



NEWSLETTER

2025/26 – 40th Anniversary Edition - Issue 29



Chairman's Introduction

This is a very exciting year for the charity as we are celebrating our Ruby 40th Anniversary! It is a magnificent achievement to have reached this milestone, helping over 1500 local Coventry & Warwickshire children over the years. It has only been possible with the dedication of our Volunteers, Funders, Operations Team and Trustees.

Within the Newsletter we bring you a little of our history and some fantastic examples of the children in need that we support. The children are referred to us from local schools or children's services and we support them through our brilliant volunteers and team. Our Newsletter includes pictures and stories about volunteer activities with our Younger Friends over the last 12 months and case studies of our friendships, plus there is news about what we have been doing with regards to fundraising as well as updates from our Operations Team and Trustees. This all helps to bring our charity alive on each page, so that you can see how valuable your organisation's contributions are.

In the wider world there are some extremely difficult times for young people impacted by war, regimes, and political uncertainty, often without thought of the impact on those most vulnerable. This additionally brings further economic uncertainty and pressure, which does not help an already challenged third sector. We are seeing established, long-standing charities unable to continue

owing to lack of funds and we are not immune to this. Bids for monies we make are regularly oversubscribed, with success frequently quoted by grant funders as no better than 1 in 8, whereas previously we were looking at above 50%. We are continuing to diversify our funding streams where possible and very much appreciate funders who are forward thinking giving multiyear funding including core costs. If you can nominate us to any local businesses or organisations looking for a charity of the year, or to actively engage with a small local charity in Warwickshire then please let me know. Additionally, please do highlight any additional funding streams that might be helpful to us. We are a charity that is heavily volunteer focused, with only a small essential Operations Team of dedicated part-time employees, with important roles in recruitment, training, matching, supervision and support.

I would like to say an enormous thank you to the funders, companies, organisations and individuals who have supported us in the last twelve months. Without you we would not be able to deliver the invaluable early help needed to local disadvantaged young people.

Our AGM is at 7pm on Wednesday 10th June on Zoom. We would be delighted if you are able to attend. Please register with karen.hoy@friendshipproject.co.uk and you will be sent joining instructions.

Please do come along with your families and friends to our 40th Anniversary celebration event on 20th June. There are more details on the next page and at the back of this Newsletter.

Finally, I give my personal thanks to our fantastic team of Volunteers, Older Friends, Group Supporters, Trustees, and all those that contribute their services and time to help sustain our charity.

Cheryll Rawbone - Chairman - cheryll.rawbone@friendshipproject.co.uk

A look back over the last 40 years, by Cheryll Rawbone

Where my journey began 40+ years ago with the Friendship Project for Children

It does not seem over 40 years since the late Charles Raeburn recruited me as Hon Secretary for the pilot project, Friendship Project for Children. This was a couple of years before it became a registered charity on 12th May 1986. I was working at the local NFU office in Warwick. Charles was a retired FD from Cadbury's and also a local farmer and County Councillor. He was also one of our clients. Charles had a vision of a charity to help local Warwickshire children who were in need to improve their self-esteem, confidence and have some fun, often sadly lacking in their lives. He had seen 'Big Brother/Big Sister' on his travels in the USA and thought that this would work well in the UK. Michael Coker, our President, frequently recounts that he thought it was a "brilliant idea but will never get off the ground." He is extremely happy to say he was wrong!

Charles tragically died in a vehicle accident in Germany in 1992. I am very proud to have been a part of his legacy in helping the charity to continue to operate and to be able to now celebrate our 40th ruby anniversary.

I initially wanted to volunteer as an Older Friend, but Charles had other ideas as his need was for an Hon Secretary. I agreed to do this with support, and it is a role I subsequently held for 25 years. I moved on to be Vice-Chair and then Chairman as my work and family commitments reduced.

Whilst preparing for this article I have read through archive paperwork about the numerous people who have contributed to the charity over the years. I was humbled by their statements and significant contributions. It is difficult to draw out a few to specifically mention, but I feel this should include previous Chairmen whose leadership has been significant: Molly Roberts, David Wright, John Vallis (also Fundraiser for 15 years), Norman Moore, Michael Ridger and John Hancock.

Our first Area Coordinator was Pam Daniel who was with us for 15 years in total, though Fiona Roche, our current Area Coordinator for the Leamington/Warwick area is catching up with 12 years. Val Gough and Peter Muckersie were Group Supporters for 17 years which included running the Warwick University branch, prior to Warwick area volunteers. Also not forgetting Older Friend Joan, who volunteered with us for over 25 years.

