

THE FRIENDSHIP PROJECT

England & Wales · Charity number 517684

Details

Other names	THE FRIENDSHIP PROJECT FOR CHILDREN
Status	Registered
Legal form	Other
Registered	1986-05-18
Register	View on the Charity Commission register

Contact

Address	20 Northumberland Road Leamington Spa CV32 6HA
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Website	www.friendshipproject.co.uk

Activities

Objects: TO PROVIDE FACILITIES FOR THE SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL TRAINING OF CHILDREN PARTICULARLY DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN BETWEEN THE AGES OF 6 AND 16 YEARS WHO BY REASON OF THEIR SOCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES ARE IN NEED OF DEVELOPING SOCIAL SKILLS BY SUCH MEANS AS THE PROJECT THINKS FIT INCLUDING THE ORGANISATION OF CONTACTS BETWEEN SUCH CHILDREN AND RELIABLE OLDER PERSONS ABLE TO HELP THEM DEVELOP SUCH SKILLS.

Activities: Supports disadvantaged children in need by 121 weekly meetings of 2/3 hours with an 'older friend', who is a volunteer. The child may have their own problems or the child may be in a family or care, that make it more difficult for the child to thrive. Aim is to improve the child's self esteem, allow them to have some fun and build confidence, plus widen their experience in a safe supported way.

Classification

- **How:** Provides Human Resources, Other Charitable Activities
- **What:** General Charitable Purposes, Education/training, Disability, Amateur Sport, Other Charitable Purposes
- **Who:** Children/young People, People With Disabilities

Geography

- Coventry City
- Warwickshire

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2024-12-31	£95,752	£94,575	-	-
2023-12-31	£78,054	£92,762	-	-
2022-12-31	£67,629	£78,349	-	-
2021-12-31	£63,366	£59,605	-	-
2020-12-31	£55,878	£55,203	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
MRS CHERYLL RAWBONE	Chair	1986-05-12
Ashima Rani Chander		2022-06-16
Cheryl Stephanie Jackson		2026-02-11
Esther Jones		2019-11-21
Ken Smith Treasurer		2019-01-23
Mr Chris Buck Webmaster and IT		
Nishi Mehta		2023-11-23
Patricia Miller		2022-02-17
RICHARD MARK BARRETT		2017-08-17
Rachel Hodge Hon Sec		2026-02-11

THE FRIENDSHIP PROJECT

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Accounts



the friendship project
for children

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Published in June 2025



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INTRODUCTION

This report reflects our achievements during 2024 and our plans for 2025.

Our thanks go to the many volunteers, employees, funders, and supporters for helping children over the last 12 months, enabling them to have some much-needed fun, aiding their personal development, confidence, and improving their self-esteem, and in particular coping with their new challenges.

Additionally, I would like to thank the contributors to this report which helps give an insight into the work undertaken by members of our Operations team, fellow trustees, plus importantly some case studies to help show the impact and difference that we and more importantly our volunteers are making.

The overall purpose of the Friendship Project is to improve the social and emotional well-being of children, aged 6-16, disadvantaged by virtue of their own or family circumstances. An Older Friend provides experiences lacking in the child's life, builds a trusting relationship and raises the self-esteem of their Younger Friend. Volunteers, over the age of 18, are drawn from Warwickshire communities and come from all walks of life. They are carefully vetted as to their suitability, including enhanced DBS checks.

Volunteers meet with their Younger Friends weekly for between 2-3 hours to be involved in mutually enjoyable and jointly planned activities and visits. Examples include playing in the park, building dens, craft activities, cooking, fishing, bird watching, climbing, golf, sewing, library, swimming, cinema, growing vegetables etc., which their school contemporaries frequently take for granted.

Volunteers maintain that the 1:1 attention, with the capacity for the child to talk to a listening adult, is the most valuable aspect of the activity. Such activities are at the heart of what the Project does.

The average length of a friendship is 2.5/3 years and over time the Younger Friend gradually becomes more open and confident in discussing worries and concerns about family, school, friends and themselves. Older Friends offer support and, increasingly, guidance on more sensitive and personal issues. This has helped Younger Friends gain a better understanding of their problems; develop better relationships with family members; and cope more positively with challenging situations at school.

Positive feedback and encouragement, invariably missing in the child's life, is a constant feature of the weekly activities and of major importance in raising self-esteem. This usually results in the young people developing new enjoyable interests and acquiring a wider range of skills, in a safe environment.

Volunteers enjoy the company of their Younger Friends and going to places they would not otherwise go to. They enjoy providing new experiences and knowing they are trusted confidante but, above all, they gain satisfaction from seeing their Younger Friend develop socially and personally.

One-to-one befriending carries a potential risk in relation to child protection. Safeguarding procedures, in relation to recruitment, vetting, briefing, training and supervision of volunteers are given the highest priority and kept under constant review with Children's Services. The Friendship Project is an Associate Member of the Warwickshire Safeguarding Children's Board and an Assistant Head of Children's Service acts as an Advisor to our Trustees, and regular meetings are held with our safeguarding team.

There is quality research available advising that the importance of early intervention in childhood has been seen to help both mental and physical health outcomes in later life, making our contribution in this area extremely valuable. Plus, our early intervention helps prevent the younger person from being drawn into inadvisable activities, or potentially criminal county lines, or indeed could be lead into and encouraged to participate in anti-social behaviors in an effort to fit in with peers. Our work helps avoid these problems.

We hope that you find this report of interest, and for further information please visit our website: www.friendshipproject.co.uk Please also follow us on: – **@friendshipproj** on and Instagram or on Facebook: www.facebook.com/TheFriendshipProjectForChildren

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Welcome to our Annual Report which I hope you will find truly inspiring with some brilliant case studies providing an active illustration of the valuable work the Friendship Project for Children delivers to communities across Warwickshire.

This excellent contribution from our volunteers, Operations team and trustees is set against a backdrop of much more difficult fund-raising climate. We have found the last 2 years much more challenging from a funding perspective, so we made the difficult decision last year not to replace our Area Coordinator in Rugby, to continue to make the charity more sustainable whilst additional funding streams are sought. We continue to cover the Rugby & District area, though now do this via our two Area Coordinators - one based in Bedworth, and nearer Southam. This financial climate is the same for all third sector organisations, with funding constrained since the economic downturn post the war in Ukraine, and general economic uncertainty. Post COVID there has been a slower involvement of corporate entities in the sector, which has contributed to more charities making grant applications.



Prior to COVID we had a success rate of nearer 65% for grant applications, now the industry average is between 1 in 6 and 1 in 8. This is at a time when we are seeing an increase in the numbers of referrals and need for our service. Additionally, we did have a bounce of volunteers immediately post COVID which has now slowed a little.

To counter this, we have increased our social media presence, and networking, and are widening our fund-raising approach, as well as engaging at grass root level in the community too, with other organisations too.

Next year will be our 40th anniversary on 12th May, a magnificent feat, when we have helped approaching 2000 children across Warwickshire. There are some great testimonials and case studies on our website about the value we have given local children who are disadvantaged. We hope to be able to celebrate this and will be seeking sponsorship for a family event in the late spring of 2026, so as to be able to invite supporters both old and new.

Our financial statement gives details of the highlights of what we have achieved in the last 12 months. Going forward we hope to be able to reduce our waiting lists, recruitment of additional volunteers, supported by funding to meet the known need.

Two of our volunteers are holding a Family fund raising day, with horse show, dog show, car boot, and fun activities and stalls at Corley on 13th July, and do look out for the full details on our social media, and our website, www.friendshipproject.co.uk

We are also seeking additional lead trustees, where we have identified a need, Marketing/social media, QA/Compliance, plus a replacement Hon Secretary, and for succession during the next 12 months a Hon Treasurer too. There are job roles available for these posts, with the trustees meeting quarterly, plus the AGM. Probably one or two meetings in person the rest online. If any interest in these trustee posts, please contact me in the first instance cheryll.rawbone@friendshipproject.co.uk

I would just like to end by sincerely thanking all our supporters, funders, volunteers, Operations team, and trustees without your valuable collective contribution we would not be able to help the children referred to us. On a personal level I am extremely honoured after almost 40 years with Friendship Project, alongside in recent years additionally being Trustee and Non-Executive Director of WCAVA, Barnardos living host, amongst other voluntary work, to be proposed to be High Sheriff in Nomination for Warwickshire for 2027.

Cheryll Rawbone, FRSA, Chairman

Safeguarding Report 2024/25

Esther Jones - Safeguarding Trustee

esther.jones@friendshipproject.co.uk



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.

As ever, there has been lots of training and this remains one of my favourite ways of ensuring the welfare of the child is at the centre of everything we do. I really enjoy meeting new volunteers attending our full training session and getting to meet older volunteers coming back for refresher training. The refresher training has been updated substantially this year with new scenarios that really encourage our established volunteers to reflect on their understanding of what safeguarding means and their responsibilities.

I also delivered a safeguarding training session for the Trustee group – encouraging the Trustees to think about how they would deal with a volunteer's concern should they be in the position where they had to.

An area of focus this year has been clarifying the Group Supporter's role in relation to Safeguarding. A small working group including myself, members of the paid team and a Group Supporter explored the opportunities to fine tune the guidance. This led to a training session for the Group Supporter team and updates to the procedures and paperwork making clearer the expectations on frequency of contact between Older Friends and their Group Supporter, how safeguarding concerns should be reported, and record keeping.

As ever, I remain thankful to the paid Operations Team for their ongoing commitment to safeguarding and for always working with me as we identify ways to improve practice and procedure.

And a thanks, as always, must go to our wonderful volunteers. I appreciate them giving up their time to attend and really engage in safeguarding training and I am especially thankful for those volunteers who have shared a worry, whether big or small. Having a conversation about concerns is so important!

If you have questions, comments, or feedback on any aspect of our safeguarding procedures or policies, get in touch.

Esther Jones
Trustee – portfolio Safeguarding

Fundraising Report 2024/25

Richard Barrett – Fundraising Trustee
Richard.barrett@friendshipproject.co.uk

We are extremely grateful to all our grant funders, corporate, and individual donors and who supported us in 2024 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
- ✓ Albert Hunt Charitable Trust
- ✓ Anonymous donors
- ✓ Aubrey Allen
- ✓ AE Beckett & Sons, Becketts Farm
- ✓ Bedworth Lions
- ✓ BIGGA
- ✓ Brian Murtagh Charitable Foundation
- ✓ Charities Trust
- ✓ Cheryll Rawbone
- ✓ Claverdon Fields Charitable Trust
- ✓ Coventry & District Cricket Club
- ✓ Danielle Kay
- ✓ BM & SJ Hall
- ✓ Edward Cadbury Charitable Trust
- ✓ easyfundraising
- ✓ F C Stokes Trust
- ✓ Fiona Roche
- ✓ Foyle Foundation
- ✓ Garfield Weston
- ✓ Hammons Solicitors
- ✓ Heart of England Community Foundation –
-Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Fund
- ✓ Heart of England Community Foundation –
-Dulverton Trust
- ✓ Heart of England Community
-Foundation – Inclusive Community Fund
- ✓ Just Giving
- ✓ Kenilworth Lions
- ✓ King Henry VIII's Endowed Trust -
Warwick
- ✓ Masonic Charitable Foundation
- ✓ Michael Marsh Charitable Trust
- ✓ Mr & Mrs Owen
- ✓ Nuneaton Borough Council
- ✓ O'Brien Trust
- ✓ Redrow Homes
- ✓ Sing It Loud
- ✓ St Mark's Church, Bilton
- ✓ Stratford Municipal Charities
Square
- ✓ Terence Hague
- ✓ The Higgs Charity
- ✓ Mrs SM Weetman
- ✓ WCC County Fund
- ✓ WPH Charitable Trust

Thanks also to:

- Thomas Flavell Solicitors for kindly printing off our Guidelines for our volunteers.
- 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.
- Our volunteers who have raised funds for us this year through their own collections and fundraising.

Like all charities, The Friendship Project relies on donations from the general public for a significant amount of its income. If anyone reading this 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 me. There are several methods in which you can donate to us, listed below, with further details on our website.

Other methods to donate are:

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



Our QR code



AGM Report 2024/25

Amez (Amrit) Bass - Social Media & Marketing
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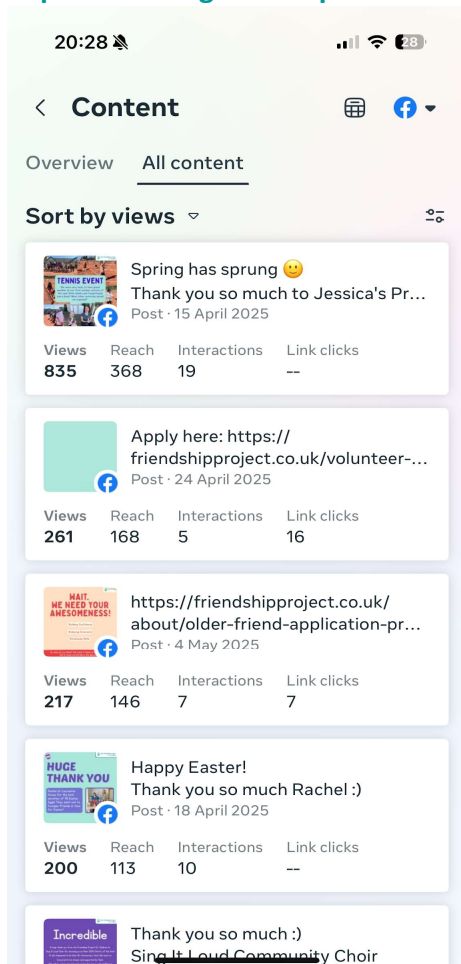
As of February this year, we have been experimenting with a few different fonts and designs to enhance our Social Media Pages. The colour palette has also expanded; the addition of brighter backgrounds and elements has elevated the page and attracted more attention. Facebook still has our largest online following; therefore, prioritising consistent engagement on this platform is still paramount. Posts are uploaded frequently, 2 to 3 times a week, depending on updates. However, we have equally been uploading regularly on LinkedIn, connecting with other Charities, as well as Corporates. By forming such connections, we aim to expand our reach, raise more awareness of our work, and attract potential partners/funders. Due to recent controversy surrounding the owner of X (formerly Twitter), we no longer post on this platform. We are still active on Instagram and endeavour to connect with other like-minded organisations.

Insights + Updates

Data shows that posts containing photos and videos of support sessions gain more views in comparison to those without any media.

Funding has been received to 'Boost' Social Media Posts.

Top Performing Posts April 2025



Next Steps

Area Coordinators to 'Boost' specific posts when most effective.

Recruitment & Funder Templates to be created for Area Coordinators to edit and post where needed.

Potential Photography Workshop to support the quality of photographs when on 'outings.'

Operations Report 2024/25

Ruth Blunt – Operations Team Leader

ruth.blunt@friendshipproject.co.uk



General

We have seen some staff changes in the Operations Team this year and we now have three Area Coordinators covering the whole of Warwickshire instead of four. We have a great team and we are fortunate to work in such a supportive environment. I would like to thank everyone in the team for their flexibility and for making sure that our Older Friends continue to receive regular contact and support.

Like many charities, we have found it increasingly difficult to raise funds in the current economic climate so, at the end of 2024 and beginning of 2025, we had a strong focus on fundraising with members of the Operations Team attending various fundraising fairs and workshops. We now have a QR code which can be used for donations and we continue to encourage people to sign up to Easyfundraising which allows online shoppers to raise money for us, at no extra cost to them.

The Operations Team have been discussing the possibility of having a 'Sponsor a Child' option on our website. Sadly, Lloyds Bank are unable to set up a giving by Direct Debit option for us but we can have up to 3 fixed payment options through PayPal which we can set up on our website. We are now looking for sponsorship from both individuals and companies and we are very grateful to O'Brien Contractors Ltd, who are the first company to sponsor specific children at the Friendship Project.

The Operations Team have recently completed some Health and Safety training with modules covering Data Protection Essentials, DSE Workstation Set-Up Essentials, Home Working Essentials, Stress Management Essentials, Time Management Essentials and also Environmental Awareness Essentials.

