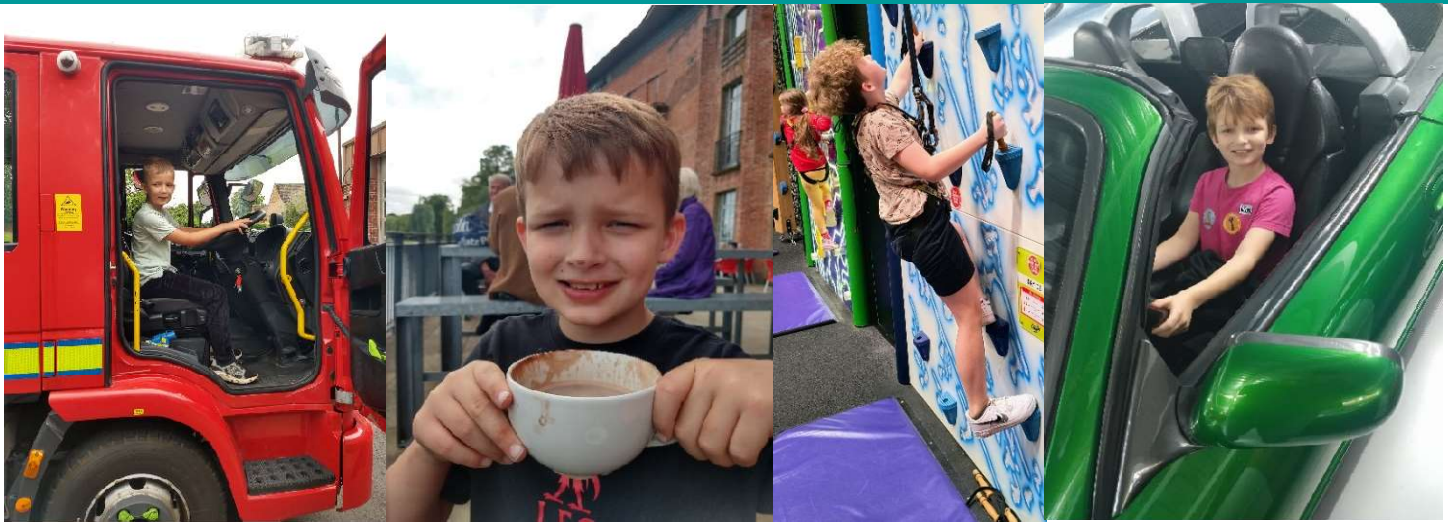
R likes to do fun activities with me and whilst he is interested in some places like Museums and the National Space Centre when I mention them he says he doesn't want to go and so I have realised they might be a bit like school but we will wait and see. The Dungeons at Warwick castle were a definite hit and I would recommend walking Alpacas with the Alpaca Pals as long as you don't mind getting a bit muddy.

We have also done cooking and baking activities at my house and are looking forward to the Summer so we can go Strawberry and Raspberry picking again and baking with yummy fresh berries.

R has grown in confidence since we have started being friends and he is happy to tell me activities he doesn't want to do and I like it when he comes up with suggestions of things he wants to do or films he wants to watch. R now has some new friends who live nearby so he can go to the park and go to their houses and it's nice to see him getting out there with his friends and having fun. R is from a family with 4 other siblings who all have health issues and/or additional needs, so the family is very busy and activities and meals out for a family of 7 can be very costly. R is well supported emotionally by his parents and he loves his family very much, especially his younger siblings. My friendship with R enables him to get out in the community more, try new opportunities and experiences and have fun. He enjoys it and so do I.

I get a lot out of seeing R happy, laughing, trying new things and when he achieves something new. When we went walking with Alpacas he was so proud that the Alpaca called Orlando liked him and walked well for him. You could see him in the photos that his head was always next to R and far away from me. All through the walk he kept talking with him and saying "alright mate."