We have been fortunate to have had so many volunteers give their time to help local Coventry and Warwickshire children enjoy a positive childhood experience. This may have been as an Older Friend, Group Supporter, Trustee, or giving their expertise on pro bono basis, plus those helping with much needed fundraising efforts. Many of our volunteers continue to keep in touch with their Younger Friends into adulthood, and it would be good if they could provide testimonials now as to the positive impact The Friendship Project had on their lives. We have some, but more would be great please! They are very valuable to us from an evidence and sustainability perspective. Please do contact me about this directly: cheryll.rawbone@friendshipproject.co.uk

Our volunteer efforts have been rewarded by various awards over the years, though the most significant was the Queens Award awarded in summer 2019 and presented at the end of February 2020, just before the COVID pandemic, which presented the biggest health challenge in our lifetime. I am extremely proud of the way in which we pivoted, engaged with our volunteers and continued to keep in touch with our Younger Friends through this period. Also, for the efforts of the Management Team and Trustees in making this happen and ensuring the charity was in a good position to resume full activities post COVID-19.

We are now in a very challenging landscape for fundraising, more so than at any point in our 40 year history.

Our thanks to our funders: including corporate, grant funding, and other local charities and organisations which have helped us to achieve this milestone.

We are looking forward to welcoming both current and previous volunteers, staff, supporters and funders to our 40th Anniversary Celebration Event on Saturday 20th June, 3pm-5pm at Clarion Charlecote Pheasant, CV35 9EW.

There will be fun activities, a BBQ, and of course cake! Please email: karen.hoy@friendshipproject.co.uk by 29th May to let her know if you will be coming along!

There is still much to do, and I feel very privileged to have been a part of the charity since its foundation and to hear the various ways in which we have collectively benefited children's lives.

Moving forward with succession planning for Trustees and future leadership are the next steps, alongside fundraising and recruitment of more volunteers to meet demand on our waiting lists.

Cheryll Rawbone - Chairman - 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

"My Older Friend just understands me. People don't tend to 'get me' but he just does, and I 'get him' too."

"Since I've been seeing my Older Friend I've learnt to understand people better and that they sometimes have different perspectives."

"I get really excited when I know we're going out."

"My Older Friend helps me to calm down if I've had a stressful day."

"I feel happier now and it's given me a chance to do so many different things that I didn't do before."

"My Older Friend listens to me. She's supportive and doesn't judge me."

"I feel more confident and like I can talk to people now which I didn't feel before."

"My Older Friend helps me to find my confidence. He also gives me guidance."

"My Older Friend is so important to me."

"Seeing my Older Friend means that I'm more confident now. Sometimes he makes me feel like I can do anything."

"I like that my Older Friend takes me out and that she's caring and kind."

"If I'm having a bad day it's always good to see my Older Friend."

"The friendship has given me more confidence. I'm a better swimmer because of it. My art skills have got better and my social skills are better now too."

"I like it that my Older Friend listens to me. A lot of people talk over me, but she never does that."

"I just like it that my Older Friend understands me and listens to me."

"I don't really have friends as I don't particularly feel that I have much in common with others my age. I feel like I can talk to her as a friend as well as her being my Older Friend."

Younger Friends

The number of children that we support is constantly changing. We currently have 64 children aged between 6 and 16 that have an Older Friend.

The children enjoy a variety of activities with their Older Friends such as going to the park, cycling, walking, arts and crafts and going to the cinema.



2025 Events

As always, we had a varied calendar of events throughout the year for both Older Friends and Younger Friends.

January

- Zoom Safeguarding Training

February

- Zoom Safeguarding Training
- Volunteer Get Together (Zoom)

March

- Volunteer Get Together

April

- CPR Training
- Tennis Event

May

- Zoom Safeguarding Training
- Canal Boat Trip

June

- AGM Zoom
- Volunteer Get Together

July

- Wizard of Oz Trip
- Cream Teas Fundraiser
- Alpaca Event

September

- Craft Event
- Charity Fun Day
- Volunteer Get Together

October

- Safeguarding Training

November

- Volunteer Get Together
- Warwick Castle Light Trail

December

- Pantomime Trip

With thanks to Newdigate Arms, Bedworth, Brewers Fayre, Rugby and Oakley Grange Care Home for providing a base for our Volunteer Get Togethers.

Tennis Event

The children and their Older Friends had a wonderful tennis coaching session at Leamington Lawn Tennis and Squash Club. It was the first time that many of the children had played tennis and they really enjoyed the new experience. The Event was sponsored by Jessica's Promise, who we were very grateful to.



Canal Boat Trip

A small group boarded The Hargreaves National Trust boat for a leisurely trip from Nuneaton, Bridge Street to Springwood Haven Marina, located near Nuneaton. All of the children who wanted a go to steer the boat had the chance to with the expert guidance from the captain (a volunteer for The Hargreaves Narrowboat Trust). We had lunch on the boat and as the weather was so lovely we stopped for a while to buy an ice cream! The children had fun playing with each other and the Older Friends enjoyed chatting with their Younger Friends and the other volunteers. It was a lovely relaxing trip.