I would like to thank the Trustees for their ongoing help and support for the Ops Team - on a day-to-day basis and beyond. Nishi Mehta provided a free training session for us to cover the new legislation on Sexual Harassment. Pat Miller provided a free jewellery workshop for us as a team-building activity. Esther Jones has played a key part in our discussions about clarifying the role of the Group Supporter. She attended meetings, helped us to amend the wording of our Guidelines and is going to carry out specific safeguarding training for the Group Supporters. Esther also arranged a bread-making session at her home to raise money for the Friendship Project. I attended an Employment Law and HR event organised by Tina Chander and Chris Buck met with the Operations Team and has updated our website. We also extend our thanks to our Chairman, Cheryl Rawbone, who is always on hand to answer any questions and give us her unwavering support.

We continue to receive numerous referrals for children and young people needing support. The majority of our friendships are well-established and continue to run smoothly. Our volunteers do an amazing job and they are very well supported by the Group Supporters and the Area Coordinators. The feedback we continue to receive is that giving the young person some quality time away from sometimes difficult home situations, really does improve their confidence and self-esteem. It is also hugely rewarding for our volunteers, knowing that they are having a positive influence and making a difference to a child's life. Three of our friendships have recently come to a natural end because the Younger Friends had reached their 17th birthdays. One of these friendships lasted 7 years and another, an incredible 10 years and all three Older Friends have agreed to take on a new Younger Friend. This is testament to the difference we make to the lives of both our Younger Friends and their volunteer Older Friends.

I would like to thank everyone in the Operations Team for their continued hard work and dedication. Finally, I would like to thank our wonderful volunteers and Group Supporters as without them, we couldn't do the amazing work that we do.

Current Friendships

Warwick and District – 21

Stratford and District – 20

Rugby and District – 14

Nuneaton, Bedworth, North Warwickshire – 15

Total number of current friendships – 70 (with a further 10 awaiting interview or awaiting matching)

Events

6/5/24 Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again (Leamington Spa Rotary Club)

18/5/24 Fishing Event

25/5/24 Sing It Loud 10th Anniversary Concert

13/7/24 Alpaca Event

28/9/24 Craft Event

24/11/24 Children's Christmas Party

7/12/24 Sing It Loud 'Under the Stars' Concert

3/4/25 CPR Training (North)

5/4/25 Tennis Event (funded by Jessica's Promise)

11/5/25 Canal Trip (North)

On Sunday 13th July 2025 we are having a Charity Fun Day which is being organised by two of our volunteer Older Friends and held at their farm in Corley. If you can support this event in any way, please contact kate.meek@friendshipproject.co.uk

Marketing and Social Media

We have some new case studies on our website and we have regular updates on our Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram pages. Everyone can support us by following, liking and sharing our posts so that we continue to reach a wider audience online. We are currently creating new templates to boost volunteer recruitment and also to encourage local businesses to get involved in supporting us. If you or your organisation can help us, please contact ruth.blunt@friendshipproject.co.uk or amrit.bass@friendshipproject.co.uk

AGM Report 2024/25

Fiona Roche – Area Coordinator for Warwick District

Fiona.roche@friendshipproject.co.uk



Older Friends: 22 plus Rugby 3 = 25

Younger Friends: 24 plus Rugby 3 = 27

Pipeline: 4

In General

2024 has been a busy year with 9 new friendships and 11 friendships ending. All the new friendships are going really well, except one which only lasted a couple of months as the match wasn't working out for the OF. 6 friendships ended with a change in the circumstances of the OF. 3 of the friendships had to end as the YF reached their 17th birthday! I am happy to say that all 3 volunteers have now been or are about to be matched with a new YF. A special thank you to Chris Lukehurst who was friends with T for 7 years and to Helena who was friends with M for an incredible 10 years! I am very lucky to have such incredible volunteers in Warwick District.

Events attended

- Team training away days
- Sing it Loud concerts
- Get togethers at the Royal Pug and Zoom
- Cream teas at The Old Bakehouse
- Presentations at Southam Lions/WI's/Local businesses
- Mill Street workshops on social media and volunteer management
- CAVA coffee and catchup networking event
- Stand at CAVA volunteer taster trail
- Safeguarding training zooms
- Online training courses
- Organised and decorated St Mary's Christmas tree
- Children's Christmas Party
- Tennis event which I helped to run

Chosen charity for Sing It Loud

We were the chosen charity for Sing it Loud Choir this year. It has been very special to be part their 10th anniversary year. A large concert was held at Warwick Arts Centre with a 1,000 people in the audience. Cheryl, Judy Sims and her Younger Friend Caitlin who is now in her 20's did the most amazing speech. It brought a lot of people to tears!

There was another concert held in December at Trinity Church where we also had refreshments stand with mulled wine and mince pies. Tim Proudler and myself did the speech this time. Over the year with donations and money from the ticket sales SIL raised £3041.

Advertising

We were given £500 for advertising by one of the Sing it Loud Choir. So far I have only spent £5 of this experimenting with boosting a Facebook post. We have discussed with Amez the design of some template posts that we can use in our local areas recruiting volunteers and asking for funding from local businesses. It is hoped that this will then generate more volunteers and funds.

I wrote a press release in the New Year which was sent to local papers. This was printed in the Courier and also online at Warwickshire World. Your call printed it in all their magazines over Warwickshire and also their online magazines.

The display board needed re vamping. I chose and ordered new photos for the board and some of the references and case studies. Karen also helped with this. We now have 2 display boards as they have been used a lot since and the photos tell a good story about our charity in a simple format.

Group Supporter role

Along with Ruth, Esther and OF Tim we looked at the role of the Group Supporter. We had several zoom discussions about the role and procedures of the GS. We felt more clarity was needed for both the GS and the OF. We reviewed the wording in the guidelines and GS form. In January we held a zoom training/discussion evening with all the GS's. From this Esther is going to be delivering a specific safeguarding training session for GS's to support their role.

Cream Teas at The Old Bakehouse

I enjoyed having a Cream Tea's weekend at my home in June. We held it alongside my partners photography exhibition which worked well. Over the very sunny weekend we had 90 visitors and raised £297! I will be holding another Cream Teas weekend 5th and 6th July. This year Rodda cream tea society has donated clotted cream and jam for the event.

It has been a good year working well with the Operations Team. Thank you Cheryl for treating us to a lovely Christmas lunch at Audley and the jewellery workshop at Chase Farm.

Case Study 1

10 years of being an Older Friend

I moved to Leamington Spa in 2014, before which I lived in Leicester where I was involved with an organisation called YOT's (Youth Offending Team). I was a volunteer for 7 years, working 1-2-1 with teenagers who were on their final warring with the police. There were set objectives that needed to be fulfilled during the pairing - mainly helping the young person understand how their offence affects them, their families and the wider ripple effect. The kids were usually frustrated with the situation they were in, so giving them the opportunity and a safe space to talk was really helpful for the kids I supported. So, when I moved to Leamington I found The Friendship Project, and I instantly wanted to be involved with such a fantastic organisation.

Following my initial interview and relevant checks, Fiona Roche, the Area Coordinator for my district, contacted me and talked me through 3-4 Younger Friends details. I think M was the 3rd case she ran through with me, and there was just something that caught my attention about M.

Our first meeting was arranged at M's Primary School, which is where I met M's mum & M for the first time.

They came across as a lovely family. M was quiet & a little shy. We agreed our first outing for the following week. The type of friendship was very different to what I'd previously done, so I was a little unsure of how the outing would go.

Our first trip out, was to St Nicholas Park to feed the ducks on the river. As I was fairly new to the area I wasn't sure of the route from M's house to the park. As it turned out, my lack of knowledge of the area & getting lost was a huge source of amusement for M, and a great ice breaker!

Over the last 10 years we've been to lots of places, including Tamworth Sky Centre for the Christmas Party! We got lost, and we were the last to arrive! Another time we met another Older Friend in St Nicholas Park as we were meeting them to go the Warwick Boat Club for a squash taster session. I didn't know that there were 2 mini golf courses at the park, and true to form we were at the wrong mini golf, so we were late again! The Older Friend we were meeting, Geoff, was very understanding when we finally found him in the park.

As M got older they would navigate the route to our destinations using a mobile phone. Which I like to think has taught them a great life skill! We've done so much during our time together - we ran a 1 mile colour run, which led us to complete Couch to 5k. We've baked cakes, swam, walked in the rain, fallen over in the mud, played snap in Costa coffee until closing time, carved pumpkins, been to the dungeons at Warwick Castle and climbed to the top of the turret of the castle. We've explored, been pen pals during lock down..... the list is endless!

I think the most life-changing experience for M that The Friendship Project has enabled them to experience is music, specifically learning to play the piano and more recently learning to play the drums at Top of The Rock drum studio in Warwick. This has given M the confidence to make friends with people who play in a band. They write songs and sing too. M wants to become a music teacher and is in college studying art which hopefully will enable them to gain access to a level 3 music course.

We have been to a gig at the O2 in London to see Billie Eilish, and watched the Arctic Monkeys perform at the Ricoh Arena. M also attended the concert by Fiona Roche's Sing it Loud choir. M was fascinated by the performance & had never seen an orchestra play before. They were blown away by all of the instruments, especially the harp. Without the support from The Friendship Project, M would not have been able to access these opportunities, and realise their dream of becoming a music teacher.

Although our Friendship Project time ended as M is now 17, we are still in contact. They get the bus to my house after college sometimes. M wants to learn how to cook, so whilst I'm finishing up my working day, M bakes a cake & then we cook dinner. M's next lesson is learning how to wash up!

I'd like to thank everyone at The Friendship Project for allowing me to be part of the charity, it has brought much joy into my life, just as much as I have been able to give.



Case Study 2

I moved to Warwick in the summer of 2021 ready to start a job at a new primary school in the area. I had moved out of my parents' house in Hertfordshire. At the time, my parents had been foster carers for the past 6 or so years so I was used to a house full of children and constantly finding activities to keep them busy, especially in the holidays. When I moved, I wanted to look for something voluntary, preferably involving young children, but in a different capacity to my job as a teacher and a quick search online led me to The Friendship Project.

Not long after applying and completing all the checks, I was matched with my Younger Friend S, who to begin with was quite a shy and quiet 10 year old, whose main love was reading. So, it began that S and I started taking regular trips to the library, then the library cafe and then beyond.

Over the first two years of our friendship, the main trips were to the library, cinema or walks around Leamington. Once S and I were more familiar with each other, if the weather wasn't great, we baked pancakes, scones and other sweet treats at my house.

We have also really enjoyed going to Dice Box Cafe in Leamington and playing through so many of the wide variety of board games they have to offer. It has been lovely to see how S's interests in games have changed over the years, from playing simpler 'roll the dice and move spaces across the board'

games to more complex strategy games now. One thing that hasn't changed, and I don't think ever will change, is her love of the Cookies 'n' Cream milkshake they make. They are delicious!

S loves being outdoors and whilst this can limit our options in winter, the rest of the year we often go for walks around different towns. She loves completing 'Treasure Trails' mystery walks where we have to search for clues in new places and we always stop off at cafes for a hot chocolate along the way. More recently, we have been to Quarry Park to play disc golf which has been really entertaining. S has discovered she is very good at throwing a frisbee so loves doing that as it is an activity she is always guaranteed to win!

We have made the most of some of the activities organised by The Friendship Project. S loves going to the Christmas party and bringing her younger sister along. We have also been to the Moreton Morrell Animal Unit, and joined a group of other Older and Younger friends planting trees at a Children's Forest in Radford Semele.

It has been a wonderful 3 ½ years with S, and our friendship has grown really strong over all the outings. Having S as part of my wedding day this year in May is going to be really special, and I am so glad she is looking forward to it too! I have loved our trips out, and I have seen S grow so much in confidence, tackling the start of the tricky teenage years seemingly unphased. I look forward to all of the future outings to come!



AGM Report 2024/25

Harriet Crawford – Area Coordinator for Stratford,
Alcester and Shipston

Harriet.crawford@friendshipproject.co.uk



Older Friends: 20

Younger Friends: 20

In General

I have been an Area Coordinator for 2 years now. I continue to really enjoy my role recruiting, training, matching and supporting friendships. I would say that this year it has been quieter but did pick up a little bit in the new year. I am very grateful to be working with a group of supportive people as when you have young children, and having a child with a complex medical condition, it is very reassuring and comforting to know you are supported.

Events attended

- WCAVA Area Coordinator meetings Bi-Monthly
- Christmas party - Dec 2025
- Jewellery workshop - Jan 2025
- Together for Better- Warwick Event – Ansty Hall 13/11/24
- Sing it Loud concert - May 2024
- Volunteer Get together - June 2024
- Volunteer Get together Zoom - February 2025
- Ops Team Away day - 16/5/24
- Maggie Lambert fundraiser in Rugby - April 2025
- Stratford town fundraising meeting

Friendships

All friendships are going very well. Thankfully over the last 12 months I have only had 2 friendships end. The main reason for both friendships ending was based on a natural end.

All volunteers are offering the children a variety of activities and experiences and the feedback from the families is incredibly positive.

Training

- Sexual Harassment training - 28/1/25
- Data Protection Essentials -Jan 2025
- DSE Workstation Set-Up Essentials -Jan 2025
- Environmental Awareness Essentials – Jan 2025
- Home Working Essentials - Feb 2025
- Stress Management Essentials - Feb 2025
- Time Management Essentials - March 2025

Summary

Over the next 12 months I really hope to work more closely with local primary schools and children's services to continue support children in all my areas. It would be nice to recruit more volunteers in the Alcester area as we are getting more referrals in this area at present. To continue to support all current volunteers and offer any extra support when needed. I am very thankful to work with such a great team and support such lovely volunteers.

Case study 1

I've been a volunteer with The Friendship Project since my Younger Friend was 9 years old. He has just finished his GCSE's now and is off to college. I couldn't be more proud of what he's accomplished. I've been a constant in his life and have always kept my word which sadly he lacks a lot of in his family unit. We have done lots of different activities over the years and even through covid we were decorating cookies via WhatsApp! Trampolining has always been his favourite, but Pizza Express comes close. It has enabled him to do a variety of things that he wouldn't be able to by sadly staying at home all the time.

He is willing to still have me in his life through college and beyond, even when he is too old to belong to the charity as we have been matched for such a long time.

It has been a long journey with my Younger Friend but the satisfaction of knowing I've made a difference to a shy, vulnerable child has all been worth it.

Case Study 2

I've been seeing E for the last 4 and a half years now. When I first started seeing her it was just before the pandemic. When restrictions allowed, we would meet up outside and go to the park, play outdoor games, have a picnic, craft activities and bike rides. E was a shy, reserved child with low self-esteem and needed time and encouragement before she would try something new. Over time she learnt how to climb the climbing frame, go on the biggest slide and swing independently. We spend lots of our time in Stratford. She still loves to go to the park and to play in the sand if it's not too busy. She enjoys going on the ferry (took a while to try) and playing crazy golf. Visiting the horse sanctuary Red Wings - donkeys being her favourite. She also enjoys visiting Hoorays and having her favourite brownie and ice cream chatting whilst colouring. But her favourite activity at the moment is going to Costa for drink, cake and natter whilst playing Uno, which she usually wins!

I don't see her as often now as her home set up has changed but we still catch up every 2 weeks and it's non-stop chatting.

It's an absolute pleasure to take E out and it's wonderful to see how she has grown in confidence. I love spending time with her.

AGM Report 2024/25

Kate Meek – Area Coordinator for Rugby, The North,
Nuneaton and Bedworth

Kate.meek@friendshipproject.co.uk



Older Friends: Rugby – 10 / North - 15

Younger Friends: Rugby – 10 / North - 16

Pipeline: Rugby – 2 / North - 2

In General

This has been a very busy year for me and my role within The Friendship Project. I have had a lot of support from my Group Supporter Judy, who lives nearby and doesn't hesitate to help if needed, either to help find volunteers, go along to presentations with me amongst other things.