Brian's Older Friend Story



For me it all started in the waiting room of my dentist in Henley in Arden less than 18 months ago. I've never liked the dentist and it was to seek distraction that I was leafing through some magazines that I saw it. I took a photo mulled it over a bit and called the number. That's how I found myself sitting in a primary school office meeting A and his mum for the first time. Would they like me? Would I like them? Would it serve any purpose? A seemed a quiet, shy and very ordinary 8 year old boy, his mum and school were pretty supportive of the friendship, so we all decided to give it a go.

The Friendship Project for Children We recruit volunteers to take out local children in need of support for friendship and fun. We are looking for volunteers to take out the young people, as well as sponsorship, donations, and kind individuals to promote us via leaflet delivering or following us on social media @friendshipproj. For more details: <https://friendshipproject.co.uk/about/how-you-can-help/> for call Heather, Area Co-ordinator 07922 400945.

Wellesbourne WI meets every month on the second Wednesday, except

Our first few outings were low key affairs, out for a walk and a chat, throwing a frisbee, playing minigolf and avoiding the rain. In these early meetings A would start very quiet, not opening up until we had been together a while. Then would become much more participative and his own interests shone through. And his interest is "CARS". He knows rather more than me about cars, including which one he plans to have when he is 17, (quite a modest Peugeot actually). I'm not sure my 12 year old Kia does much for my street credibility with him.

After those first few meetings we've tended to do things with activities involved and we've got to know each other better. I really enjoy my time with A and I think he sees me as a friend, but definitely a grown-up friend, someone who is in charge. We have settled into a pattern of weekly meetings of about 2.5 to 3 hours from pick-up to drop-off, not on a particular date or a particular time. I arrange the date and time with his mum (who is really supportive). It used to be only with his mum, but we have recently created a WhatsApp group which includes A so he can participate.

While A's main interest is cars he is also pretty interested in "Luxury Hot Chocolate with all the trimmings" so this often features in our outings.

So what sorts of things have we done together this last year:

Visits to St Nicks Park – Minigolf, frisbee, playground and Café – done this a few times.

National Trust visits – especially to Charlecote Park where we can stalk the deer. Tip: Junior membership of the NT is only £10 to a year – great value. They also run events like Easter Egg Trails.

Cycling – riding a bike gives him a challenge and some independence. So far its mainly been off road – the Greenway in Stratford is good – but A's favourite is the traffic free circuit of Draycote water. He is always challenging me to races 😊.

Did I mention Cars, the British Motor Museum at Gaydon has hundreds. The ticket allows unlimited return visits for a year so that has been a great winter activity and investment.

Swimming pool (with watershoot), Climbing wall and the Dice Box game café have all been in the mix as well as a couple of great events organised by the project. A visit to Kenilworth Fire Station was a great treat – he really wanted to drive the Engine.

So has it worked out? I think so. I look forward to our outings. He has done things he wouldn't have done, but so have I (down the watershoot at the pool and used a fire hose). He is relaxed and comfortable with me and we have fun together. His mum is supportive and I'm told he is doing well at school and he keeps me feeling younger than my 67.



 **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
www.friendshipproject.co.uk

 Facebook/  Instagram/  Twitter@friendshipproj



Make a difference to a child's life!

Registered Charity No. 517684

*Calls to this number from a BT telephone line will be approx. 2p/min daytime and 0.5p/min evening (excludes of VAT). Calls from mobiles and other operators may vary.



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

Registered Charity No.517684

www.friendshipproject.co.uk <https://www.facebook.com/FriendshipProj> @FriendshipProj

Alec and Mariam's Older Friend Story



We both decided to become Older Friends nearly two years ago, after finding out about a set of excitable, energetic and inquisitive twins that needed a couple to match with! The timing couldn't have been better.

For us, meeting up with the twins each week gives us purpose, and it creates space in our busy diaries for us to have fun! With chaotic working lives, being able to spend time with the twins with the sole focus of having a great time is like a breath of fresh air for us. Seeing the world through their eyes challenges us and makes us laugh, and the question of "aren't you doing this with us too?" has meant we've found ourselves doing loads of things we didn't expect - like climbing trees, trying Churros, and running around and playing hide and seek in an empty cinema!