Here is some feedback from an Older Friend on the trip with his Younger Friend M:

"It was exactly the right sort of event for M. He struggles at school and in his village to fit in and to make friends. Today, having a number of other children of a similar age all together in a limited space was a chance for him to fit in, be part of a group and have a very positive experience. He came out of the day feeling very happy and very good about himself."



Alpaca Event

For the second year running we visited Lucky Tails Alpacas in Hurley, Atherstone. We met rabbits, guinea pigs, tortoises, pigs, goats, chickens, meerkats, ferrets, ducks and donkeys. We were able to sit in the meerkat enclosure to feed them which was a real highlight for the children. We finished off by walking some alpacas who we soon found out all have very different personalities!



Charity Fun Day



We were delighted when volunteers Lynsey and John offered to hold a Charity Fun Day at their Equestrian Farm to raise funds for us. Although it was originally due to be an outdoor event, the typical British weather meant we had to hold it in their eventing arena on the day due to wind and rain, after already having to postpone it previously because of a heatwave!

John, Lynsey and Friendship Project Area Coordinator Kate did a wonderful job of arranging everything to ensure the day ran smoothly. There was also a raffle, that due to the generosity of local businesses, helped us to raise money leading up to the event.

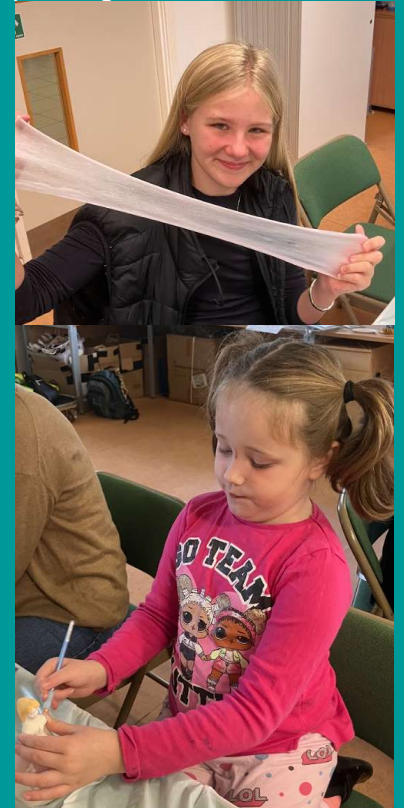
One of the highlights was having Nicky and her team from www.soundhounds.co.uk there running dog shows throughout the day. The shows, which included a prize for the 'best sausage catcher,' attracted many visitors who also enjoyed looking around the varied stalls on offer, including an outside bar from the Clarendon Arms in Kenilworth.

The fun day raised £2402.07 for us!



Craft Event

In September we held our Annual Craft Event at War Memorial Park in Coventry. The children did drawing, pottery painting, made their own slime and pebble painting.



Christmas Party

This year we went to Warwick Castle to see the wonderful light trail there. It was a huge success, with one Younger Friend exclaiming, "Now that's what I call Christmas!" when first seeing the lights.



What others have been doing for us

In January 2025 we received £500 from www.speechtherapywarwickshire.com for winning a duck race arranged by Kenilworth Lions on Boxing Day.



In March 2025 Trustee Esther ran a bread-making morning. She said it was, "really relaxing and the attendees were very pleased with their achievements – taking home a white loaf and focaccia and we had lots of time for cups of tea and chatting." £60 was raised.



Five Star Theatre that perform at Benn Hall in Rugby often offer us complimentary tickets to their performances. After watching a show an Older Friend said, "M loves to dance & sing so she could imagine herself on stage doing the same. The production was very good!"

In March 2025 O'Brien Contractors Ltd donated £4,000 to us through their charity fundraising foundation. This funding was used to sponsor 4 specific children in need in Warwickshire for the following 12 months. We thank them for their support.



Solicitors <https://www.manderhadley.co.uk/> have supported us by choosing us as their 'Charity of the Year.' They have raised money with cake sales, a bake off, Christmas Jumper Day, a raffle and much more.



In October 2025 Aubrey Allen donated £2750. They give a percentage of their profits every year to worthwhile causes.

Dunelm (Davenport Warehouse) donated presents for Younger Friends in North Warwickshire and Rugby for their 'Delivering Joy' campaign.

Free Cakes for Kids often provide cakes for our events and also on Younger Friends' Birthdays.

Make Good Grow provided us with free training and also donated some used laptops which in turn we offered to our Younger Friends.

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.....

Broadwell Flower Show supported us by giving us a cheque for £600.

We received a £500 grant from Tesco Stronger Starts token scheme in Bedworth, Atherstone and Nuneaton.

Leycester House Care Home donated Easter Eggs which were passed on to our Younger Friends.

Older Friend Chris kindly donated a bike to a child in need. Don't they look happy!



In October 2025 we received the huge amount of £10,000 from Severn Trent Community Fund.

NFU Mutual in Stratford Upon Avon donated gifts for the children who came to our Christmas Event at the Warwick Castle Light Train. They also gave some money towards the ticket costs.