I really feel part of the Friendship Project now as I have been employed for just over one and half years and have had my hours increased twice over the last year which has enabled me to concentrate on this job and finish my other part time jobs which is a lot better for me. When the last Area Coordinator left last year, I was asked to temporarily take on the Rugby friendships. The Trustees felt that in the current financial climate and taking into account funding levels, it was prudent to delay a replacement. This is working well, and I continue to run the two areas now with just a handful being shared out to the other Coordinators.

Group Supporters

I have 3 Group Supporters which help me in both the North and Rugby areas to check in with the volunteers. Judy also does my DBS for new starters and to renew them too, which is very helpful. We had a zoom meeting for all Group Supporters earlier this year, which I found very useful to know how we are all working along the same lines and supporting each other.

Events attended/Networking

- Nuneaton and Bedworth networking event in June
- 3 x Bedworth Networkers networking event
- Stand in Morrisons and Tesco to raise awareness of our charity
- Stand at North Warwickshire College to engage with older students
- Attended a Funding Fair and Job/Volunteering fair at Nuneaton through Cava
- A stand and presentation at Bedworth library
- Atherstone Networking event
- Presentation at Bedworth Lions
- Attending the Nuneaton Funding Fair
- BVS Fun Day at the Gurdwara
- Presentation with Fiona at Mander Hadley Solicitors
- We meet up for our Ops Meeting on a regular basis but in between catch up at The Farmers Fayre for a more relaxed catch up to share ideas with each other

Marketing

I reach out on social media to the local communities, sharing events and fundraisers throughout the year. I was involved with a large event last year at the BVS Fun day, where we had our own tombola stall and to talk to people about our charity.

I have done several stands in various places and hand out our posters whenever possible, including community boards in local shops.

I also check in with WCava and have had a couple of meetings with Tina, my local WCava advisor.

Training

We had an away day training session at Wolston last year which was lovely to have face-to-face training and very useful. Two topics - Handling Difficult Conversations and Effective Time Management. Other training has been online with an exception of a jewellery making course put on for us very kindly by one of our Group supporters, Pat. This was lovely to spend a few hours together in a relaxed environment.

Training this year has included:

Sexual Harassment

GDPR

Data Protection Essentials

DSE Workstation Set-Up Essentials

Home Working Essentials

Stress Management Essentials

Time Management Essentials

Environmental Awareness Essentials.

CPR – Free training course for OF's through Everyone Active.

Fundraising

The North and Rugby area have raised money through having the BVS tombola, Bedworth Lions donation and Bulkington WI donation.

Volunteers have raised money through a cake sale, through a church and through a group called BNI. In the pipeline for this year is a Big Charity Fun Day put on by two of our volunteers that own a farm.

Friendships

I have really got to know my friendships over the last year. I have met quite a few Volunteers and Younger Friends face-to-face and have also matched through the whole process with several in both the North area and Rugby.

I have held three Older Friends get togethers at a local pub in Bedworth which is lovely to get to chat to volunteers - both Older Friends and Group supporters.



Case Study 1

Margaret is a lovely, retired lady who likes to keep herself busy. She has volunteered for us for just under 3 years with a young boy who is now 11 years old. The friendship with Margaret and Younger Friend L is coming to an end in a few weeks as L has grown in confidence and now has a very busy life at home, school and friends.

Margaret felt she would love to share some of her spare time with another child, so I have just matched her with a lovely girl, almost 11 years old, for their new journey to start.

Here is what Margaret says about her journey so far with the friendship project:

I met L in May 2022. L needed someone to spend time with and talk to about his feelings. Initially L was quiet and only wanted to spend a short time away from his family. That was understandable as he was only 7 at that time.

Slowly we built up a friendship doing lots of activities. L was good at confiding in me, and I tried to advise him in the right way to go about things. He was very confident in his opinions and sometimes we had different opinions, but we never fell out. He was mostly easy going and liked to win at games and change the rules, we had a laugh and we learnt from each other. He would often talk about me at home and say, "Margaret said this and explained that to me!" I learnt a lot from L too as he's interested in various subjects.

The friendship came to a natural ending as he realised he couldn't pick & choose when he wanted to see me. I was sad to lose him but happy he had mentally grown so much that he could make a choice. I felt good about myself that I had a small part in helping him to be strong willed but also be fair and kind. L has a lovely caring family and I'm sure he'll be supported throughout his younger life.

I'm looking forward to seeing my 'new' friend and helping her.

This is what the parent's of the Younger Friend said about their experience with us:

The Friendship Project has been incredibly helpful to our son L during a difficult time in his life.

Margaret, our carer, was incredibly friendly and always made time to see L. Nothing was too much trouble for Margaret, and we've really appreciated all the support. The Friendship Project has brought a sense of joy and companionship back into L's life, and we've formed a lasting friendship with Margaret. We want to express our deepest gratitude to all the volunteers who dedicate their time and effort to this amazing programme. Their work has made a significant difference in our lives, and we can't thank them enough. L himself has spoken highly of The Friendship Project. He's said that it's helped him immensely and provided him with a much-needed break during some tough moments. He's also built a strong bond with Margaret, and we're so proud of him for his positive outlook on life.



Case Study 2

Sean is a lovely man that has volunteered for us for three years. He sees his Younger Friend, C, who is 14 usually every two weeks. C has had a troubled childhood but absolutely loves going out with Sean. C has learnt that he can put his trust in him, which he wasn't able to do before. They go on all sorts of outings including, swimming, cinema, eating out, escape rooms, laser quest etc. C can confide in Sean when he is feeling down or would like some advice.

Here is Sean's story:

I became an Older Friend because I (at the time) had time at the weekends and decided to be proactive and try and have a positive influence towards a youngster. It's been good fun, done things and been to

places that are difficult to do on your own, it helps me relive a bit of my youth, and as my wife puts it, gets me out the house!

As for C, he's changed quite a bit over the last 3 years, from a quite nervous young lad into a more confident lad who can do things on his own (sometimes with an encouraging nudge) and can talk to people with confidence.

Considering that we generally have no plan between us, I've found that we come up with ideas about activities in a natural way that has come with time.

I'd recommend this to anyone, pass on that knowledge, skills and experience, that's maybe hidden inside of you for a while, do things you haven't done in a while and help a youngster to discover that the world is not all bad and dangerous.

Here are some comments made by C's Mum:

Communication is brilliant. Sean goes above and beyond what his role is as C's Older friend. Mum doesn't involve Sean in the family problems, but she knows C feels comfortable talking to Sean about his troubles.

They go out everywhere. Sean takes C out to places that Mum could never take him to. They go to the cinema, escape rooms, laser quest, Stratford and lots and lots of places. C always talks to Mum about the places they have been to.

The difference Sean is making to C is huge. It is the best thing that could have happened to C. You'd think that they would have had a connection since birth when you see them together, not just a few years. Sean has changed C's perception of men since they have been friends. The support Sean gives C is amazing. Sean is amazing.

The Friendship Project

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 517684

Financial Statements

For the year ended 31 December 2024

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2 - 4	Trustees' annual report
5	Independent examiner's report
6	Statement of financial activities
7	Balance sheet
8 - 13	Notes to the accounts

The Friendship Project
Trustees' Annual Report
for the year ended 31 December 2024

Full Name: The Friendship Project
Other names: The Friendship Project for Children
Registered charity number: 517684
Principal registered address: Myton Park, Myton Lane, Warwick, CV34 6PX

Trustees: Cheryll Rawbone, Chairperson
Ken Smith, Honorary Treasurer
Jon Gibbons, Honorary Secretary
Chris Buck
Richard Barrett
Esther Jones
Patricia Miller,
Ashima Rani Chander
Nishi Mehta

Honorary Treasurer: Ken Smith
Honorary Secretary: Jon Gibbons
Bankers: Lloyds TSB, Stratford upon Avon

Independent examiner: Paula Wilson, 2 Hickman House, Hickman Road,
Galley Common, Nuneaton, CV10 9NQ

Governance & management

The charity is operated under the rules of its constitution adopted 12th May 1986 as amended 7th September 1993, 6th March 1995 and 11th May 2005.

Overall management of the charity is the responsibility of the trustees who are elected and co-opted under the terms of the constitution. Day to day management is carried out by paid staff and/or volunteers.

The Friendship Project Trustees' annual report (continued) for the year ended 31 December 2024

Aims and objectives

To provide facilities for the social and physical training of children particularly disadvantaged children between the ages of 6 and 16 years who by reason of their social circumstances are in need of developing social skills by such means as the project thinks fit including the organisation of contacts between such children and reliable older persons able to help them develop such skills.

Summary of the main activities undertaken for the public benefit

With developing confidence and enhanced self-esteem, gained from the friendships, the young people are more prepared to develop new interests and achieve a wider range of skills. They grow personally and socially enabling them to forge better relationships with peers and family members. Generally, they are more settled at school but, above all, they develop a greater sense of self-worth. This is priceless and will have a positive impact on every aspect of their lives.

Summary of the main achievements during the period

- ✓ Continued to provide the invaluable 121 befriending to children in need, to help them improve their confidence, self-esteem, and to allow them to have some fun, sadly lacking in many of their lives.
- ✓ We have helped 88 children directly during 2024, and many more in the wider family, school and community environment.
- ✓ Our Newsletter published in May 2025 for the previous year work gives some fantastic stories of success, and the benefits of our service, to both volunteers and the children we help.
- ✓ We held several successful outside events including pottery craft event, and a Christmas party again at OLRFC with over 100 attending the latter event. There are pictures in our newsletter.
- ✓ Safeguarding training has reverted to mostly face to face, with online has been undertaken when necessary. Our policies and procedures have been reviewed and updated too.
- ✓ We took the decision not to replace our Area Coordinator who left in the summer 2024, previously covering Rugby and district, and to merge the work elsewhere in the Operations team so as to be more prudent financially.
- ✓ Our income achieved was £95,752, higher than the previous year, and more in line with our expenditure, against the previous year of income £78,054, though this had been lower as some monies were received a little later and came in the first part of 2024, instead of 2023. The carried forward into 2025, was slightly higher at £32,067. Our expenditure was slightly higher at £94,575, with salaries being the greatest difference with 2024 being £54,387 from £51,679 in 2023. Going into 2025 we are budgeting lower salaries owing to 1 less area coordinator. Older Friends' expenses reduced from £26,967 to £23,844 in 2024.
- ✓ We have adjusted our reserves policy as we go into 2024 to 3/4 months expenditure to more reflect the reality of our position, and lead time for grants. We meet regularly to consider whether we have sufficient funds for continued operation.
- ✓ We had recruited a social media person for 4 hours a week in 2024, and this is started to help improve our profile. We are looking to increase our volunteer numbers and also gain interest as charity of the year with local companies.
- ✓ In addition to a few hours from a freelance fund raiser we have also engaged with a larger company to help with sourcing potential grant making bodies and we have paid for them to do one bid in 2025 to see whether their approach will assist.
- ✓ SSD in Stratford have kindly continued with free basic archive storage.
- ✓ We have postponed adoption of CIO status, as previously agreed, owing to lack of funds, and want to focus on our core delivery.

The Friendship Project Trustees' annual report (continued) for the year ended 31 December 2024

Financial Review

The charity made an overall surplus of £1,177 in the year, ending the year with total reserves of £32,067, whilst this is welcome, it should be taken with the backdrop of £18,000 of grants which came in early 2024, when they were ant

We are keeping our funding support under review. Given the challenges in the sector with bids typically being successful in 1 in 6/ 1 in 8 ratio. This makes it much more difficult to obtain funding, and our net has had to be widened, whilst at the same time keeping our costs under review.

The Trustees have reviewed the financial position of the charity in light of the current economic environment and the forecast costs of its operations and fund raising. They believe that with the funding commitments made and plans for 2025, the charity has the necessary funding to continue providing its services for at least the next 12 months. The trustees review this at each of their quarterly meetings.

The charity's policy on reserves

In line with the guidance provided by the Charities Commission, the Friendship Project has reviewed and revised its policy on the holding of financial reserves.

Most of our monthly expenditure relates to the salaries and expenses of our staff and the expenses of our Older Friends.

As our income varies considerably month by month it is important that in order to provide continuity of support for our Younger Friends that we have sufficient financial resources in place for the timely and regular payment of salaries and expenses.

In order to ensure our ability to achieve this, the trustees believe that it is essential to hold financial reserves, including restricted funds, of a minimum of three/four months forecast expenditure. A proportion of these funds are held in an interest earning deposit account.

This policy will be monitored and reviewed annually.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:

Signed  - 10th June 2025

Cheryll Rawbone, Chairman

Independent Examiners Report to the Trustees of The Friendship Project

Year Ended 31 December 2024

I report on the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31 December 2024, which are set out on pages 6 to 13.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act;
- follow the procedures laid down in the general directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act, and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect, the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Acthave not been met; or
2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Signed:

Paula Wilson, MAAT

Date: 10th June 2025

The Friendship Project

Statement of Financial Activities

For the year ended 31 December 2024

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2024 Total Funds £	2023 Total Funds £
Incoming resources					
Grants	2	31,366	41,779	73,145	63,619
Donations	3	18,472	-	18,472	12,091
Fundraising events	4	3,758	-	3,758	2,164
Investment income		377	-	377	180
Total incoming resources		<u>53,973</u>	<u>41,779</u>	<u>95,752</u>	<u>78,054</u>
Resources expended					
Salaries, NI	9	22,169	32,218	54,387	51,679
Staff expenses		1,631	2,369	4,000	4,999
Volunteer expenses		9,720	14,124	23,844	26,967
Insurance		4,068	-	4,068	3,675
Events/Christmas parties		397	-	397	791
Other expenditure	10	7,529	-	7,529	4,301
Independent examination fee	12	350	-	350	350
Total resources expended		<u>45,864</u>	<u>48,711</u>	<u>94,575</u>	<u>92,762</u>
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources		8,109	(6,932)	1,177	(14,708)
Gains & (losses) on investments		-	-	-	-
Total funds brought forward		13,340	17,550	30,890	45,598
Total funds carried forward	8	<u>21,449</u>	<u>10,618</u>	<u>32,067</u>	<u>30,890</u>

Expenditure is allocated between Unrestricted and Restricted funds on the basis of actual expenditure incurred along with an element of judgement on indirect items of expenditure.

The Friendship Project

Balance Sheet

For the year ended 31 December 2024

	Note	£	2024 £	£	2023 £
Current assets					
Cash at bank and in hand		34,456		33,112	
Debtors	6	312		607	
		<u>34,768</u>		<u>33,719</u>	
Current liabilities					
Creditors	7	<u>(2,701)</u>		<u>(2,829)</u>	
Net current assets			32,067		30,890
Net assets			<u>32,067</u>		<u>30,890</u>
The funds of the charity					
General Funds			21,449		13,340
Restricted Funds			10,618		17,550
Total Funds	8		<u>32,067</u>		<u>30,890</u>

The trustees declare that they have approved the accounts above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:



Signed:

Date: 10th June 2025

Cheryll Rawbone, Chairperson

The Friendship Project

Notes to the Financial Statements

For the year ended 31 December 2024

1. Accounting policies

These financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention with items recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant notes to these accounts and with the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) issued on 16 July 2014 and with the Charities Act 2011.

Incoming Resources

All material incoming resources have been included on a receivable basis – i.e. they are included if the date receivable falls within the period covered by these accounts.

Resources expended

These have been analysed using a natural classification.