We like to think we've given them some new experiences too - as they've loved playing Uno and making pizzas at our house! We couldn't believe how amazing they both were at rock climbing, and their swimming abilities have improved loads too.

It's been really rewarding to see them grow in confidence and hearing them speak their minds about things. We can't believe how shy they were when we first met them! It's been great to receive feedback that the Friendship Project has been having a positive impact on them, as it's also had a positive impact on us too.

We're really thankful to the Friendship Project staff for checking in with us all regularly and giving us new ideas. We tend to find that balancing exciting things with trips to the park keeps our friendships moving forwards, and we're looking forward to having more adventures as it starts to get lighter again.

Friendship Project feedback has been that Mum says, "I have a brilliant relationship with Alec and Mariam - they are so caring and supportive. The friendship has made a huge difference to the family." The children say, "My Older Friend is caring and understands me. They are very kind and keep us safe."



Chris's Older Friend Story

I am a father of two children, both now in or around their 30's. I myself had a challenging upbringing and as a result I am only too aware of the positive influence those in your wider circle, not necessarily family, have on your life and your approach to it. It was with this background I volunteered to help the Friendship Project, specifically, in response to a Social Media post asking for males to be matched with boys. I met my Younger Friend when he was 10. He is 12 now. He had been identified for the project by the school. A was quiet and reserved at first. He lacked confidence and was very reluctant to try anything new. I was told he had coordination issues and therefore didn't 'do much'. I am fortunate enough to own a smallholding, complete with goats, horses, donkeys and many, many birds of all types. He has built a particular bond with the massive male goat we own! Now this goat scares most adults. I taught A how to scratch him between the horns and they became the greatest of friends!

A likes to design things. He has an incredible capability for detail! He said he wanted to make a den and had designed it accordingly in his head! We constructed a lovely little den in the woods by the stream on the site picked (very carefully) by him. We then set about camouflaging it with military style netting! When we built it, it was the first time he had used a screwdriver or indeed screws. He also learned to use a hammer and watched me saw various bits of wood. He helped level the ground with a shovel. When we had finished the den, I suggested we could take a little gas stove over and cook ourselves some sausages.

I have a small buggy on the farm. It's essentially a quad with a cab. An agricultural vehicle for use in the fields. A loves riding in it and we use it a lot. I asked him if he would like to learn to drive it. Of course he would. He loved it and what a great thing to tell the other boys on a Monday morning. I videoed him so he could settle any doubter's minds!

Bikes. A couldn't ride a bike when he came to me. Eventually, his parents asked me if I might be able to teach him. He didn't have a bike so we bought a second hand one. By this time A and I had built up a lot of trust, so when I told him there was nothing I could do other than hold him to start he listened! It honestly took about 5 minutes of false starts and minor falls before he had mastered it. We had a lot of laughs learning. He gave up making a fuss when he fell over a long time ago so was happy to laugh with me when he was in a heap on the floor.

Cars. I own a couple of classic cars. A was interested from the outset. Early on I took him to a classic car meet. I have very rare cars. He was so proud to be sat in the cars. He kept asking me to divert in the hope one of his mates would see him! Anyway, he took lots of pictures to show them and thrived on the attention the other classic car owners gave him at the meet.

In the workshop we have made a light sabre, a box, wool holder (a birthday present for his mum). All designed in detail by A. He was so proud of it. I have also taught him to use other tools in the workshop. He loves using a hammer on the anvil and was amazed to discover if you hit a piece of metal enough it gets hot!

We enjoy so much together. In between all the exciting things described above, I often find us just sitting and talking. Initially I was worried I wasn't doing enough with him but actually now realise these 'quiet, reflective' sessions are probably more important than anything. Sometimes we sit on top of the hill and just chat while admiring the view and the nature around us. We have built a real bond. I confess, I have probably got as much out of it as he has. I love sharing my life with him and he laps it up.

A has blossomed over the past two years. Some of this is just growing up but of course I like to think some is because of his time with me. He is much more confident, much more willing to try new things and much more resilient. He also believes in himself more. I hope I have shown him what is possible in life. He now has a lot to tell those other boys on a Monday morning. Long may it continue.