We received a £250 donation from Idverde in December 2025.

Law Firm **Weightmans LLP in Birmingham** who kindly printed our Guidelines for our volunteers.

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

Peter Pan Pantomime at The Royal Spa Centre, Leamington



We were lucky enough to be picked as the chosen charity to support at the Peter Pan Pantomime in the Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa in 2025.

We had over 80 volunteers in total for the month collecting money at the end of each performance. Without these volunteers we would not have **raised the huge amount of £13,741.41!**

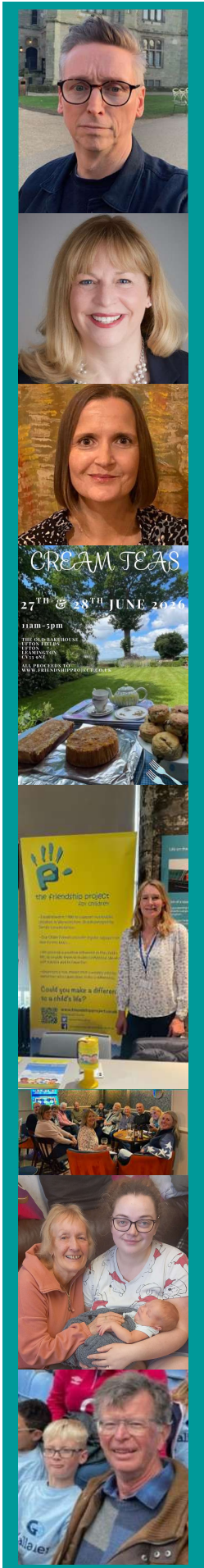
For a small charity like us this exposure was amazing. We have even recruited a new Older Friend who was one of the audience!

On the final day of the pantomime, 23 Younger Friends watched the show with their Older Friends. They had a backstage tour and a 'meet the actors' session beforehand. One of our Younger Friends even had the opportunity to go up on stage with the pantomime dame and her sidekick for some fun during the show!

One of our Older Friends gave us some lovely feedback: "The show was brilliant and we both have so many memories of a great experience. You and the rest of the Friendship Project team undoubtedly put in a huge effort to organise it for us...well done, much appreciated."



Trustee & Operations Team News



Co-opted Trustee - Marketing - James Cheetham

James joined us in Autumn 2025. He brings over 20 years' experience of marketing for a range of businesses from Financial Services, Retail and Leisure. He brings a deep understanding of how to best communicate and engage with different audiences. His aim is for as many people to know about The Friendship Project as possible and to want to then get involved just as he has.

Trustee - Honorary Secretary - Rachel Hodge

Rachel has joined us as a Trustee after having previously been an Older Friend. She has seen first-hand the significant and lasting impact these friendships can have for both younger and older participants and has developed a strong understanding of the charity's purpose and values. Rachel continues to mentor her former Younger Friend, now 19, and they still meet on a weekly basis.

Rachel brings over 30 years' experience in marketing and communications. Rachel is keen to use both her professional expertise and lived experience of the Project to support strong governance, clear communications, and the charity's long-term sustainability.

Trustee - Honorary Treasurer Designate - Cheryl Jackson

Cheryl brings further finance knowledge to the charity. She first became aware of The Friendship Project in 2018. Her daughter was only 7 years old at that time, so although she wanted to volunteer, she didn't feel able to commit to being an Older Friend. Cheryl is delighted to have now found a different way to support us. Cheryl lost her own amazing mum in December 2024. Her mum gave her an amazing childhood, full of love, support and encouragement and Rachel thinks it is an honour to volunteer for a charity that puts children and their childhood at the heart of everything we do.

Jon Gibbons has said farewell to The Friendship Project. He became an Older Friend with us in 2017, and we then welcomed him as a Trustee in 2018. **Pat Miller** has also stepped down as Trustee Older Friend Representative but continues to be a valued Older Friend to C. We thank them for their dedication as Trustees over the years. Welcome to Older Friend **Mary Keane** as our new Older Friend Representative.

Cream Teas

Area Coordinator Fiona Roche has held a Cream Tea event for the last few years to run alongside her partner Carl's Open Studios Exhibition (Light by Night Photography). Guests are treated not only to lovely cakes and tea, but also Icelandic sheep in a pen to stroke and garden games to play. In 2025 £528 was raised for us!

The 2026 Cream Teas will be on 27/28 June 2026, 11am-5pm.

Volunteer Events

We regularly attend volunteering fairs in order to promote The Friendship Project and to recruit volunteers. If you or anyone you know are interesting in volunteering, the volunteer fairs are definitely worth a visit. Do come and say hello if you attend one that we're at! An excellent volunteering website to look on is www.wcava.org.uk

Volunteer Get Togethers

Our regular Volunteer Get Togethers offer a relaxed social setting to discuss experiences and maybe even find a few hints and tips. The Area Coordinators regularly arrange the Get Togethers and all volunteers are always welcome, along with anyone else interested in becoming a volunteer for us.