2. Grants

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2024 £	Total Funds 2023 £
Warwickshire Police & Crime Commissioner	-	-	-	10,200
King Henry VIII Endowed Trust	-	5,460	5,460	4,250
29th May 1961 Charitable Trust	5,000	-	5,000	6,000
Heart of England 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust	1,000	-	1,000	1,000
Heart of England - High Sheriff of Warwickshire	-	-	-	500
Maud Elkington Trust	-	-	-	2,000
L&Q Foundation	-	2,319	2,319	6,957
Heart of England Dulverton Trust	-	5,000	5,000	5,000
The Higgs Charity	-	-	-	12,000
Masonic Charitable Foundation	4,366	-	4,366	4,366
Four Acre Trust	-	-	-	6,346
IFT O'Brien Trust	3,000	-	3,000	2,000
Warwickshire Crimebeat	-	-	-	3,000
Hearth of England Youell Family	-	3,000	3,000	-
Heart of England CICF	-	13,500	13,500	-
The Michael Marsh Trust	1,500	-	1,500	-
Garfield Weston	7,500	-	7,500	-
Edward Cadbury Grant	-	3,000	3,000	-
The Foyle Foundation	5,000	-	5,000	-
The Misses Barrie Charitable Trust	-	2,000	2,000	-
Austin Edwards Grant	500	-	500	-
FC Stokes Charitable Trust	500	-	500	-
WPH Charitable Trust	3,000	-	3,000	-
Municipal Charities of Stratford upon Avon	-	2,500	2,500	-
Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council	-	5,000	5,000	-
	<u>31,366</u>	<u>41,779</u>	<u>73,145</u>	<u>63,619</u>

3. Donations

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2024	Total Funds 2023
	£	£	£	£
Anonymous Donors	7,000	-	7,000	2,000
Aubrey Allen	2,414	-	2,414	2,500
Bates Trust Claverdon	1,500	-	1,500	1,500
FC Stokes Trust	500	-	500	1,500
Charities Trust	-	-	-	1,540
Stour Valley Lions	-	-	-	500
Memory of Toby Barwell	-	-	-	607
George Pragnell	-	-	-	500
Warwickshire Crimebeat	300	-	300	-
WPR Redrow	795	-	795	-
Rotary Club leamington Spa	500	-	500	-
Dean Cleaver	500	-	500	-
F/Flow British and Bigga Ltd	500	-	500	-
Nuneaton Community Church	728	-	728	-
Swains Donation	500	-	500	-
Donations under £500	3,235	-	3,235	1,444
	<u>18,472</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>18,472</u>	<u>12,091</u>

4. Fundraising Events

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2024	Total Funds 2023
	£	£	£	£
C Rawbone Rugby Shirt	-	-	-	500
Just Giving	164	-	164	1,274
Leamington & District Christmas Sleigh	-	-	-	339
Amazon Smile	-	-	-	52
Laura Bennett Y3 Girls Ettington	179	-	179	-
Becketts Farm	632	-	632	-
Gurdwara Bedworth	135	-	135	-
Danielle Kay Raffle	148	-	148	-
Cream Teas	274	-	274	-
Sing Loud Concert	1,777	-	1,777	-
Other Fund Raising	448	-	448	-
	<u>3,758</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3,758</u>	<u>2,164</u>

5. Investments

Our Investment Account with M&G Charibond was closed in 2022, due to increased investment risk in the current economic climate. Monies were moved to a lower risk deposit account with Lloyds Bank.

6. Debtors

	2024 £	2023 £
Insurance Prepayment	<u>312</u>	<u>607</u>
	<u>312</u>	<u>607</u>

7. Creditors

	2024 £	2023 £
Volunteer Expenses	1,798	2,137
Staff Expenses	409	251
Independent Examination Fee	350	350
Events Christmas Party	144	90
	<u>2,701</u>	<u>2,829</u>

8. Movements in Funds

	Opening Balance £	Incoming Resources £	(Resources expended) £	Transfers £	Closing Balance £
General funds	13,340	53,973	(45,864)	-	21,449
Total General Funds	<u>13,340</u>	<u>53,973</u>	<u>(45,864)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>21,449</u>
Restricted Funds					
Warwickshire P&CC	2,550	-	(2,550)	-	-
King Henry VIII Endowed Trust	1,062	-	(1,062)	-	-
The Higgs Charity	9,000	-	(9,000)	-	-
Four Acre Trust	2,021	-	- 2,021	-	-
Dulverton Trust	2,917	-	(2,917)	-	-
King Henry VIII Endowed Trust	-	5,460	(4,095)	-	1,365
L&Q Foundation	-	2,319	(2,319)	-	-
Heart of England Dulverton Trust	-	5,000	- 417	-	4,583
Heart of England Youell Family	-	3,000	(3,000)	-	-
Heart of England CICF	-	13,500	(13,500)	-	-
Edward Cadbury Grant	-	3,000	(2,750)	-	250
The Misses Barrie Charitable Trust	-	2,000	(1,330)	-	670
Stratford Municipal Charities	-	2,500	(1,250)	-	1,250
Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council	-	5,000	(2,500)	-	2,500
Total Restricted Funds	<u>17,550</u>	<u>41,779</u>	<u>(48,711)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>10,618</u>
Total Funds	<u>30,890</u>	<u>95,752</u>	<u>(94,575)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>32,067</u>

9. Staff costs and numbers

	2024 £	2023 £
Wages, NI & Pension	50,472	51,679
	<u>50,472</u>	<u>51,679</u>

No employee received emoluments of more than £60,000.

The average weekly number of part time employees during the year was 8 (2023: 6)

10. Other expenditure

	2024	2023
	£	£
Telephones	595	521
Printing, stationery & advertising	729	377
Database / IT	91	461
Payroll	576	763
Fundraising	4644	1,500
Sundries	894	677
	<u>7,529</u>	<u>4,299</u>

11. Trustees' remuneration, benefits and expenses

During the accounting period, the charity obtained insurance cover including Public Liability, Employer's Liability, All Risks for Assets, Personal Accident for volunteers and younger friends and Trustee Indemnity Insurance for a total of £4,068

The management committee and other trustees did not receive any remuneration during the year (2023: nil).

12. Independent examination and accountancy services

During the period, the cost of the examination and accountancy services was £350.

13. Controlling parties

The charity is under the control of the management committee.

14. Glossary of terms

Restricted funds:	These are funds given to the charity, subject to specific restrictions set by the donor, but still within the general objects of the charity.
Debtors:	These are expenses paid in the year with some of the benefit arising in the following year
Creditors:	These are amounts owed by the charity, but not paid during the accounting period.

THE FRIENDSHIP PROJECT

England & Wales - Charity number 517684

Accounts



the friendship project
for children

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Published in June 2024



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INTRODUCTION

This report reflects our achievements during 2023 and our plans for 2024.

Our thanks go to the many volunteers, employees, funders, and supporters for helping children over the last 12 months, enabling them to have some much-needed fun, aiding their personal development, confidence, and improving their self-esteem, and in particular coping with their new challenges.

Additionally, I would like to thank the contributors to this report which helps give an insight into the work undertaken by members of our Operations team, fellow trustees, plus importantly some case studies to help show the impact and difference that we and more importantly our volunteers are making.

The overall purpose of the Friendship Project is to improve the social and emotional well-being of children, aged 6-16, disadvantaged by virtue of their own or family circumstances. An Older Friend provides experiences lacking in the child's life, builds a trusting relationship and raises the self-esteem of their Younger Friend. Volunteers, over the age of 18, are drawn from Warwickshire communities and come from all walks of life. They are carefully vetted as to their suitability for this work, including DBS checks.

Volunteers meet with their Younger Friends weekly for between 2-3 hours to be involved in mutually enjoyable and jointly planned activities and visits. Examples include playing in the park, building dens, craft activities, cooking, fishing, bird watching, climbing, golf, sewing, library, swimming, cinema, growing vegetables etc. which, their school contemporaries take for granted.

Volunteers maintain that the 1:1 attention, with the capacity for the child to talk to a listening adult, is the most valuable aspect of the activity. Such activities are at the heart of what the Project does.

The average length of a friendship is 2.5/3 years and over time the Younger Friend gradually becomes more open and confident in discussing worries and concerns about family, school, friends and themselves. Older Friends offer support and, increasingly, guidance on more sensitive and personal issues. This has helped Younger Friends gain a better understanding of their problems; develop better relationships with family members; and cope more positively with challenging situations at school.

Positive feedback and encouragement, invariably missing in the child's life, is a constant feature of the weekly activities and of major importance in raising self-esteem. This usually results in the young people developing new interests and acquiring a wider range of skills.

Volunteers enjoy the company of their Younger Friends and going to places they would not otherwise go to. They enjoy providing new experiences and knowing they are a trusted confidante but, above all, they gain satisfaction from seeing their Younger Friend develop socially and personally.

One-to-one befriending carries a potential risk in relation to child protection. Safeguarding procedures, in relation to recruitment, vetting, briefing, training and supervision of volunteers are given the highest priority and kept under constant review with Children's Services. The Friendship Project is an Associate Member of the Warwickshire Safeguarding Children's Board and an Assistant Head of Service acts as an Advisor to our Trustees.

There is quality research available advising the importance of early intervention to help both mental and physical health outcomes in later life, making our contribution in the sector extremely valuable.

We hope that you find this report of interest, and for further information please visit our website: www.friendshipproject.co.uk Please also follow us on: – [@friendshipproj](https://twitter.com/friendshipproj) on twitter and Instagram or on Facebook: www.facebook.com/TheFriendshipProjectForChildren

CHAIRMANS REPORT

My report is focused primarily on our activities and achievements in 2023, our last financial year, plus our plans for 2024. Last year saw a major historical event with the coronation of King Charles III, and it was good that the focus of the weekend was volunteering in the community. Highlighting how important our sector is to everyone in the country, and what valuable work volunteers contribute to society. Regrettably both Ukrainian and Middle East wars bring stress, disruption, and sadness to so many people, with considerable impact to the innocent children caught up in these tragic events. Whilst our focus is on local children in need we have particular empathy for the children impacted, with little respite available.



The current economic position has continued to impact all charities, and we are not immune to this, with referrals/need increasing and funds depleting. Gaining more volunteers & funds is key.

First and foremost, I would like to extend a big thank you on behalf of all the children (Younger Friends) that we are supporting and have helped, to all our excellent current and past volunteers, employees, benefactors/funders, and trustees. Without whose dedication our small local charity could not continue to help the lives of children in need throughout Warwickshire. Since 1986, we estimate that there have been more than 1,600 children helped over this period. Our longest standing older friend volunteer has retired at 86, after 26 years' service. Please do read more about her story in this report.

I would particularly also like to thank our operations team for supporting new colleagues in the last 12 months, and covering extended areas whilst we recruited new members of the team. Sarah Edge from Rugby left us as she moved to full-time work, and Hannah Peattie had family commitments which meant that she was unable to continue in her role. Tarragon Kelham is thanked for achieving a significant uptick in our social media whilst she was with us and she is wished well for the future. We have been joined by Kate Meek as Area Coordinator for Bedworth, Nuneaton & North Warwickshire, and Sam Spencer for Rugby & District.

During the last twelve months we have recently welcomed Nishi Mehta as trustee for Operations portfolio, and along with her background in inclusivity and diversity we are delighted to have her join our board.

We have held various collective fun events, with photographs in our recently published newsletter. We were also able to hold our Christmas party with venue donated kindly at the clubhouse of Old Leamingtonians, with over 100 attending.

Trustee vacancies

We are looking to further strengthen and improve diversity of our trustee board, and key skills identified as needed are social media/marketing strategy, QA/Compliance/Risk, and Fund Raising Events. If you know of anyone in these areas that would be interested, then we would be delighted to discuss further.

In 2023 the highlights of what we achieved:

- ✓ We have helped 98 children in Warwickshire directly during 2023, and many more in the wider family and school's environment positively.
- ✓ Continued to provide the invaluable 121 volunteer support and fun for disadvantaged children. Aim to increase the numbers supported and reduce our waiting lists. Target to have 85 still matched by end of 2024, though the quality is still more important than the numbers matched.
- ✓ Recruitment of 2 new replacement area coordinators in Rugby & District, and Bedworth, Nuneaton & North Warwickshire areas.
- ✓ Aim to increase the numbers supported and reduce our waiting lists. Target to have 85 still matched by end of 2024, though the quality is still more important than the numbers matched.

- ✓ Our budget was to raise £85,000, achieved £78,054, with anticipated expenditure to be £90,707, whereas costs amounted to £92,762, overall net deficit of £14,708, covered from reserves.
- ✓ Identified additional grant funding and seek business nominations as their charity of the year.
- ✓ Recruited a trustee for Operations with specific skill set areas and improve our experience in diversity and representation.
- ✓ Attended periodic networking events to increase the profile of the Friendship Project.
- ✓ Improved our social media presence, by recruitment of part time person to support this.
- ✓ Organised regular sessions through the year for Safeguarding Training for volunteers, both as refreshers and also for new volunteers, online and face to face.
- ✓ Continued to hold periodic Older Friends get-togethers/training/support sessions.
- ✓ Continue to encourage and support training for the operation team.
- ✓ Recruit additional Group Supporters, as required as our Older Friend volunteers increase.
- ✓ Held training day for the Operations team with focus on inclusion and diversity

In 2024 we are aiming to achieve

- ✓ Continued to provide the invaluable 121 volunteer support and fun for disadvantaged children. Aim to increase the numbers supported and reduce our waiting lists. Target to have 85 still matched by end of 2024, though the quality is still more important than the numbers matched.
- ✓ Specifically, to increase the number of Older Friends as volunteers, particularly in Nuneaton, Bedworth & North Warwickshire, plus Rugby and district, with recruitment of new area coordinators now established in these areas.
- ✓ Our budget is to raise £105,500, with anticipated expenditure to be £105,241.
- ✓ Identify additional grant funding, with assistance of paid fund raiser, and seek business nominations as their charity of the year.
- ✓ Recruit additional trustees as identified in certain specific skill set areas.
- ✓ Recommence work with our Trusted Charity project, when we have trustee lead in place for this.
- ✓ Attend periodic networking events to increase the profile of the Friendship Project.
- ✓ Further improve our social media presence. Recruit new part time person to support this.
- ✓ Organise regular sessions through the year for Safeguarding Training for volunteers, both as refreshers and also for new volunteers, online and face to face.
- ✓ Continue to hold periodic Older Friends get-togethers/training/support sessions.
- ✓ Complete the Procedures Manual including Trustees Responsibilities too, in "How to" format for contingency planning.
- ✓ Continue to encourage and support training for the operation team.
- ✓ Recruit additional Group Supporters, as required as our Older Friend volunteers increase.
- ✓ Safeguarding Training for trustees to be delivered.

Our 40h Anniversary

In 2026 we are on track to achieve our 40th anniversary, a fantastic feat, so ideas and help for planning for this would be most welcome. If you know of any organisations that may be prepared to sponsor this anniversary year, please let me know. The organisation started in 1985 as a concept trial, and then became a registration charity in May 1986. I have been part of this journey since inception, and would just like to say a personal **Big thank you** to both past and present the many Older Friends, Group Supporters, volunteers, operations team, employees, and trustees, who give their time freely to help our Younger Friends have important 1-2-1 attention, emotional support, friendship and the opportunity to explore new activities and have some fun, particularly through these most challenging times.

Cheryll Rawbone - Chairman

Email: cheryll.rawbone@friendshipproject.co.uk

Safeguarding Report 2023/24

Esther Jones - Safeguarding Trustee
esther.jones@friendshipproject.co.uk



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

Fundraising Report 2023/24

Richard Barrett - FundraisingTrustee

Richard.barrett@friendshipproject.co.uk

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 including printing of guidelines, 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 anyone reading this 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 me. There are several methods in which you can donate to us, listed below, with further details on our website.

Other methods to donate are:

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



Our QR code



AGM Report 2023/24

Amez (Amrit) Bass - Social Media & Marketing
amrit.bass@friendshipproject.co.uk



I recently joined The Friendship Project in January. Since my first post in February, I have specifically focussed on improving the quality and design of Facebook Posts and increasing engagement. Facebook has our largest online following; therefore, prioritising consistent engagement on this platform first was paramount. Posts are uploaded frequently, 2 to 3 times a week, depending on updates. For instance, 3 posts are uploaded if the charity has received new funding or has an upcoming event. The regular posting schedule is Wednesdays and Fridays. Content is created on Canva and uploaded to Facebook using The Meta Planner. Posts consist of photographs, testimonials, funding updates, and colours that reflect the 'brand identity'. Posts are also uploaded to Instagram, LinkedIn and X. However, these platforms each require differing strategies to increase growth and engagement. See 'Next Steps' for further details.