When asked his favourite activity that he and Chris do together A says, "Everything. We've done geocaching. I like helping with his cars and have just designed a pocket in one of them for a mobile phone. I like playing with Izzy who is the crazy dog. I like making things with him. We have been to The Rollright Stones a few times. We even went to a classic car show. We've built a den and we are going to be making another one soon too. Chris is funny and lively. He makes me happy."

Joan Bolton – our longest serving Older Friend

Our longest serving Older Friend is Joan who has had 27 years of volunteering for the Friendship Project. It's hard to believe it but Joan is 88 years young!

She recently received a Highly Commended Award at the WCAVA Warwick District awards.

We'd like to pay tribute to the fantastic contribution she's made to The Friendship Project and to the lives of her Younger Friends by telling you a little more about her.

Born and bred in Warwick, Joan attended Coten End Primary School followed by Shottery Girls School. She then went on to successfully complete 2 years of teacher training at Westwood College. During her career, she taught at Shrubland Street Primary School, Clinton Primary School and then for 18 years at Bishops Tachbrook School.

When Joan retired, back in 1997, her neighbour encouraged her to join the Friendship Project, and she has been with us ever since!

Her first YF was an 8 year old boy called *Jake, who she supported until he was 15 years old. Along with many activities such as exploring the local countryside and canals, fossil hunting and cycling, Joan introduced him to bowling down at the bowling green in Leamington. He was a very talented bowler, Jake played regularly with the Royal Leamington Spa Men in matches, and was selected to play for the county junior bowling team. Joan remembers being extremely proud of Jake's achievement when he was presented with a trophy for winning the junior club competition.

Next, was *Clare whom she befriended from the age of 6 to 16 years old. Clare had some real anger issues and at times was excluded from school, but when she was out with Joan they got on very well and she behaved well too! Clare's father wrote, "Joan is a lovely lady, Clare has benefited a great deal, she is a very demanding kid, not easy to live with at times. But Joan lifts her up, brings her out of herself, my Clare loves Joan and always looks forward to seeing her. She has helped in so many ways, has Joan." Clare as a young girl wrote, "I love going out with Joan, I look forward to seeing her. I have lots of fun with her. Thank you Joan."

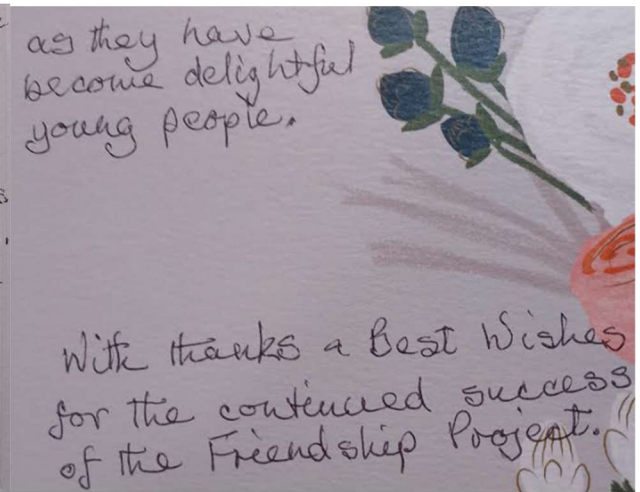
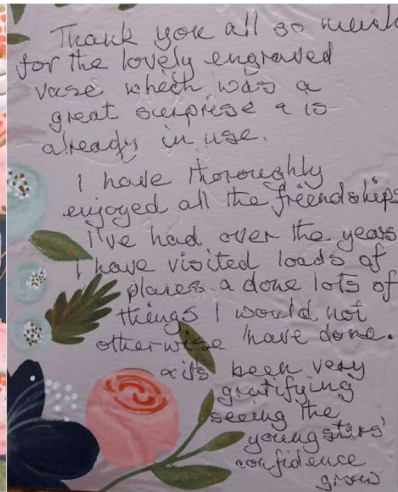
In 2012 Joan became an Older Friend to *Esme, who was then 6. She also became an Older Friend to Esme's younger sister *Sarah and took the two girls out together. The children were cared for by their grandparents, who were extremely happy with Joan taking the girls out. They trusted her totally and considered her one of the family. It gave them a well needed break. So instead of slowing down, Joan took on more by supporting 2 young girls. She had a lovely time with them, visiting local farms and parks, cycling down the greenway and doing crafts and baking.