Pictured left is Area Coordinator Kate Meek at a Get Together in Bedworth in March 2025.

Congratulations to former Younger Friend C

Volunteer and Ops Team member Judy was an Older Friend to C from 2009 until 2018. They have always kept in touch since, and C often pops along to our events to say hello. It has been a pleasure to see her grow into the wonderful young adult that she is today. Judy was delighted to see C and her newborn baby recently and is looking forward to her 'unofficial Aunty' journey over the coming years!

Older Friend John

We were shocked and saddened when our wonderful volunteer John died so suddenly. He was the most amazing volunteer, and he had been a wonderful Older Friend to C for 5 and a half years. He was such a gentle, kind man who was very well respected in The Friendship Project. We were honoured when his family chose us to receive a share of the donations from his funeral. Both we, and his Younger Friend miss him very much.

With grateful thanks to those who donated in 2025

We are extremely grateful to all our grant funders, corporate and individual donors and those who supported us in 2025 through grants and a range of large and small donations. We would also like to thank our cash and QR code donors where the details of the donor are not always known.

- ✓ 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust
- ✓ Albert Hunt Trust
- ✓ Anne Bedford
- ✓ Anonymous donors
- ✓ Anthony Bourne Foundation
- ✓ Aubrey Allen
- ✓ Baron Davenports
- ✓ Bates Trust Claverdon
- ✓ Brian Murtagh Charitable Trust
- ✓ Bridgetown WI
- ✓ Broadwell Flower Association
- ✓ Bulkington WI
- ✓ Charities Aid Foundation
- ✓ Charities Trust
- ✓ Coventry & District Midweek Cricket League
- ✓ Develop Warwickshire Vistry
- ✓ Edward Cadbury Charitable Trust
- ✓ F C Stokes Trust
- ✓ Garfield Weston
- ✓ Groundwork UK - Tesco
- ✓ Guys Cliff Masonic Lodge
- ✓ Heart of England Community Foundation - 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust
- ✓ Heart of England Community Foundation - Coventry, Solihull, Warwickshire Fund
- ✓ Heart of England Community Foundation - Dulverton Trust
- ✓ James Lambell Chase
- ✓ Jessica's Promise
- ✓ Just Giving
- ✓ Kenilworth Lions
- ✓ King Henry VIII Endowed Trust Warwick
- ✓ Leamington & District Lions - Santa Sleigh
- ✓ Leamington Spa Town Council
- ✓ Long Marston WI
- ✓ Masonic Charitable Foundation
- ✓ Mr & Mrs D E Owen
- ✓ Much loved
- ✓ NFU Mutual
- ✓ Nuneaton & Bedworth Council
- ✓ O'Brien Charitable Trust
- ✓ Payroll Charity Giving
- ✓ Pebworth WI
- ✓ Severn Trent Community Fund
- ✓ Sing it Loud
- ✓ Southam Lions - Santa Sleigh
- ✓ Stratford Municipal Charities
- ✓ Sue Weetman
- ✓ The Leathersellers
- ✓ Warwick Woodloes Townswomen Guild
- ✓ WCC Councillor Fund
- ✓ William Cadbury Charitable Trust

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!



easyfundraising

Turn your online shopping into everyday magic for Friendship Project for Children with easyfundraising. You shop, brands donate to us. It won't cost you any extra!

How to sign up

Scan the QR code

or visit: <http://efraising.org/HPKzAh2X9>

Download the easyfundraising App

Google Play App Store

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



Mary's Older Friend Story



I have been volunteering for The Friendship Project since 2022 after I learnt about the work they do on social media. I had previously worked in a nursery, school and in community support.