Facebook Statistics, 8th February - 25th April

Reach = 34.7% Increase

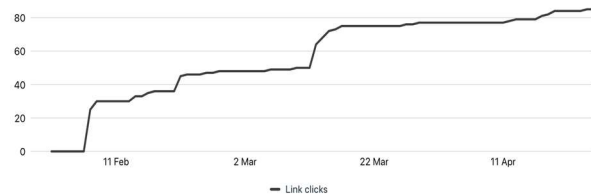
Link Clicks = 1.2% Increase

Total

24,195 ↑ 34.7%

From organic

23,707 ↑ 32%



Top Performing Posts

Highest reach on a post

Facebook post
 Apply Here: <https://friendshipproject.co.uk/about/older->
 7 Feb 2024, 04:00

This post's reach (4,891) is **1,369%** higher than your median post reach (333) on Facebook.

Highest reactions on a post

Facebook post
 Exciting News! :) We're thrilled to announce we've received a grant of £13,500 from the
 6 Mar 2024, 03:30

This post received **308%** more reactions (49 reactions) than your median post (12 reactions) on Facebook.

Highest comments on a post

Facebook post
 Exciting News! :) We're thrilled to announce we've received a grant of £13,500 from the.
 6 Mar 2024, 03:30

This post received **500%** more comments (6 comments) than your median post (1 comment) on Facebook.

Audience

Leamington Spa	1
Warwick	11.6%
Stratford-upon-Avon	11.5%
Rugby	7.6%
Coventry	5.7%
Nuneaton	4.6%
Kenilworth	2.8%
Birmingham	2.7%
Shipston on Stour	2.2%
Southam	2.2%

Next Steps

- Increase the organic growth of our Rugby Audience.
- Potential Photography Workshop to support the quality of photographs when on 'outings'.
- Gaining more followers and engagement on Instagram through a tailored strategy.
- LinkedIn to be prioritised for Networking opportunities.

Operations Report 2023/24

Ruth Blunt – Operations Team Leader
ruth.blunt@friendshipproject.co.uk



General

We have welcomed two new Area Coordinators to the Operations Team this year. Kate Meek joined us in September as the AC for Nuneaton, Bedworth and North Warwickshire. Kate has lots of experience of working in the childcare sector, but she also has experience in administration, interviewing, counselling and safeguarding. With Kate's experience and enthusiasm, we are confident that we will continue to recruit new volunteers and promote the Friendship Project in the north of the county.

Sam Spencer joined us in March as the new Area Coordinator for Rugby and District. Sam was an Older Friend many years ago, so she has a good knowledge of what we do and brings with her a wealth of experience of dealing with people from all walks of life, organising events and creating connections with organisations in the local community.

We have also appointed a new Marketing and Social Media Assistant to take responsibility for our social media and marketing content. Amrit (Amez) Bass joined the Friendship Project in January. She works 4 hours per week and is responsible for managing and developing our social media and marketing content to raise funds, recruit volunteers and promote the Friendship Project so that we can continue to support more children and young people throughout Warwickshire.

We've had to reject a couple of volunteers this year because we were unsure of their suitability. They didn't take the rejection particularly well and came back with what could be described as passive aggressive, possibly even manipulative, language in their responses. Having taken advice from Esther Jones, I contacted the LADO, who suggested that we should ensure on our application form that people declare if they have any medical or mental health issues which may impact on their work and be explicit that we will undertake rigorous checks with the right to refuse applications on any number of grounds. She said that should dissuade those who may be hiding something and also prepare people for possible rejection that they might not have expected. Most of this was already mentioned in our Volunteer Recruitment Policy and on the OF Application Form but we have now reviewed the wording on our policies to incorporate the LADO's suggestions.

Following feedback that a number of YFs were spending a lot of time on their mobile phones during outings, we have updated our Guidelines and the Friendship Agreement to state that both Older Friend and Younger Friend (if applicable) should only use their mobile phones on an outing for photographs or for emergency use to contact the carer etc.

We continue to receive numerous referrals for children and young people needing support. We have had to end some friendships where the relationships between the OF and their YF, or the YF's family, have become too complex. The majority of our friendships are well-established and continue to run smoothly. Our volunteers do an amazing job and they are very well supported by the Group Supporters and the Area Coordinators. The feedback we continue to receive is that giving the young person some quality time away from sometimes difficult home situations, really does improve their confidence and self-esteem. It is also hugely rewarding for our volunteers, knowing that they are having a positive influence and making a difference to a child's life.

I would like to thank everyone in the Operations Team for their continued hard work and dedication. I would also like to thank our wonderful Group Supporters and volunteers as without them, we couldn't do the amazing work that we do.

Current Friendships

Warwick and District – 23

Stratford and District – 17

Rugby – 13

Nuneaton, Bedworth, North Warwickshire – 12

Total number of current friendships – 65 (with a further 11 awaiting interview or awaiting matching)

Training

Myers Briggs Training (Internal) – July 2023

Diversity and Inclusion - Appropriate Language (CM Talent) - July 2023

Wellbeing That Works (Auburn Coaching) – ongoing (RB only)

Trusted Standard (NCVO) – September 2023 (RB only)

Health & Safety - Personal Safety for Lone Workers (Virtual College) - November 2023

Safeguarding Refresher Training (Internal) – February 2024

Events

1/7/23 – Kenilworth Fire Station Event

23/9/23 - Craft Event

26/11/23 – Christmas Party

20/4/24 – Fishing Event

18/5/24 – Fishing Event

13/7/24 – Alpaca Event

28/9/24 - Craft Event

November 2024 - Christmas Party (date tbc)

Marketing and Social Media

We now have some new case studies on our website and Amez has been updating our Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram posts. Our Facebook engagement has increased by almost 35% since Amez joined us and she is currently working on strategies to increase growth and engagement on Instagram, X and LinkedIn. Having someone who can focus on promoting the Friendship Project to raise funds and recruit more volunteers is essential so that we can continue to support more children and young people throughout Warwickshire. This is particularly important in Rugby and the North of the county where we need to boost our volunteer numbers.

AGM Report 2023/24

Fiona Roche – Area Coordinator for Warwick District
Fiona.roche@friendshipproject.co.uk



Older Friends: 23
Younger Friends: 24
Pipeline: 6

In General

In July 2024 I had been the Warwick Area Coordinator for 10 years! I feel very proud to have been part of the project for this long. I continue to really enjoy my role, recruiting, training, matching and supporting friendships. I would say that this year it has been quiet an effort to maintain numbers, as fast as I have matched, friendships have also ended. The numbers of Older Friends and Younger Friends has stayed at the same level despite this activity. This winter I did have to work reduced hours for a couple of months as mother became unwell and then died. The Friendship Project team were extremely supportive during this time. They covered my absences and were very kind to me of which I am really appreciative and grateful for.

Friendships

Friendships matched 11

We have some great new friendship that started this year. We have a brother and sister who now both have their own friendship. When the carer check up was completed the feedback was: "We couldn't have asked for 2 better Older Friends, they are both amazing. The bond between each YF and OF is fabulous. They've got so much in common even though they are different ages." Mum even asked had either of them been OFs before because they are so good at it, which they hadn't! The friendships are definitely making a difference as mum doesn't have time for any 1-2-1 with 4 children on her own to look after.

Friendships ended 12

4 natural end
1 reached 17
1 safeguarding reasons
1 OF illness
3 YF family reasons
1 OF work commitments
1 OF moved to USA

Pipeline 6

I have 2 matches set up to start in May. The other 4 I hope to happen during June. 2 of these friendships are Older Friends who have come back after a 6 month break having completed friendships of 5 and 6 years.

Joan Bolton longest ever volunteer

A really big thank you to our oldest (87) and longest standing volunteer of 27 years, Joan Bolton! She has had 4 friendships over the years and left quite an impression. I entered Joan into the WCAVA awards this year and she was presented with the Highly Commended for the Lifetime Achievement Award. Congratulations Joan!

Events attended

- Team Away day
- Cava volunteer fair
- Christmas Party
- Zoom get togethers
- Face to face get togethers
- Presentation to Sing it Loud Choir – charity of the year
- Attended Midlands Excellence Awards
- Better Together workshop
- Radio interview for Capital FM
- FP Christmas tree – won friendliest tree award!
- Charity of the year for Thomas Favell Solicitors

Finally

I have 2 new Group Supporters, Arianna Piani and Amanda Truner now in my team of 6. I would like to thank them all for the great work they do supporting their Older Friends.

It has been a pleasure to help train and start working with Harriet. We are establishing a good team in the South. I am looking forward to working more with our 2 new Area Coordinators Kate for The North, and Sam for Rugby. The social media work from Taggie and now Amez is really positive and I hope by working with Amez we can build our profile and recruit more OFs in Warwickshire. The whole Ops team is great to work with and Karen is a super star administrator!

Case Study

The Story of Our Longest Serving Older Friend: Joan Bolton

Our longest serving Older Friend is Joan Bolton who has had 27 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.*



AGM Report 2023/24

Harriet Crawford – Area Coordinator for Stratford,
Alcester and Shipston

Harriet.crawford@friendshipproject.co.uk



Older Friends: 19
Younger Friends: 20
Pipeline: 1

In General

It has been a good year for new friendships and established ones. It has also been really great to get to know some of my Older Friends better and I really enjoy catching up with them bi-monthly to listen to the experiences and opportunities they are giving their Younger Friends every week.

I have been working closely with Fiona Roche to support friendships over the south and we have been catching up to chat about any issues or support needed from each other.

Events attended

- Safeguarding training (May and Oct)
- Bi- monthly ops Meeting
- Pensioners lunch meeting in North end
- Linked in at The Coventry Theatre Delivered by The M Guru (Gus Bhandal)
- Together for Better – Charity Networking event at Chesford Grange hotel.
- WI meeting in Temple Grafton
- Team Away Day (Myers Briggs and Equality and Diversity training)
- Christmas Party
- Face to Face get togethers
- BNI meeting for the South Warwickshire group
- Friendship Project events

Friendships

It has been really great to get a few more volunteers in the Stratford town Area and also to be able to work with the a few more local primary schools. All friendships are going really well and communication between Older Friends and parent/guardians are working well.

Sadly we have lost a few friendships.

1 Friendship ended due breakdown in communication between parent and volunteer.

1 Friendship ended due to the Older Friend relocating to Durham for her husband's new job.

1 Friendship ended due financial difficulty and was unable to have the time to support Younger Friend.

1 Friendship has ended due the Older Friend sadly not communicating with me at all so we had to end it for that reason.

2 Safeguarding concerns which have been dealt with by myself with support from Ruth Blunt and Esther Jones.

Marketing

Walton and Wellesbourne magazine did an interview with myself to try and help us recruit more volunteers in south Warwickshire area. It was published in the March issue.

Myself and Fiona went to a charity networking event run by Warwick Events to support local charities with recruitment, social media and charity management. It was a really great day and it gave us the opportunity to meet other charities in the area and see how we can support each other for a common goal.

Summary

Overall a really great year. I have really enjoyed working with the team.

Over the next 12 months it would be good to get more volunteers in the Stratford town area as we are getting quite a few referrals from local schools in that area. And to continue supporting the existing friendships.

Case study 1

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.

Case Study 2

I started writing to C during lockdown and we used WhatsApp until July 2021 to keep in touch. I took him den building and started a three year friendship seeing each other most Saturdays. We involved ourselves that year in activities such as disc golf, visiting the 'Farm' near Snitterfield and going to see the Christmas lights near Coventry.

In 2022 outings included visiting the butterfly centre and going to Charlecote Park, where I have volunteered for over 10 years. We were shown round the Vulcan bomber at Wellesbourne.

Other activities have been going on the big wheel and seeing the classic cars in Stratford. The motor museum was amazing and we joined the Friendship Project at the veterinary nurses training centre at Moreton Morrell.

Watching the boat race in Stratford and visiting Redwings Equine Sanctuary where I used to work were excellent as was the Riding for the disabled association visit in Rowington.

This year in March we watched the gymnastics display in Leamington Spa and involved ourselves in some activities the following week.

Christmas parties and burger bars even Warwick University and bowling. Our friendship has gone from strength to strength and I really feel that C's confidence has grown a lot over the past 12 months. We really enjoy our time together.

AGM Report 2023/24

Kate Meek – Area Coordinator for The North,
Nuneaton and Bedworth

Kate.meek@friendshipproject.co.uk



Older Friends: 12
Younger Friends: 13
Pipeline: 1

In General

I joined the Friendship Project in September 2023; I have loved every minute so far. The people on the team are very friendly and I know they are only a phone call away if I need any advice about anything. I have matched one friendship from start to finish which felt wonderful and the friendship is going very well. I am getting to know the existing friendships I have in my area too.

Group Supporters

I have two group supporters Judy and Elizabeth (Kay) who help me to look after our Older Friends, checking in with them every few months to make sure all is ok. Judy also does the DBS applications for the North. Judy has been a tower of strength to me as she has been with the project for many years, she has been very helpful, especially when recently I had to have time off due to an unexpected operation.

Events attended

1. Safeguarding training
2. Meetings with other AC's
3. Bi-monthly Ops meetings
4. Funding Fair in Nuneaton
5. Presentation to Mothers Union
6. OF's social get together for my area

Marketing

Due to the high levels of referring we have in North Warwickshire; it remains one of my main priorities to recruit more volunteers. I regularly reach out on social media, covering Facebook and all the local communities on social media. I have been out and about putting posters up and recently spent the day with Judy reaching out to villages and their surrounding communities. We will be doing more of this in the coming months to get our name known to the general public and future volunteers. I have, and will be, asking schools if they can add our poster into their weekly/monthly newsletters too. I am in the middle of talking to our local rotary club to see if they can help in any way. They might have us to do a presentation for them. This will be ongoing for the following year, to get our name out there a bit more in the hopes of recruiting more volunteers and possible funding too. Last week, I did my first presentation at a Mothers Union meeting. This went very well and to my surprise, raised over £80 on the night too. I am hoping to do a few more presentations over the coming year to raise awareness to our project.

Fundraising

In addition to my employment with the Friendship Project I also work part time at Welcome Break. I put a bid in and managed to secure a grant of £600 for our charity. This was a lengthy process, but I was very proud of the outcome for The Friendship Project.

Friendships

Most of the friendships have remained since I joined and all are very happy with their friendships, both the Older Friend, Younger Friend, and Carer. I have lost two friendships since I joined, both were having difficulties when I took over my role. One friendship the OF was getting far too involved with the family dynamics and the other was an elderly lady that had been matched with a child that proved to be too much for her. Otherwise, all is going well.

Case Study 1

MK is a lovely, retired lady who used to be a teaching assistant. She gets on well with children and likes to be active and be out and about. MK's children had both grown up and left home but MK knew she had more love/caring left in her. MK saw our advert on Facebook and decided to apply. MK was matched with her YF in June 2022.

MK said, "I was surprised that we share the same birth date, only some years apart! I've worked with children from babies to 16-year-olds. We have had many adventures from baking a cake for her Mums birthday to trampolines! My Younger friend had grown in confidence and looks forward to our time together."

The Younger Friends Mum tells us that the teacher at her school has observed that since the friendship started AM is more confident and is taking part in more school activities. Mum also said, "We could not have wished for a better friendship for our daughter, the impact has been massive. AM always used to spend all her time in her room, but now she comes downstairs and talks to me, the outings have given us a conversation point."

We asked AM how she felt about MK, she told us that she always looked forward to going out with MK and loves to do crafts, baking, playing in the park and going to Ash End Farm. AM said MK feels like her grandmother and always listens to her and helps her to concentrate. AM told us it's always good to have peace away from the house and her two brothers.

This friendship is going from strength to strength with both OF and YF enjoying each other's company almost every week.

Case Study 2

This is a lovely friendship that is working out very well for 9-year-old twins, that were both referred to us at the same time. They are a boy and a girl. Initially the male twin was matched. Then after a few months the partner decided she would also like to be an OF, so she was matched with the other twin.

Since the twins have been a YF to their OF's they have lots of fun times either going out together or separately, usually every Thursday. Some of the outings they love to do together are going to the Red Kangaroo Park and the Wave in Coventry. In the winter months, they have visited the OF's house sometimes to cook, pizza and a board game is something they all have fun doing together. TM likes to go to the Climbing wall activity with her OF, whereas K enjoys going to the Soft Play at Bermuda with his OF. It is great that they have the best of both worlds and can go out together or separately, depending on what they have planned.