Joan says the best part of being an Older Friend is the enjoyment she gets from "taking the kids out and going to do things I wouldn't normally do without them". Joan had the support of her late husband Keith who joined in with some of the outings, as well as her little dog Charlie, whom the children love.

In addition to being an Older Friend, Joan has worked for the Volunteer Bureau in Leamington Spa and also was a respite carer for children in Coventry, providing emergency respite care for children in need.

Joan is a very modest lady who has given a huge amount of time to supporting children in the local community. We are very privileged to have her as an Older Friend. Thank you, Joan!

**names of children have been changed.*



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!

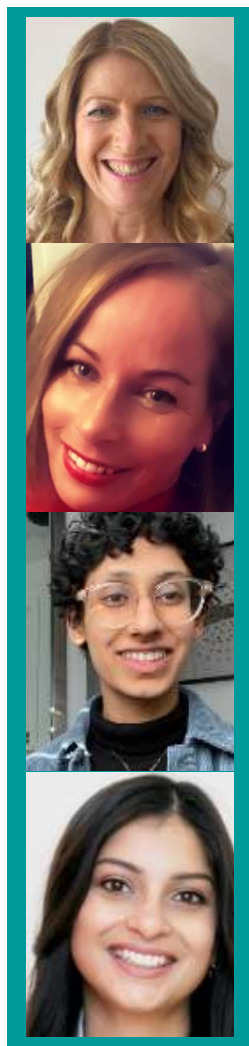
If you are thinking of volunteering for us, here are some words from current Older Friend Clare to inspire you:-

"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 for more information.

Trustee and Operations Team News

Our volunteer numbers are constantly increasing, and this has been supported by our Operations Team. Kate Meek, Sam Spencer and Amez Bass have joined us. Nishi Mehta joins the Trustee Team.



Kate Meek – Area Coordinator for Nuneaton, Bedworth & North Warwickshire

Many years ago I was a Manager in several public houses. I then moved into retail management which I really enjoyed. I then met my future husband, and whilst our children were young I wanted to spend as much as possible with them, so decided to become a childminder. I then moved on to work in a nursery setting. I stayed in this line of work, including being a teaching assistant until my children were a lot older. My daughter is now 23 years old and my son is 17. I have experience with Autism as my son was diagnosed at 2 years old and I have worked with children with Autism in the settings that I have been in. I have also taken several courses over the years that has helped me understand children that may have special needs one way or another. It is good to have a part in making a difference for those children who need their smile back.

Sam Spencer – Area Coordinator for Rugby District

In my early career I gained Payroll, Accounts, Retail and HR skills. Whilst in retail I grew, and had the belief of treating people how I would like to be treated in life. This served me well and I progressed into Management and Area Management. I then took a leap to a different country and transferred my skills, where I loved running a bar and café. When I had my son, I worked part time, and also obtained a degree in Art and Design. Through my best friend, I then found myself working in the world of Dementia where I managed the activity and stimulation of thirteen homes. This was a total joy, and I loved the difference I could make daily.

Due to great loss, I made a huge decision to gain a better life and work balance by working part time. Thankfully, I discovered that the Friendship Project were looking for an Area Coordinator for the Rugby area. I am grateful for this opportunity and to give back to an amazing charity. I was an Older Friend sixteen years ago which was a rewarding experience to see the true difference that an Older Friend can make to a child's life. I am looking forward to matching lots of children with life altering friendships, through the Friendship Project.

Amez Bass – Marketing & Social Media Assistant

Please read Amez's article on the next page to find out more about her and the work she is doing.

