

# Making Friends



## Project

We all need friends to surround and support us throughout life but for people with learning disabilities this need is often overlooked. According to the Foundation for People with learning disabilities, "People with learning disabilities tend to have very few friends, though when asked about friendship they attach great importance to this and are often aware of their own limited social networks and consequent social isolation." ([www.learningdisabilities.org.uk](http://www.learningdisabilities.org.uk)).

Research conducted specifically to investigate this problem (Caulfield and Fraser, 2006) established that people with a learning disability felt that having friends was important to them. Most said they had friends but there was confusion around the definition of a friend – some viewed the relationship between themselves and their support worker as a friendship and some identified family members as friends. Those people attending a day centre appeared to be more successful in maintaining and sustaining friendships but this did not extend to having enough opportunity or confidence to continue friendships out with the centre. Some cited lack of support hours as a difficulty.

The findings concluded that the barriers to friendship that adults with a learning disability face are physical, attitudinal and financial. Overwhelmingly people said they needed support to overcome these barriers; meet new people, make contact, and stay in touch

My name is Heather Sinclair and I am the Making Friends Project dedicated Local Area Co-ordinator. The project is in its infancy but presently members are being invited to join the project so that we can identify how to support people in their friendships. If any particular activities are requested by several members then attempts to organise group outings involving such activities will be made in the hope that natural introductions and friendships can be formed. The project also hopes to help members reconnect with old friends where contact has diminished for whatever reason.

Application forms for membership of the project are available. If you know of anyone with a Learning Disability you feel may benefit from this service please do not hesitate to contact me.

The Project would also very gratefully receive any volunteers who feel they can assist and support members to make and maintain friendships.

For more information or an application pack please contact me

Heather Sinclair  
Local Area Coordinator  
Beardmore Business Centre  
Tel 0141 562 2476/ 07500 782 432  
Email [heather.sinclair@west-dunbarton.gov.uk](mailto:heather.sinclair@west-dunbarton.gov.uk)