When we speak to the OF's they both really enjoy this aspect of their lives. They are both professional people with responsible jobs but can have fun on a weekly basis with their YF's.

When we have spoken to Mum, she tells us that she gets on well with the OF's and knows that if the twins have a worry they will confide in their OF. K has Autism and Mum said he sometimes "kicks off", But his OF knows how to calm him down if this happens on their outings. Mum said that the friendship had made a huge difference to the family. It gives her some time to herself and both children come home happy and with a better attitude.

We also spoke to the YF's, they told us that K loves to play football with his OF and both love going to the Wave and Red Kangaroo. K told us his OF "listens and understands me, he helps me to calm down." TM said they were respectful, and both had a lot of patience with them. Both the YF's said that they were very kind and the keep them safe.

This friendship is going very well and both Mum and the OF's know that if there was ever a problem, I am only a call away.

AGM Report 2023/24

Sam Spencer - Area Coordinator for
Rugby & District

sam.spencer@friendshipproject.co.uk



Older Friends: 13
Younger Friends: 13
Pipeline: 3

In General

As I am new to the Friendship Project team, I have been gathering knowledge and gaining experience. Previously, sixteen years ago I was an older friend for the Rugby area, so I thought sharing this experience would be relevant.

After my family dynamics changed and we adapted to a new family routine, I wanted to give back and fill my spare time at the weekends. Luckily, I discovered the Friendship Project and became an Older Friend to a young boy. At home there were other siblings and he lacked attention, which he only received by his bad behaviour or refusal to go to school. At first, we took baby steps getting to know each other properly. We both enjoyed our first outing to visit a local park where he and I played on every piece of equipment, during which he had a huge smile on his face. Unbeknown to me, he had never enjoyed this experience before. We ended the park visit with ice-cream and planned our next few outings on the drive home. Over the coming months our friendship grew as he began to trust me. Time spent together was fun for us both and we became an effective team especially at sport or laser quest. His behaviour improved as his confidence and self-esteem grew. His school attendance and learning improved and he was making new friends. This experience changed his outlook on life, as it did mine and I remember our time together fondly.

When the opportunity arose to work for the project, I was thrilled to become the Area Coordinator for Rugby. I have spent time, learning how the procedures and project work through Ruth, Karen and the AC team. Everyone has been welcoming and happy to share their experiences and knowledge. This week I am taking part in a second interview with Harriet. The OF is from Rugby, my area, so it is great to be involved at this stage. This was a true learning experience, making me confident for the future Rugby matches.

Recently I had the opportunity to attend a local BNI meeting in Rugby, which was a valuable experience. The other attendees were a variety of local business owners, who were looking for a new nominated charity to support. I enjoyed conversations speaking about our charity to people and collecting useful contacts. Writing and timing a speech, about all the amazing parts of our FP Project, in sixty seconds was a fun task to complete.

I have been prepping my future work plan to complete, once my knowledge and training is in place. This will be to gather community links through local schools, businesses and promoting our Social Media page, through my own.

I am looking forward to experiencing our events coming up and learning from them.

Case study 1

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 add 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 then 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."

Last year we did a short walk at Draycote Water after school and R would like to be able to build up to walking all the way around it so in the Spring we will start doing some shorter canal walks to build up to the 5 miles to walk around Draycote.



Case Study 2

L & I love spending our time together. We chat about school, his drama school & auditions for the shows they do. We chat about family & the various activities both of us do. L is very clever & knowledgeable; he tests me about how tall certain structures are or how much things weigh! We both loved Rugby Museum when they were showing people's lives & how they lived in the Victorian era. L was amazed & appalled how poor people lived. I feel as if am giving something back into society by being involved in the Friendship Project. L certainly brightens my day when I meet him & gives me another purpose in life.

The Friendship Project for Children

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 517684

Financial Statements

For the year ended 31 December 2023

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6	Statement of financial activities
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The Friendship Project for Children Trustees' Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2023

Full Name:	The Friendship Project
Other names:	The Friendship Project for Children
Registered charity number:	517684
Principal address:	Myton Park, Myton Lane, Warwick, CV34 6PX
Trustees:	Cheryll Rawbone, Chairperson Ken Smith, Honorary Treasurer Jon Gibbons, Honorary Secretary Chris Buck Richard Barrett Esther Jones Patricia Miller, Ashima Rani Chander Nishi Mehta, appointed 23.11.2023 Angela Dawn Truman, resigned 7 th June 2023
Honorary Treasurer:	Ken Smith
Honorary Secretary:	Jon Gibbons
Bankers:	Lloyds TSB, Stratford upon Avon
Independent examiner:	Paula Wilson, 2 Hickman House, Hickman Road, Galley Common, Nuneaton, CV10 9NQ

Governance & management

The charity is operated under the rules of its constitution adopted 12th May 1986 as amended 7th September 1993, 6th March 1995 and 11th May 2005.

Overall management of the charity is the responsibility of the trustees who are elected and co-opted under the terms of the constitution. Day to day management is carried out by paid staff and/or volunteers.

The Friendship Project for Children Trustees' annual report (continued)

for the year ended 31 December 2023

Aims and objectives

To provide facilities for the social and physical training of children particularly disadvantaged children between the ages of 6 and 16 years who by reason of their social circumstances are in need of developing social skills by such means as the project thinks fit including the organisation of contacts between such children and reliable older persons able to help them develop such skills.

Summary of the main activities undertaken for the public benefit

With developing confidence and enhanced self-esteem, gained from the friendships, the young people are more prepared to develop new interests and achieve a wider range of skills. They grow personally and socially enabling them to forge better relationships with peers and family members. Generally, they are more settled at school but, above all, they develop a greater sense of self-worth. This is priceless and will have a positive impact on every aspect of their lives.

Summary of the main achievements during the period

- ✓ Continued to provide the invaluable 121 befriending to children in need, to help them improve their confidence, self-esteem, and to allow them to have some fun, sadly lacking in many of their lives.
- ✓ We have helped 98 children directly during 2023, and many more in the wider family, school and community environment.
- ✓ Our Newsletter published in May 2024 for the previous year work gives some fantastic stories of success, and the benefits of our service, to both volunteers and the children we help.
- ✓ We held several successful outside events including craft event, and a Christmas party again at OLRFC with over 100 attending the latter event. There are pictures in our newsletter.
- ✓ Safeguarding training has been undertaken online, including refresher training. Our policies and procedures have been reviewed and updated too.
- ✓ New team members have been successfully recruited to replace colleagues who have left the charity.
- ✓ Our income achieved was £78,054, lower as some grants delayed, against previous year of £67,629, though with expenditure higher at £92,762, with salaries being the greatest difference £51,679 from £42,962 with extra employee, plus wage increases. Older Friends' expenses up to £26,967 from £22,751, with more volunteers claiming expenses, and increased costs of going out for food, trips etc. The carry forward to 2024 reserves of £30,890, was slightly lower than 2022, was, though still leaving us with the ability to continue, with some established funding in our pipeline, albeit with much lower reserves. This includes restricted funds.
- ✓ We have adjusted our reserves policy as we go into 2024 to 3/6 months expenditure to more reflect the reality of our position, and lead time for grants. We meet regularly to consider whether we have sufficient funds for continued operation.
- ✓ Our work force has been expanded to include a part time person to improve social media presence so as to aid both recruitment and fund raising.
- ✓ We have expanded our fund raising resources to include a professional fund raiser, as there are increasing demands on the grant funding bodies, reducing our success rate, and to support the need to widen our fund raising net.
- ✓ SSD in Stratford have kindly continued with free basic archive storage.
- ✓ We have postponed adoption of CIO status, as previously agreed, owing to lack of funds, and want to focus on our core delivery.

The Friendship Project for Children Trustees' annual report (continued)

for the year ended 31 December 2023

Financial Review

The charity made an overall deficit of £14,708 in the year, ending the year with total reserves of £30,890. The deficit was largely due to the timing of grant income as The Project received £18,000 of grants in January 2024, most of which had been expected to be received in December 2023. Had these been received in December rather than January, The Project would have reported a small surplus for 2023.

Recognising, the increasing challenges of raising funds from grant providers and the need to provide greater resilience to the charity, in late 2023, The Project commenced working with a professional fundraising consultant to assist with our grant applications. We are pleased to report that this is increasing our income in 2024.

The Trustees have reviewed the financial position of the charity in light of the current economic environment and the forecast costs of its operations and fund raising. They believe that with the funding commitments made and plans for 2024, the charity has the necessary funding to continue providing its services for at least the next 12 months. The trustees review this at each of their quarterly meetings.

The charity's policy on reserves

In line with the guidance provided by the Charities Commission the Friendship Project has reviewed and revised its policy on the holding of financial reserves.

The majority of our monthly expenditure relates to the salaries and expenses of our staff and the expenses of our Older Friends.

As our income varies considerably month by month it is important that in order to provide continuity of support for our Younger Friends that we have sufficient financial resources in place for the timely and regular payment of salaries and expenses.

In order to ensure our ability to achieve this, the trustees believe that it is essential to hold financial reserves, including restricted funds, of a minimum of three to six months forecast expenditure. A proportion of these funds are held in an interest earning deposit account.

This policy will be monitored and reviewed annually.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:



Signed

Date 3rd June 2024

Cheryll Rawbone, Chairman

Independent Examiners Report to the Trustees of The Friendship Project for Children

Year Ended 31 December 2023

I report on the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31 December 2023, which are set out on pages 6 to 12.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act;
- follow the procedures laid down in the general directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act, and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect, the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Acthave not been met; or
2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Signed:

Paula Wilson, MAAT

Date: 3rd June 2024

The Friendship Project for Children

Statement of Financial Activities

For the year ended 31 December 2023

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2023 Total Funds £	2022 £
Incoming resources					
Grants	2	20,191	43,428	63,619	49,475
Donations	3	12,091	-	12,091	12,707
Fundraising events	4	2,164	-	2,164	4,759
Investment income	6	180	-	180	688
Total incoming resources		34,626	43,428	78,054	67,629
Resources expended					
Salaries, NI	10	33,210	18,469	51,679	42,962
Staff expenses		3,674	1,325	4,999	3,944
Volunteer expenses		6,333	20,634	26,967	22,751
Insurance		3,675	-	3,675	3,616
Events/Christmas parties		791	-	791	1,137
Other expenditure	11	4,301	-	4,301	3,589
Independent examination fee	13	350	-	350	350
Total resources expended		52,334	40,428	92,762	78,349
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources		(17,708)	3,000	(14,708)	(10,720)
Gains & (losses) on investments	6	0	-	0	(3,977)
Total funds brought forward		31,048	14,550	45,598	60,295
Total funds carried forward	9	13,340	17,550	30,890	45,598

Expenditure is allocated between Unrestricted and Restricted funds on the basis of actual expenditure incurred along with an element of judgement on indirect items of expenditure.

The Friendship Project for Children

Balance Sheet

For the year ended 31 December 2023

	Note	£	2023 £	£	2022 £
Current assets					
Cash at bank and in hand		33,112		47,692	
Debtors	7	607		304	
		<u>33,719</u>		<u>47,996</u>	
Current liabilities					
Creditors	8	(2,829)		(2,399)	
Net current assets			30,890		45,598
Net assets			<u>30,890</u>		<u>45,598</u>
The funds of the charity					
General Funds			13,340		31,048
Restricted Funds			17,550		14,550
Total Funds	9		<u>30,890</u>		<u>45,598</u>

The trustees declare that they have approved the accounts above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:



Signed:

Date: 3rd June 2024

Cheryl Rawbone, Chairperson

1. Accounting policies

These financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention with items recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant notes to these accounts and with the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) issued on 16 July 2014 and with the Charities Act 2011.

Incoming Resources

All material incoming resources have been included on a receivable basis – i.e. they are included if the date receivable falls within the period covered by these accounts.

Resources expended

These have been analysed using a natural classification.

2. Grants

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2023	Total Funds 2022
	£	£	£	£
Warwickshire Police & Crime Commissioner	-	10,200	10,200	8,000
King Henry VIII Endowed Trust	-	4,250	4,250	3,900
29th May 1961 Charitable Trust	6,000	-	6,000	-
Heart of England 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust	1,000	-	1,000	-
Heart of England - High Sheriff of Warwickshire	500	-	500	-
Maud Elkington Trust	2,000	-	2,000	-
L&Q Foundation	-	6,957	6,957	-
Heart of England Dulverton Trust	-	5,000	5,000	-
The Higgs Charity	-	12,000	12,000	-
Masonic Charitable Foundation	4,366	-	4,366	-
Four Acre Trust	4,325	2,021	6,346	-
IFT O'Brien Trust	2,000	-	2,000	2,500
Warwickshire Crimebeat	-	3,000	3,000	-
National Lottery Community Fund	-	-	-	9,650
AVIVA Community Fund	-	-	-	5,000
Stratford Town Trust	-	-	-	6,000
Warwick & District Council	-	-	-	12,500
Warwickshire Police Charitable Trust	-	-	-	1,925
	<u>20,191</u>	<u>43,428</u>	<u>63,619</u>	<u>49,475</u>

3. Donations

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2023	Total Funds 2022
	£	£	£	£
Anonymous Donors	1,000	-	1,000	2,000
Aubrey Allen	2,500	-	2,500	-
Bates Trust Claverdon	1,500	-	1,500	1,000
FC Stokes Trust	1,500	-	1,500	1,000
Charities Trust	1,540	-	1,540	2,400
Mike & Stella Parton	1,000	-	1,000	-
Stour Valley Lions	500	-	500	-
Memory of Toby Barwell	607	-	607	-
George Pragnell	500	-	500	-
Donations under £500	1,444	-	1,444	6,307
	<u>12,091</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>12,091</u>	<u>12,707</u>

4. Fundraising Events

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2023	Total Funds 2022
	£	£	£	£
C Rawbone Rugby Shirt	500	-	500	-
Just Giving	1,274	-	1,274	-
Leamington & District Christmas Sleigh	339	-	339	-
Amazon Smile	52	-	52	-
Warwickshire Police Cadets	-	-	-	2,696
Anonymous	-	-	-	1,000
Fundraising Events under £1,000	-	-	-	1,063
	<u>2,164</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,164</u>	<u>4,759</u>

5. Investments

Our Investment Account with M&G Charibond was closed in 2022, due to increased investment risk in the current economic climate. Monies were moved to a lower risk deposit account with Lloyds Bank.

6. Debtors

	2023 £	2022 £
Insurance Prepayment	607	304
	<u>607</u>	<u>304</u>

7. Creditors

	2023 £	2022 £
Volunteer Expenses	2,137	1,836
Staff Expenses	251	213
Independent Examination Fee	350	350
Events Christmas Party	90	-
	<u>2,829</u>	<u>2,399</u>

8. Movements in Funds

	Opening Balance £	Incoming Resources £	(Resources expended) £	Transfers £	Closing Balance £
General funds	31,048	34,626	(52,334)	-	13,340
Total General Funds	<u>31,048</u>	<u>34,626</u>	<u>(52,334)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>13,340</u>
Restricted Funds					
Warwickshire P&CC	2,000	10,200	(9,650)	-	2,550
National Lottery	9,650	-	(9,650)	-	-
King Henry VIII Endowed Trust	975	4,250	(4,163)	-	1,062
Warwickshire Police Charitable Trust	1,925	-	(1,925)	-	-
L&Q Foundation	-	6,957	(6,957)	-	-
The Higgs Charity	-	12,000	(3,000)	-	9,000
Four Acre Trust	-	2,021	-	-	2,021
Dulverton Trust	-	5,000	(2,083)	-	2,917
Warwickshire Crimebeat	-	3,000	(3,000)	-	-
Total Restricted Funds	<u>14,550</u>	<u>43,428</u>	<u>(40,428)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>17,550</u>
Total Funds	<u>45,598</u>	<u>78,054</u>	<u>(92,762)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>30,890</u>

9. Staff costs and numbers

	2023 £	2022 £
Wages, NI & Pension	51,679	42,962
	<u>51,679</u>	<u>42,962</u>

No employee received emoluments of more than £60,000.