Nishi Mehta – Operations Trustee

I have over 13 years of dedicated experience as an Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion specialist, it's my mission to empower organisations to cultivate inclusive and supportive work environments.

I've created and delivered numerous diversity and inclusion initiatives in the UK and globally across diverse sectors, including construction, retail, and education. Innovation is at the heart of my work. I have developed innovative training and workshop materials, including upskilling initiatives, behavioural change learning programmes, maturity models, and culture and leadership diagnostic tools, all uniquely tailored to the organisations I support.

As a seasoned public/keynote speaker, host, and workshop facilitator, I am skilled in designing, moderating, and facilitating events that guide organisations' journey towards inclusivity. I also operate as a Level 7 Accredited Leadership coach, a postgraduate from the University of Warwick specialising in executive career progression and inclusive leadership. I guide individuals to discover their unique purpose, build confidence, and achieve things they never thought possible.

I firmly believe that knowledge gaps in diversity, inclusion, and wellbeing can hinder team performance and limit opportunities. By equipping individuals with the tools for success and guiding organisations in fostering more inclusive workplaces, we can all thrive.

Sarah Edge, Hannah Peattie and Taggie Kelham said farewell to The Friendship Project. We thank them all for their hard work and commitment to the charity.

Social Media and Marketing

Amez (Amrit Bass)
Social Media & Marketing

Born in the UK and of Indian Heritage, I speak 3 languages and enjoy pursuits that enable me to harness my creativity. My drive to enter the charity sector began at age 18 after a 3 month volunteering experience overseas in Malawi, Africa. I was fortunate to have partaken in an International Development Project in schools and the local community.

A few years later, I became a Police Constable and worked in 999 Response, Investigations, and Neighbourhood Policing. I achieved a Level 4 in Policing and learnt and implemented an array of methodologies to prevent crime and disorder in youth.

After some time, I made the decision to move back into the charity sector where I felt I could make a lasting impact. As a Senior Youth Engagement Officer for a youth charity, I utilised my TEFL Qualification to support and mentor young Asylum Seekers and Refugees with learning English and building new skills.

My experiences over the years also encompass a Legal Management Role for an NGO, working as a Graphic Designer, and graduating from 'Initial Naval Training'. As of recently, I started my business as a Private English Teacher for children and adults. Increasing confidence and improving social skills are at the heart of what I do. Furthermore, I am a Trustee for a youth charity based in Leamington Spa.

I joined The Friendship Project in January, and am responsible for Social Media and Marketing. I am thrilled to be part of this incredible charity and to create engaging content!

**TAKE A LOOK AT SOME OF THE
NEW SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT ON
THE NEXT PAGE!**

FRIENDSHIP FRIDAY!



DID SOMEBODY SAY HOT CHOCOLATE?!

FRIENDSHIP FRIDAY!



"Highlight of the month was looking 't' the stars and being at the Science Centre"

FRIENDSHIP FRIDAY!



An Easter Egg Hunt followed by a 'Make Your Own Easter Eggs' Session!

FRIENDSHIP FRIDAY!



"We went to the Science Centre in Leicester. At first this was the favourite activity but after the first part we saw the Planetarium Show. We all definitely are going back!"

MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE.

VOLUNTEER FOR 2 HOURS A WEEK



Seeing a child being able to experience new things... it's one of the most rewarding things I have ever done! Volunteering has also greatly improved my own self esteem.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!



"I love the opportunity to help children and young people who are in need. It's a chance to make a difference and to help them reach their full potential."

"I have been able to help a lot of children and young people who are in need. It's a chance to make a difference and to help them reach their full potential."

'SING IT LOUD'

CONCERT ON SATURDAY 25TH MAY



CHOOSE THE DATE YOU WANT TO VOLUNTEER ON: SATURDAY 25TH MAY

TO SUPPORT THE CHARITY

"We are so proud to have our first concert and to have so many people who have been able to help us. It's a chance to make a difference and to help them reach their full potential."

"We are so proud to have our first concert and to have so many people who have been able to help us. It's a chance to make a difference and to help them reach their full potential."