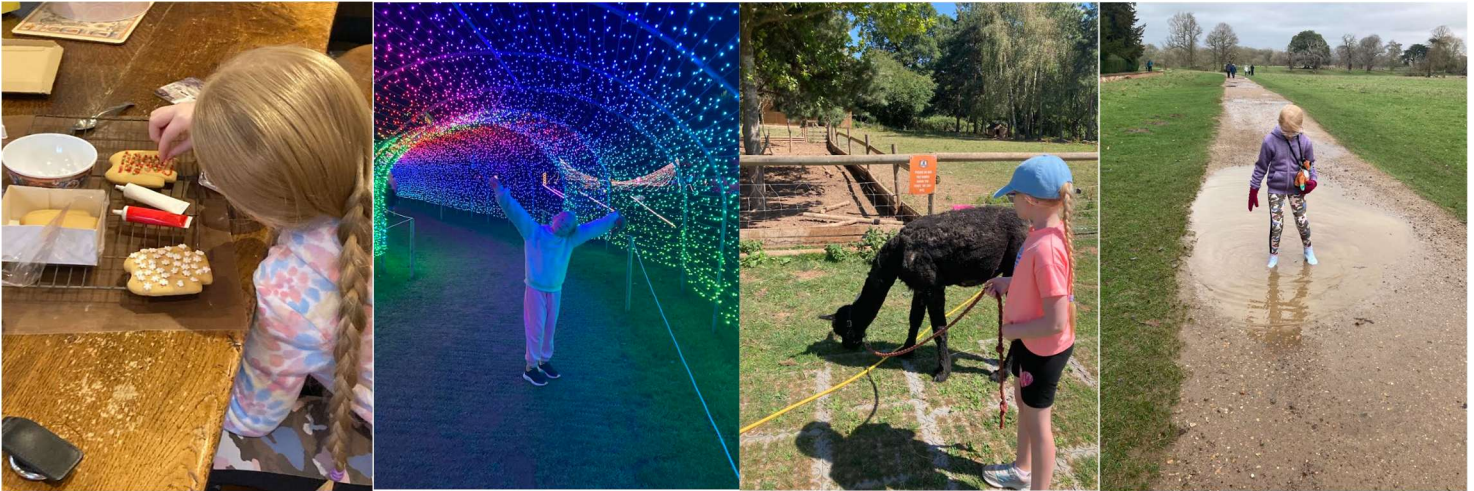
Once I had gone through the interview process and relevant training and checks, I met my Younger Friend A with her Mum at her school where we chatted about the types of activities that she enjoyed. I noticed that she was a quiet girl with a lovely smile. Our first outing was to a horse stables where she had a go on a mechanical horse. She was the youngest there and really enjoyed it, coming away from it wanting to have a horse herself! Over the years we have gone on many trips including Cadbury World, where we enjoyed playing with (and eating) all the chocolate! Some Sundays she likes to come to church with me and enjoys the singing. A's confidence has grown so much since I've known her and I'm happy that I've been able to help with that in some way.

For the last 5 months I've also been an Older Friend to A's brother, M. It was strange at first to think of interests for a boy as I was used to doing girly things with A. We've chatted about his interests though, and we seem to be doing ok. We went to the Coventry Transport Museum which he found interesting, seeing things like the Penny Farthing. We wondered, "How would you get on it?" We went on the Thrust Simulator which he really enjoyed. I think he likes thrills as I took him and his sister to Drayton Manor recently and he wanted to go on all the rides! Luckily some were not open, which was good for me!

I've thoroughly enjoyed these past 4 years and I hope to see A and M do well in the future.



Tanya's Older Friend Story



Life felt a little quiet when my kids left home and I was no longer volunteering at a nearby primary school. So, when I saw an advert for The Friendship Project, I thought, "What a great idea to liven up my life and allow another child to experience new opportunities."

I met A a year ago and we have had great fun together, initially visiting parks and then walking my dog, and jumping in puddles at every opportunity (she definitely likes wet feet much more than me), feeding our hens and being outside as long as it is warm enough. We both particularly enjoy seeing the deer at Charlecote Park followed by an ice cream or cake. She even now asks which is the longest way back to the car so that we spend more time together with the dog.

We have baked cakes and biscuits and we have attempted craft projects with varying success on both our parts and with a lot of laughter at our results. We have knitted together and we are currently making a scarf for one of her teddies, and we have made fluffy felt pumpkins at Halloween. On wetter days we have both enjoyed Saturday morning cinema trips.

She is now very adept at using the bread maker and I am told that our cheese and bacon flatbreads are nearly as good as McDonalds. High praise!

We have both also really enjoyed the Friendship Project group events. The tennis stretched my skill set at least and the ice lollies were very welcome on a hot day and we went home happily exhausted. A absolutely loved the Alpaca Farm with our stubborn animal which was unkeen on following the others, and reminiscing makes us giggle still. A New Year trip to the BFG at the RSC was a real highlight of the year and we hope for future theatre trips in the years ahead.

Recently we completed a scrap book of our first year together and it was so lovely seeing her remember the outings and reminiscing about all the things we have done together so far.

We look forward to many more meet ups in the years ahead.



Catherine's Older Friend Story



I first heard about The Friendship Project more than ten years ago. It sounded wonderful, but I didn't have much free time until a couple of years ago, when I finally felt ready to commit. That's when I was matched with F—a little whirlwind of energy and curiosity—and our adventure began!

We met at her school just a few weeks before her sixth birthday and there was an instant connection – we bonded over our love of cheese, dogs and swimming.

A couple of weeks later after her birthday celebrations, we went on our first outing which was a stroll around Warwick, a peek into the museum and lunch at a café. F was a little shy, as most six-year-olds are, but her excitement to meet again the following week told me we were off to a good start. One summer day, we headed to St Nicholas Park. grey skies didn't dampen the fun, though I wasn't quite expecting a paddling pool detour! F didn't hesitate—she kicked off her shoes and socks, waded straight in and promptly lay down, fully clothed, pretending to swim for a full 20 minutes! With no towel in sight, an old picnic blanket from my car and a cranked-up heater saved the day. Luckily, her mum Amy had a great sense of humour about the adventure and we planned a proper swimming trip the following week.