The average weekly number of part time employees during the year was 6 (2022: 5)

10. Other expenditure

	2023 £	2022 £
Telephones	521	469
Printing, stationery & advertising	377	388
Database / IT	461	273
Payroll	763	1307
Fundraising	1500	-
Storage of documents	-	483
CIO Accreditation	-	212
Sundries	677	458
	<u>4,301</u>	<u>3,589</u>

11. Trustees' remuneration, benefits and expenses

During the accounting period, the charity obtained insurance cover including Public Liability, Employer's Liability, All Risks for Assets, Personal Accident for volunteers and younger friends and Trustee Indemnity Insurance for a total of £3,678.

The management committee and other trustees did not receive any remuneration during the year (2022: nil).

12. Independent examination and accountancy services

During the period, the cost of the examination and accountancy services was £350.

13. Controlling parties

The charity is under the control of the management committee.

14. Glossary of terms

Restricted funds:	These are funds given to the charity, subject to specific restrictions set by the donor, but still within the general objects of the charity.
Debtors:	These are expenses paid in the year with some of the benefit arising in the following year
Creditors:	These are amounts owed by the charity, but not paid during the accounting period.

THE FRIENDSHIP PROJECT

England & Wales - Charity number 517684

Accounts



the friendship project
for children

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

Published in June 2023



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INTRODUCTION

This report reflects our achievements during 2022 and our plans for 2023.

Our thanks go to the many volunteers, employees, funders, and supporters for helping children over the last 12 months, enabling them to have some much-needed fun, aiding their personal development, confidence, and improving their self-esteem, and in particular coping with their new challenges.

Additionally, I would like to thank the contributors to this report which helps give an insight into the work undertaken by members of our Operations team, fellow trustees, plus importantly some case studies to help show the impact and difference that we and more importantly our volunteers are making.

The overall purpose of the Friendship Project is to improve the social and emotional well-being of children, aged 6-16, disadvantaged by virtue of their own or family circumstances. An Older Friend provides experiences lacking in the child's life, builds a trusting relationship and raises the self-esteem of their Younger Friend. Volunteers, over the age of 18, are drawn from Warwickshire communities and come from all walks of life. They are carefully vetted as to their suitability for this work, including DBS checks.

Volunteers meet with their Younger Friends weekly for between 2-3 hours to be involved in mutually enjoyable and jointly planned activities and visits. Examples include playing in the park, building dens, craft activities, cooking, fishing, bird watching, climbing, golf, sewing, library, swimming, cinema, growing vegetables etc. which, their school contemporaries take for granted.

Volunteers maintain that the 1:1 attention, with the capacity for the child to talk to a listening adult, is the most valuable aspect of the activity. Such activities are at the heart of what the Project does.

The average length of a friendship is 2.5/3 years and over time the Younger Friend gradually becomes more open and confident in discussing worries and concerns about family, school, friends and themselves. Older Friends offer support and, increasingly, guidance on more sensitive and personal issues. This has helped Younger Friends gain a better understanding of their problems; develop better relationships with family members; and cope more positively with challenging situations at school.

Positive feedback and encouragement, invariably missing in the child's life, is a constant feature of the weekly activities and of major importance in raising self-esteem. This usually results in the young people developing new interests and acquiring a wider range of skills.

Volunteers enjoy the company of their Younger Friends and going to places they would not otherwise go to. They enjoy providing new experiences and knowing they are a trusted confidante but, above all, they gain satisfaction from seeing their Younger Friend develop socially and personally.

One-to-one befriending carries a potential risk in relation to child protection. Safeguarding procedures, in relation to recruitment, vetting, briefing, training and supervision of volunteers are given the highest priority and kept under constant review with Children's Services. The Friendship Project is an Associate Member of the Warwickshire Safeguarding Children's Board and an Assistant Head of Service acts as an Advisor to our Trustees.

There is quality research available advising the importance of early intervention to help both mental and physical health outcomes in later life, making our contribution in the sector extremely valuable.

We hope that you find this report of interest, and for further information please visit our website: www.friendshipproject.co.uk Please also follow us on: – **@friendshipproj** on twitter and Instagram or on Facebook: www.facebook.com/TheFriendshipProjectForChildren

CHAIRMANS REPORT

My report is focused primarily on our activities and achievements in 2022, our last financial year, plus our plans for 2023. It has been a momentous year with the death of the late Queen, a new monarch, King Charles III, and regrettably continuation of the Ukraine war brings stress, disruption, and sadness to so many people. The current economic position has impacted all charities, and we are not immune to this, with referrals/need increasing and funds depleting.



First and foremost, I would like to extend a big thank you on behalf of all the children (Younger Friends) that we are supporting and have helped to all our excellent current and past volunteers, employees, benefactors/funders, and trustees. Without whose dedication our small local charity could not continue to help the lives of children in need throughout Warwickshire. Since 1986, we estimate that there have been more than 1,500 children helped over this period.

I would particularly also like to thank our operations team for the way in which they have continued adapted to work with the changes we have seen coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, and on behalf of our volunteers who frequently commend the support and help they receive from the team, how they are integral to the Friendship Project and greatly appreciated.

It has been great that we have been able to resume our important face to face weekly meetings with our younger friends, and it is much appreciated the various initiatives that our Older Friend volunteers have supported whilst we pivoted to continue to support as many children as possible through the various COVID restrictions that have been in place in the last three years. The fortitude of our volunteers, operations team, and trustees to help us come through this period is greatly appreciated.

We have been able to return to again hold collective events indoors in the latter part of 2022, with our valued craft event in September being the first, which was also the last one to be organised fantastically by Pauline Higginbottom, who has sadly now retired from the charity after many years excellent service, and we now have a team in place for September 23rd 2023. We were also able to hold our first Christmas party for 3 years in late 2022, which was very exciting, and an energetic event held kindly at the clubhouse of Old Leamingtonians, with over 100 attending.

Since our last report we have said goodbye to Heather Shipley and Viv Kelsey, who are thanked for their loyal service. We have successfully recruited replacements, with Hannah Peattie new area coordinator for Nuneaton, Bedworth, and North Warwickshire, and Harriet Crawford in the same role for Stratford, Shipston and Alcester areas. Sarah Edge has reduced her hours, and we have recently employed Tarragon Kelham also on part time basis to help us with social media and marketing.

From a trustee perspective Angela Truman is standing down at the AGM, owing to increased work and personal responsibilities, though will continue to help periodically with promotional events. Angela is thanked for her service, constructive help and support.

Trustee vacancies

We are looking to further strengthen and improve diversity of our trustee board, and key skills identified as needed are social media, Marketing, QA/Compliance/Risk, Fund Raising Events, and Operations. If you know of anyone in these areas that would be interested, then we would be delighted to discuss further.

The Highlights of what we have achieved in 2022 are as follows:

- ✓ Continued to provide the invaluable 121 volunteer support and fun for disadvantaged children despite the ongoing challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- ✓ We have helped 105 children directly during 2022, and many more in the wider family and school's environment.
- ✓ Risk Assessments for COVID-19 and Q & A provided for volunteers and team have been regularly updated as regulations changed, to enable us to continue to function as the law allowed, and with more freedom in the latter part of the year.
- ✓ We have returned fully to face to face support during 2022.
- ✓ We held several successful outside events including craft event, and a Christmas party at OLRFC with over 100 attending the latter event.
- ✓ Safeguarding training has been undertaken online, including refresher training. Our policies and procedures have been reviewed and updated too.
- ✓ Our income achieved was £67,629, against previous year of £63,366, and with expenditure higher at £78,349, including Older Friends expenses up to £22,751, almost double the previous year, when there were more restrictions on going out.
- ✓ The carry forward to 2023 of unrestricted reserves £31,048 was significantly lower than in 2022, though still leaving us with the ability to continue, with some established funding in our pipeline, albeit with much lower reserves. We have restricted funds of £14,500 in addition.
- ✓ Our investment account has been closed, and monies moved to a lower risk deposit account from Charibond, owing to the economic climate.
- ✓ Our salaries have increased as we have now employed an Operations team manager, so as to remove the day-to-day responsibility for line management from the trustee board, which is good governance.
- ✓ We agreed to review our insurance provider and HR payroll costs in 2023, with a view to making savings in overheads for the coming year.
- ✓ We have also been kindly given free archive storage for 2023 at SSD in Stratford.

In 2023 our plans include the following:

- ✓ Continue to provide the invaluable 121 volunteer support and fun for disadvantaged children. Aim to increase the numbers supported and reduce our waiting lists. Target to have 85 still matched by end of 2022, though the quality is still more important than the numbers matched.
- ✓ Specifically, to increase the number of Older Friends as volunteers, particularly in Nuneaton, Bedworth & North Warwickshire, plus Rugby and district.
- ✓ Our budget is to raise £85,000, with anticipated expenditure to be £90,707.
- ✓ Identify additional grant funding and seek business nominations a charity of the year.
- ✓ Recruit additional trustees as identified in certain specific skill set areas and improve our diversity and representation.
- ✓ Re-commence work with our Trusted Charity project, when we have trustee lead in place for this.
- ✓ Attend periodic networking events to increase the profile of the Friendship Project.
- ✓ Further improve our social media presence. Recruit part time person to support this.
- ✓ Organise regular sessions through the year for Safeguarding Training for volunteers, both as refreshers and also for new volunteers, online and face to face.
- ✓ Continue to hold periodic Older Friends get-togethers/training/support sessions.
- ✓ Complete the Procedures Manual including Trustees Responsibilities too, in "How to" format for contingency planning.
- ✓ Continue to encourage and support training for the operation team.
- ✓ Recruit additional Group Supporters, as required as our Older Friend volunteers increase.

Big thank you

Whilst writing my report I would like to again personally thank both past and present the many Older Friends, Group Supporters, volunteers, operations team, employees, and trustees, who give their time freely to help our Younger Friends have important 1-2-1 attention, emotional support, friendship and the opportunity to explore new activities and have some fun, particularly through these most challenging times.

Cheryll Rawbone

Chairman Email: cheryll.rawbone@friendshipproject.co.uk

Safeguarding Report

Esther Jones esther.jones@friendshipproject.co.uk



As Trustee with responsibility for safeguarding, I'm proud to say that that safeguarding, and the ensuring the welfare and wellbeing of our younger friends has continued to be the most important priority in everything we do over the last year.

Ensuring our older friends are the right people for the role is something we take very seriously, so this year we reviewed our volunteer recruitment policy and induction process. There are numerous stages of the recruitment process and we have updated the policy by setting out the principles underpinning it, namely that the safety and wellbeing of our younger friends is the most important consideration in what we do and that the suitability of our volunteers will be the foremost consideration throughout the process. Our recruitment process has numerous stages from receipt of the application, home visit and interview to undertaking ID and DBS Checks, sharing of the project guidelines and reviewing the safeguarding agreement. It's only once these stages are complete that a Matching meeting can occur. We wanted to give our younger friends a stronger voice as part of the matching process we will ask the younger friend to identify a safe person they can talk to if they are unhappy with any aspect of their outings. If the safe person isn't present at the meeting, we will reach out to them so they know how to contact us and pass on any feedback or concerns raised by our younger friend. Following the initial matching, we will also undertake a check-in with the carer within the first 6 months, and then again after the 1st year to check-in on the friendship (as well as being available at any point in between these contact points.)

Another important part of safeguarding practice is knowing when to have a conversation with another agency to share any worries or concerns that have occurred. Area Coordinators usually receive these concerns and as Safeguarding Trustee, they may bring them to me for a second opinion. I'm always impressed by the team's focus on doing what is best for our younger friends' wellbeing. Having a conversation is such an important part of safeguarding and it's often the bit that didn't happen when things go wrong. This year we have introduced a change in policy so we are working in alignment with standard practice across children's services: where we have a concern that means we need to talk to the Front Door we will ring the parents of the younger friend first to let them know first, unless we are concerned that doing so might cause problems for the younger friend. If you are parent or carer reading this, we know this can sound like a really scary thing but please be assured that our priority is always the safety and wellbeing of our younger friends.

I look forward to another year with the Friendship Project and wish to pass on my thanks to all within the team for working with me to continually learn and improve what we do.

Grant, Trust and Local Fund Raising

Richard Barrett richard.barrett@friendshipproject.co.uk

It has been pleasing to see our total income grow by approximately 7% in 2022, but disappointing that our donations and fundraising income declined by 22%. The effects of inflation and the cost-of-living crisis impacted upon this income and at the same time our own costs rose significantly, resulting in a deficit of over £11,400 for the year.

We are very grateful for the continuing support of existing grant funders, The Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner, The National Lottery Community Fund, The King Henry VIII's Endowed Trust, The Heart of England Community Foundation, 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust, Stratford Town Trust, Aviva Community Fund, The Four Acre Trust and Warwickshire CrimeBeat. In addition to applications made to existing grant funders, we were also successful in applying to Warwick District Council and the Warwickshire Police Charitable Trust.

We were delighted to welcome The O'Brien Charitable Trust and Sumo Digital as new corporate supporters during the year and to continue our relationship with CR Callum Limited who also contributed to our fund raising during the year.

We are also thankful to The Warwickshire Police Cadets who raised £2,696 through a sponsored walk and to Nina Young who raised £1,810 through a Just Giving sponsored boxing event as well for all who raised money on our behalf or contributed to our other fundraising activities in 2022.

We are extremely grateful to all our corporate and individual donors who have supported us through large and small donations and also for the ongoing support of all our grant funders:

- ✓ 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust
- ✓ Amazon Smile
- ✓ Anonymous donors
- ✓ Aviva Community Fund
- ✓ Balsall Common Lions
- ✓ Bravissimo
- ✓ Charities Trust
- ✓ Claverdon Field Charitable Trust
- ✓ Claverdon Monday Club
- ✓ Coventry & District Cricket Club
- ✓ CR Callum Limited
- ✓ Cubbington WI
- ✓ Dotshill WI
- ✓ Gallagher Ltd
- ✓ Georgina Rawbone
- ✓ BM & SJ Hall
- ✓ F C Stokes Trust
- ✓ Grendon WI
- ✓ Heart of England Community Foundation
- ✓ Just Giving
- ✓ King Henry VIII's Endowed Trust - Warwick
- ✓ Mr & Mrs. M Parton
- ✓ Mrs K Read
- ✓ Mrs L Hamon
- ✓ Mrs S Weetman
- ✓ NFU Mutual
- ✓ Nina Young
- ✓ Rowington WI
- ✓ Shipston Rotary
- ✓ Sophie Parker
- ✓ St Marys WI
- ✓ Stratford Town Trust
- ✓ Terence Hague
- ✓ The Four Acre Trust
- ✓ The National Lottery Community Fund
- ✓ Warwickshire CrimeBeat
- ✓ Warwickshire Police Cadets
- ✓ Warwickshire Police Charitable Trust
- ✓ Warwickshire Police & Crime Commissioner
- ✓ Women of Welton

Thanks also go to Gallagher Insurance Broking Limited who continued to give administration support and to Leamington Lawn Tennis and Squash Club for use of their meeting room.

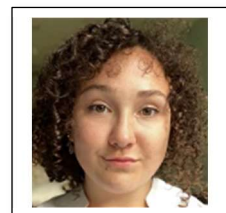
We have continued to raise our profile, particularly through social media, Facebook and our website, alongside attending networking events and speaking engagements. It has been pleasing to see how this activity results in volunteers coming forward to be Older Friends as well as raising funds for the Project.

We look forward to continuing our work and to growing our friendships, supporting more disadvantaged children. This will require us to raise further funds as our costs grow, but we are confident that we can continue to grow our income through the support of our donors and grant funders.

Fundraising is a team effort and thanks go to the whole team for all their hard work in supporting our fundraising.

Marketing

Taggie Kelham tarragon.kelham@friendshipproject.co.uk



Social Media

NEWS AND UPDATES

AT A GLANCE

- New Marketing and Social Media Assistant
- New Initiatives
- Request for Help

New Marketing and Social Media Assistant

Taggie Kelham has recently moved back to Warwickshire from Edinburgh after completing her masters degree in Art History and Fine Art. Taggie is excited to utilise her years of experience of working as a Live Entertainment Publicity Consultant, specialising in running campaigns at the Edinburgh Fringe for clients including Nish Kumar, Milton Jones and Sir Ranulph Fiennes. Recently Taggie has been volunteering at Cherished, a charity in Sutton Coldfield dedicated to supporting children to feel safe, seen, soothed and secure. This voluntary work with children has motivated Taggie to engage with The Friendship Project and use her publicity experience to bolster the charity's online presence and develop The Friendship Projects social media and marketing strategies.