TWO HOURS CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

CAN YOU SPARE 2 HOURS PER WEEK? VOLUNTEERS & OFFER FRIENDSHIP TO A YOUNG PERSON IN NEED!

VOLUNTEERS HELP YOUNG PEOPLE WITH:

BUILDING CONFIDENCE, WORKING INTEREST, DEVELOPING SKILLS

HOW CAN YOU HELP?



PLEASE FOLLOW, LIKE, COMMENT & SHARE

Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter.

This really helps to spread the word of what we do!

PHOTOS, VIDEOS, TESTIMONIALS

Please send us content that highlights your experience with The Friendship Project. This content will be shared on our Social Media to raise awareness of how we support young people #FriendshipFriday #Fundraising

OUR AMAZING VOLUNTEERS

We would love to do Volunteer Appreciation Posts!

Please send in testimonials and photos of activities you have done with your Younger Friend.

This may also inspire others to volunteer!

PLEASE SEND TO:

amrit.bass@friendshipproject.co.uk



Safeguarding

Another year has whizzed by and it remains my pleasure to be the Trustee of the Friendship Project with responsibility for safeguarding and ensuring, along with my fellow Trustees, that we enact our values by placing the welfare of children at the centre of what we do.

We couldn't do what we do without our wonderful volunteers, and it remains my privilege to see so many of them at the safeguarding training sessions I deliver. This year's sessions have been offered both online and face to face. I'm always impressed by how well each and every volunteer engages with these sessions, and I feel confident that volunteers are really clear about the importance of talking to their Area Coordinators about any concerns or worries, whether big or small. If you are a volunteer who has shared a worry, thank you!

How we recruit our volunteers has been under review this year. Safer Recruitment is about ensuring we only recruit people who are suitable to work with children and young people and it's a vital part of creating a safe and positive environment for friendships to blossom, as well as tangibly demonstrating our commitment to keeping children safe. The review of the procedures led to them being re-written into a clearer format and the addition of a preface to make clear our commitment to the safeguarding of children and to ensuring suitability decisions will not be based on factors such as gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation, indeed, we welcome applications from people of all backgrounds! The procedure was also updated to ensure clarity regarding how parents could raise any concerns and to add in a process for ensuring Younger Friends can talk to someone they feel comfortable with if they aren't enjoying their outings.

The Local Authority Designated Officer, or 'LADO', is responsible for dealing with concerns about adults who work with children. We consulted with the LADO about aspects of our recruitment procedure and were pleased to have our processes described as 'robust'. The LADO offered advice about being more explicit about the fact we will undertake 'rigorous checks' and we updated the policy accordingly.

Over the next year, I plan to review the training needs of our Area Coordinators: There are lots of changes going on within Local Authorities at the moment and I want our Area Coordinators to remain confident in knowing where to turn for information and support.

As ever, if you have questions, comments, or feedback on any aspect of our safeguarding procedures or policies, get in touch!

Esther Jones

Future Events

We really hope to see you at some of our events this year!

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

If you have any questions with regards to these events, or ideas for future events, please feel free to contact:

karen.hoy@friendshipproject.co.uk

It is also worth mentioning that we have 2 events that are being used as fundraisers for us.

16 May – Mamma Mia Sing-Along by Leamington Rotary

25 May – Sing it Loud concert.

Younger Friend Events:-

20 April – Fishing Event

18 May – Fishing Event

13 July – Lucky Tails

Alpaca Event

28 September – Craft Event

Nov/Dec – Xmas Party
TBC

All events which are not yet booked will be communicated as soon as they are booked.

Volunteer Events:-

9 January – Zoom

Safeguarding training part 1

6 January – Zoom

Safeguarding training part 2

6 February – Zoom

Safeguarding refresher training

14 May - Zoom Safeguarding training part 1

21 May - Zoom Safeguarding training part 2

6 June – AGM at 7pm via Zoom. Contact:

karen.hoy@friendshipproject.co.uk to register

18 June - Zoom Safeguarding refresher training

We hold Volunteer Get-togethers every few months. We will communicate dates as soon as they are booked.