Over the last 18 months, F and I have done everything from exploring Hatton Farm Park to building dens at Ryton Pools. Swimming sessions followed by café treats are always a hit, but we also love wandering Leamington's parks, visiting the art gallery and even checking out the games café.

F is bursting with energy, curiosity and has a fantastic sense of humour. She's grown so much in confidence, physical skills, and social awareness—from conquering Clip 'n' Climb and Air Hop to making friends wherever we go.

Together, we've joined Friendship Project events like craft sessions, the Warwick Castle Christmas lights and the recent Tennis Club gathering.

Sometimes F visits my home for her to see the dogs, play in the garden, or do crafty things or baking. She used to be shy around my family, but now she teases us all with confidence and delight.

F is a breath of fresh air. Her curiosity and positivity are contagious, and she has opened my eyes to new joys and discoveries.

Being part of her life has been a true gift and we're both looking forward to lots more fun in the months and (hopefully) years to come.



Dagmara's Older Friend Story



For some time before starting with The Friendship Project, I felt a growing desire to commit to voluntary work.

As a support worker, I spend most of my time with adults and I realised how much I was missing the energy and perspective that young people bring.

A is the first person I've been matched with, and looking back now, I can't imagine not having her in my life.

At the beginning, I was a little unsure whether she would warm up to me, but she has been incredibly open and welcoming. It didn't take long for us to build a genuine friendship.

Very naturally, we began spending time together—trying new things, exploring different activities, and simply enjoying each other's company.

I wouldn't consider anything I've done to be particularly remarkable, if it weren't for the changes I've noticed such as how excited she is for our visits, how her curiosity and confidence continue to grow, and the many words of gratitude I've received from her Mum.

Of course, there's a real sense of fulfilment in seeing a young person flourish, but the credit truly belongs to my Younger Friend—for being such a wonderful person and making every moment we spend together a joy.

Here are some of the things we've done and the goals we've achieved:

Learning from each other

This isn't a one-way experience—I'm growing as a person and learning just as much from her. A is a real film aficionado, so we often find ourselves chatting about cinematography and sharing our perspectives. Spider Man is her all-time favourite.

Opening up to new experiences (including culinary ones)

During a visit to a local vegan café, A discovered a love for tofu-egg sandwiches—and she's been dreaming about them ever since.

Making the most of our local community

Our outings are not just about spending time together—they're also an opportunity for my Younger Friend to meet like-minded people and discover what she truly enjoys.

Building a friendship for a lifetime

And this is only the beginning—there are many more wonderful memories still to come...



Could you be an Older Friend?

Here is some feedback from a regular referrer showing the positive impact that you could have on a child in need.

If you are thinking of volunteering for us, or feel that you would like to know more, please contact karen.hoy@friendshipproject.co.uk for more information.

Some key facts about being an Older Friend:

- We work with children in need aged 6-16 throughout Warwickshire
- The Younger Friend is a child who would benefit from a break from their personal situation
- Our Older Friend volunteers have regular meetings with a child for 1-2-1 time
- As an Older Friend, you are reimbursed mileage, plus up to £14 per outing for the Younger Friend's expenses
- We give you safeguarding training, guidance and support
- You would need an Enhanced DBS check (which we pay for) and ideally have your own car to take the child out
- We ask for a minimum commitment of 6 months in this role to allow some continuity for the child



To The Friendship Project Team,

I am writing to express my heartfelt appreciation for the incredible work you do to support our young people.

The Friendship Project is not just a service — it is a lifeline. Your volunteers create a safe, supportive environment where young people who may feel vulnerable, isolated, or unsure of themselves are given the opportunity to grow in confidence and flourish as a young person.

Many of the young people we have referred with face a range of challenges. This can include special educational needs, mental health difficulties, struggles with leaving the home, or uncertainty around how to interact with peers. Some of our young people may also be supported through local authority services where there is a higher level of support needed.

What makes your work so impactful is the way you meet these young people where they are, without judgment, and gently support them to take meaningful steps forward.

Through your dedication, you help build trust, confidence, and a sense of belonging. You provide young people with the tools they need to develop independence, form relationships, and learn how to engage within society — all of which are essential for their future.

The impact of your work cannot be overstated. You are helping to shape brighter, more independent futures for young people who need it most.

Thank you for your commitment, your compassion, and the genuine difference you make every single day.


Kindest Regards
Joedie Bradgate
Deputy safeguarding Lead

Rugby Free Secondary School
A: Anderson Avenue, Rugby, Warwickshire, CV22 5PE
E: info@rugbyfreesecondary.co.uk
W: www.rugbyfreesecondary.co.uk
T: 01788 222060



Social Media and Marketing

HOW CAN YOU HELP?




PLEASE FOLLOW, LIKE, COMMENT & SHARE
Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram.
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 #smallcharity #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

Safeguarding remains the utmost priority for The Friendship Project and it's been my pleasure to be leading this for another year, along with my fellow Trustees.

This year, we compiled a Safeguarding Risk Assessment for the work of The Project. This document sets out all the potential Safeguarding risks and how we, as a project, seek to mitigate them. Although the Risk Assessment contained nothing new – it essentially pulled together the various policies and procedures into one coherent document, and it provided an opportunity to reflect on how much Safeguarding is built into everything we do. The Risk Assessment also sought to 'RAG' rate each of the risks i.e. apply a 'red', 'amber' or 'green' rating to indicate how serious or likely each potential risk is.

Unsurprisingly, our volunteers feature heavily in the Risk Assessment and this is where the various policies and procedures come into play: Our recruitment processes, the training requirements, the guidance on what to do if something happens on an outing, the mobile phone policy etc. The fact that our volunteers engage with these policies and take them so seriously is part of what makes them one of our biggest assets.

It's always an absolute pleasure for me to meet our volunteers, new and old, at the Safeguarding training sessions and I'm always impressed by how much they have absorbed already from their induction training. And then, to those volunteers who end up making contact with us to share a worry, whether big or small, I am extremely thankful. Having a conversation about concerns is so important.

Of course, our Safeguarding practice would be nothing without the dedication of the paid Operations Team, who make it all happen. I am always so thankful for their ongoing commitment to safeguarding and improving practice.

If you have questions, comments, or feedback on any aspect of our safeguarding procedures or policies, do get in touch. Esther.jones@friendshipproject.co.uk

Future Events

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

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

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

karen.hoy@friendshipproject.co.uk

Younger Friend Events

January

4 - Peter Pan Pantomime

March

21 - Tennis Event

April

1 - Coventry City FC Tour

June

13 - Hatton Adventure World Event

July

4 - Hargreaves Boat Trip

September

6 - Hargreaves Boat Trip

26 - Annual Craft Event

Nov/Dec

Christmas Event TBC

Volunteer Events

January

20 - Safeguarding Zoom Training – part 1

27 - Safeguarding Zoom Training – part 2

February

3 - Safeguarding Zoom Refresher Training

5 - Volunteer Zoom Get Together

April

29 - Volunteer Get Together in Rugby

May

14 - Safeguarding Zoom Training – part 1

20 - Volunteer Get Together in Stratford

21 - Safeguarding Zoom Training – part 2

June

4 - Safeguarding Zoom Refresher Training

10 - AGM on Zoom

27 - Cream Teas

28 - Cream Teas



The poster features a large green archway with the text '40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION' in white. Inside the arch, the words 'Fun Day' are written in a large, yellow, cursive font. Above 'Fun Day' is the logo for 'the friendship project for children', which includes a stylized hand icon. Below 'Fun Day', the text 'BBQ FOOD & FUN ACTIVITIES' is written in bold, black, uppercase letters. Underneath that, a smaller line of text reads 'Help us to celebrate, make memories, and enjoy a wide range of fun-filled activities'. The date and time '20 JUNE 3PM-5PM' are prominently displayed in large, bold, yellow letters. The background of the poster is a vibrant illustration of a park scene with people, balloons, and a man in a top hat juggling. At the bottom, a green banner contains the location information: 'FIELD AT REAR OF: CLARION CHARLECOTE PHEASANT HOTEL, CHARLECOTE RD, CHARLECOTE, WARWICKSHIRE, CV35 9EW'. Below the banner, a yellow bar contains the RSVP information: 'RSVP by 29 May to: karen.hoy@friendshipproject.co.uk'.

40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

the friendship project
for children

Fun Day

BBQ FOOD & FUN ACTIVITIES

Help us to celebrate, make memories, and enjoy a wide range of fun-filled activities

**20 JUNE
3PM-5PM**

**FIELD AT REAR OF: CLARION CHARLECOTE PHEASANT HOTEL,
CHARLECOTE RD, CHARLECOTE, WARWICKSHIRE, CV35 9EW**

RSVP by 29 May to: karen.hoy@friendshipproject.co.uk

Our 40th Anniversary Celebrations!

If you are reading this Newsletter, chances are that you have had some sort of link to The Friendship Project either in the past or present day. We would therefore be delighted if you would join us to celebrate 40 years since we were established! All we ask is that you email karen.hoy@friendshipproject.co.uk to confirm your attendance. We look forward to seeing as many of you there as possible! We will also be having a Christmas 40th Anniversary concert on 5th December – more details to follow on this one!

Trustee Recruitment

In the next 12 months we are looking to recruit a Trustee for the following role:

- QA/Compliance

If you would be interested and would like to chat about what is involved, please contact **Cheryll Rawbone – Chairman** cheryll.rawbone@friendshipproject.co.uk