New Initiatives

- The aim is to create a cohesive message across all The Friendship Project's social platforms, where the consistent graphics and content hopefully encourage more likes and follows and clearly communicate what The Friendship Project does, and why it deserves the public's support.
- New regular posts like #FriendshipFridays where existing friendships are showcased every Friday in the hope that they will affirm to existing volunteers the value of their contribution and inspire new volunteers to join.



What we need from you

Your continued support!

Like, share and follow us at:-

[Facebook](#) / [Instagram @friendshipproj](#) / [Twitter @friendshipproj](#) / [The Friendship Project](#)

We need your **testimony, photos** and **videos** documenting your experience of The Friendship Project for us to share on social media and spread the message of the wonderful work the charity does.

For example, images of volunteers will feature in our #FriendshipFriday posts. Let us say a public thank you by sending in images/video of your fundraising efforts for The Friendship Project or if you're an older friend it would be really helpful if you could send in images/video of activities you've done with your younger friend. It doesn't need to be doing anything noteworthy, even a picture or some video walking the dogs would be great. Finally, testimony of your experience with The Friendship Project will help encourage other people to get involved or support the project with donations.

Please send testimony, photos and videos to tarragon.kelham@friendshipproject.co.uk

Operations Report for AGM

Ruth Blunt ruth.blunt@friendshipproject.co.uk



General

We have welcomed two new Area Coordinators to the Operations Team this year. Hannah Peattie joined us in January as the AC for Nuneaton, Bedworth and North Warwickshire. She brings with her a wealth of experience in supporting families facing challenges. She has done lots of volunteering work and has 4 children of her own.

Harriet Crawford joined us in April as the new Area Coordinator for Stratford, Alcester and Shipston. Harriet has in-depth experience of working with children and families who have complex needs and challenges.

We have also appointed a part-time Marketing and Social Media Assistant to take responsibility for our social media and marketing content. Tarragon (Taggie) Kelham joined the Friendship Project in May. Taggie has wide-ranging experience of working in PR, Events and Marketing as well as experience of working in the charity sector supporting young people.

In order to ensure that our procedures are robust and clearly documented, we have recently reviewed our policies and procedures. We have updated our policy to reflect the need to inform the parent/carer before making any referrals to the Front Door. We have reviewed our Recruitment Process Guidelines to ensure that we are making all the relevant checks prior to matching a volunteer with a young person. We have updated and consolidated the Friendship Agreement Form and the Notes for Parents/Guardians Form. We now also have a standard New Friendship Form for details to be completed after every match meeting and sent to Karen for her records.

We have reviewed and downgraded our COVID-19 policy. This will be reflected in the updated version of our Guidelines. We will keep the old version on file.

I have completed audits on the team's files, which were mostly comprehensive and well-organised. Where detailed information was lacking, I have requested that the information is updated.

We continue to receive numerous referrals for children and young people needing support. We have had to end some friendships where the relationships between the OF and their YF, or the YF's family, have become too complex. We also had to end a friendship when an AC and OF received abusive messages from a parent. The majority of our friendships are well-established and continue to run smoothly. Our volunteers do an amazing job and are very well supported by the Group Supporters and the Area Coordinators. The feedback we continue to receive is that giving the young person some quality 1-1 time away from sometimes difficult home situations, really does improve their confidence and self-esteem. It is also hugely rewarding for our volunteers, knowing that they are having a positive influence and making a difference to a child's life.

Current Friendships

Warwick and District – 27

Stratford and District – 22

Rugby – 13

Nuneaton, Bedworth, North Warwickshire – 11

Total number of current friendships – 73 (with a further 12 awaiting interview or awaiting matching)

Training

Dealing with Difficult Situations/Being Assertive (Internal) – September 2022
Workplace Wellbeing Forum (C&W Chamber of Commerce) – September 2022
Health and Safety Essentials (Nimble) – October 2022
Volunteers and the Law (NCVO) – February 2023 (RB only)
Equality and Inclusion / Transgender Awareness (EQulP) – March 2023
Safeguarding (Internal) – ongoing
Restorative Practice (Warwickshire County Council) – December 2022/June 2023
Myers Briggs Training (Internal) – July 2023
Wellbeing That Works (Auburn Coaching) – ongoing (RB only)

Events

13/02/23 – OF get-together (Zoom) Warwick District
4 and 11/3/23 – Motionhouse Event
16/3/23 – Midlands Service Excellence Awards – FP nominated finalist
3/6/23 - Moreton Morrell Event
14/06/23 – OF get-together Warwick District
1 or 8/7/23 – Kenilworth Fire Station Event
23/9/23 - Craft Event
October – Potential Train Outing (Community Rail Partnership)
December 2023 – Christmas Party (tbc)

Marketing and Social Media

We have now appointed a part-time Marketing and Social Media Assistant who will be responsible for managing and developing our social media and marketing content. We haven't previously been able to dedicate enough time to marketing and social media so having someone who can focus on promoting the Friendship Project to raise funds and recruit more volunteers is essential so that we can continue to support more children and young people throughout Warwickshire. This is particularly important in Rugby and the North of the county where we need to boost our volunteer numbers.

AGM Report April 2022-23

Fiona Roche – Area Coordinator for Warwick,
Leamington & Kenilworth
fiona.roche@friendshipproject.co.uk



Older Friends: 25
Younger Friends: 27
Pipeline: 7

In General

Another very busy year. My year has been mainly spent matching new volunteers and ending friendships. Looking after new friendships, monitoring and sorting out small issues and larger safeguarding warnings. I worked closely with Heather to support friendships over the South of Warwickshire. Organised Face to face get-togethers which are back, but zoom get togethers are still popular as well. I have helped with some training for Ruth and our 2 new Area Coordinators.

A special Thank You to Joan Bolton who volunteered with us for 26 years and 4 Younger Friends. She also takes the record for our oldest volunteer leaving us at the age of 87! She would still be happy to take on a new Younger Friend if the right one is referred to us!

2 other notable thank you's go to Claire Morris who was with us for 11 years and Laura Holloway 13 years. It is amazing to have worked with these lovely ladies for all my 9 ¾ years at the project.

Friendships

Friendships matched 15

It is great that we have had lots of new volunteers join and become Older Friends. Sadly a few of these have ended already due to reasons below. I have some fantastic new friendships that are going really well. I have had to request from children's services and schools some younger referrals as most of them are secondary school age children. Younger referrals did come in and these were all matched.

Friendships ended 16

2 friendships ended before they got going, 1 due to mothers' anxieties about letting her child go and the other because the YF was 6 and felt after a couple of outings didn't want to leave her mother.

8 for natural reasons eg, reached 17, become independent teen.

5 safeguarding concerns eg OF wasn't following our procedures and guidelines, family problems were escalating and OF didn't feel comfortable taking the YF out. Concerns were raised with MASH who then spoke to the mother. OF and myself then got abusive messages, so ended immediately.

1 Older friends work diary and family illness meant she felt she no longer had time to take her YF out.

Pipeline 7

I am busy arranging new matches, currently in the process of matching 5 Older Friends. I have a couple to interview and 1 Older Friend to rematch later in the year when she is back from holidays.

Events attended

- Team Away day
- Cava volunteer fair
- Christmas Party
- Motionhouse event
- Zoom get togethers
- Face to face get togethers
- Presentation to WI
- Attended Midlands Excellence award

Radio

I went on CW Radio at the beginning of the year and took part in Snake Escape which was a first! It gave me an opportunity to talk about the Friendship Project.

Rotary Holiday to Whitemoor lakes

I organised for 4 Younger Friends age 11-13 to go on a Rotary Holiday. I would say it was mixed success. The holiday was fully funded by the Rotary Charity and the District to the tune of £360 per head. Unfortunately, I had to pick up 2 of the YFs on the first evening as one had got upset causing his sister to also get very upset. One YF made it through half the week and the last did the whole 5 day week. The concept and place was amazing. There was a lake with water activities, climbing wall, zip wires, fencing, and more. 3 hot meals a day and a tuck shop. The organisers did in fact say that half the children who attended went home early, which was down to homesickness. The effects of Covid certainly showing here of separation anxiety. All 4 children and their parents were extremely positive and grateful for the opportunity. Staying away from home for 4 nights was a bit too much for 3 of them. The time that they were there they did in fact enjoy themselves in the main.

Summary

I put a lot of time into looking after my friendships. I feel it is very important to make sure the Older Friends feels supported and valued. My Group Supporters, Tim Proudler, Elaine Freeman, Kerry Williams, Gilly Dale and Rosie Goy are fantastic and a great help to me.

I am very sad that Heather has left the project. We had a great working relationship and I will miss her a lot. I was pleased to be in the interview panel for the new AC for Stratford - Harriet, and am looking forward to working with her. Hannah for North Warwickshire has fitted in really well to the team and I am enjoying her being part of it. It is great having Ruth as our manager to support the operations team.

I feel pleased to have nearly reached 10 years working for the Friendship Project and I continue to enjoy being part of this amazing charity.

Case Study

I moved to Leamington Spa in September 2019 knowing very little about the activities in the town. I soon got to meet plenty of people of a similar age through the seniors section of The Warwickshire golf club, but did not know any other people in the area. I wanted to make a contribution through volunteering, and went along to a volunteer fair at the Royal Priors shopping centre.

My preference was for doing something with young people. At the fair I met Fiona Roche and Heather Shipley and was pleased to hear that I was not too old to be considered as an Older Friend with the Friendship Project. After going through the necessary checks, I went on the induction training session in March 2020, just 10 days before the first Covid lockdown.

Because of the Covid restrictions, it was not until November 2020 that I first met C and his Mum at his school. We arranged a first meeting in early December and walked down to St. Nicholas Park in Warwick. C was quiet to begin with, but after a while, he suggested that we played Pooh Sticks in the stream running through the park, and from then on we have enjoyed a variety of activities together.

C is happiest doing something outdoors. Our standard activity is to kick a ball around in his local park, and sometimes that is all we do. Usually, we add a drink and a snack somewhere, which gives an opportunity to talk through how things are going for him, as well as important news items such as who Chelsea have lost to this week. Over the months we have tried out other sports – basketball was an early favourite, as well as tennis, golf and frisbee.

We have also explored other places locally – Charlecote Park and the welly walk at Packwood House are favourite examples. We have been to local festivals together such as the Food and Drink festival in Leamington.

I meet C after school some weeks, and in winter this limits our options, but last winter we found that we enjoyed going to the Dice Box Café in Leamington and playing their extensive selection of board games whilst enjoying our drinks.

We have taken full advantage of some of the activities that the Friendship Project arranges for us. We went to the light show at Coombe Abbey Park, the group visit to Moreton Morrell Animal Unit and a chance for C and other young friends to form a guard of honour at a Wasps rugby game in Coventry. Last week C and I were lucky enough to be able to use two tickets to see Coventry City that had been offered to the Friendship Project by a donor. C doesn't like noisy environments, but he was fine in a raucous 30,000 crowd there!

At our meetings, C is relaxed and well behaved. He goes back to his Mum happy but sometimes tired out (so am I!). I get regular feedback which indicates that the friendship is working well, and C and his Mum appreciate the time we spend together. I enjoy being with C and the exercise he gives me!

After 2 ½ years of meetings we are still enjoying each other's company, and I hope we will still be meeting for some time to come.

Case Study

My involvement with the friendship project started 13 years ago and feels like it went in the blink of an eye! I had time to spare and the involvement with the project was flexible enough to fit around my working week. What really attracted me was the simplicity of the concept and the opportunity to have some fun along the way. It did not disappoint!

For the first 8 years I was paired with my younger friend T; who over the period went from shy and quiet to an opinionated, funny (and tall) teenager! This time was not without its challenges; some weeks he would not want to leave the house with me, which sometimes just resulted in sitting at the dining table and having a quick chat before leaving and returning the following week to try again. Over time we built up trust and even came to laugh about these instances; and I learned to understand his thinking more and what might constitute a bad day for him – and more importantly what was most likely to persuade him to venture out! Usually this involved pizza, or our mutual love of animated and marvel films, and our equally competitive nature when it came to bowling. Over time we got more adventurous with climbing walls (him climbing, me watching) and days out – including some fabulous trips and events run by the project. One thing that always made me smile was T's simplistic and straight to the point view of the world. I will never forget ordering a fresh mint tea when we were out, only for him to declare to the waitress that it was a 'rip-off' to charge for some leaves in hot water. I genuinely still smile about that every time I have a mint tea now!

My friendship with T came to a natural end as he got older, and soon I was paired with S. She was the complete opposite in some ways; couldn't wait to go out and always had a long list of all the things she wanted to do. S's sibling was also in the project and after a while of unsuccessful pairing we evolved into a trio. This was with S's agreement that we could sometimes still have 1:1 outings, which we did and she would choose the activity on those days. Pizza and cinema was again a favourite with both; with the biggest ice cream sundaes known to man for birthday treats. S & R were always up for an adventure; trampolining (which my back did not thank me for) and even convincing me to join them on the climbing wall (making me feel bad for the encouragement to get to the top that I had always given T from the sidelines) – it's a lot harder than it looks! While both had difficult periods during our friendship, they never failed to make me laugh. S has said that she likes my sense of humour – we're quite similar in that respect - and R never stops talking or asking questions. It has been an absolute pleasure to watch them both grow over the last five years. COVID was difficult but we sent letters, treats and pictures in the post and as S got her own phone it was easier to keep in touch over Whatsapp. She would often send me ideas for outings once restrictions had lifted!

Over both friendships I always had good relationships with parents and schools and it was always nice to receive feedback that the friendship was having a positive impact on the children. I put this down not really to any part I played other than providing a space to talk and be listened to, but mostly an outlet to just have fun. R said that outings mean he can 'get away from things for a while'. It really is as simple as that. I'd be lying if I said there hadn't been tears as well as the laughter, but the Friendship Project supporters and staff have always been accessible and unwavering in their support. What a fantastic job you all do!

It is with a heavy heart that after 13 years I am stepping away as an older friend – due to relocation and increased work commitments. I hope to still be involved with the project in some capacity and will forever be a great supporter of this wonderful charity. I plan to still see S & R too when time allows! If you are reading this and you have the time to commit to being an older friend, please do it – I can honestly say I have never once regretted it. I feel like it has given me so much more than I have given back.



AGM Report March 2023

Heather Shipley/Harriet Crawford
Area Coordinator for Stratford District
harriet.crawford@friendshipproject.co.uk



Older Friends: 23
Younger Friends: 23
Pipeline: 1

In General

A busy year recruiting, matching and rematching volunteers. Our referrals continue to be complex with many young people with ASD/ADHD diagnosis' needing support. We have had a few safeguarding issues that have been managed appropriately within the Operations Team, Esther, Children's Services and referrers.

There continues to be a lack of new volunteers in the Stratford town area. This is a historical issue and other charities are also experiencing the same issue with recruiting volunteers in the town.

PR/Marketing

Throughout the year, I have been working within the community to spread the word about the Project with the aim of recruiting new volunteers. Attending networking meetings, WI talks and promoting our friendships via social media. Putting up posters in supermarkets, cafes and notice boards. I have attended meetings with the RSC to see how we can work together and the RSC has sent us tickets for RSC shows for volunteers to use.

Volunteer Events

I have enjoyed attending our regular online and face to face events for volunteers, as well as our activity days for both volunteers and younger friends.

Volunteers

I have a stable base of volunteers who are doing an excellent job of being volunteers for us. The majority of my current volunteers live in the surrounding villages of Stratford.

I also look after some of Fiona's volunteers in Warwick/Harbury. I have attended various 2nd interviews for Fiona to ensure we both feel the volunteers are suited to the Project.

Leaving

It is with sadness that I am leaving the Project. I have so loved working with you all over the last (nearly 6 years). I will really miss you all and our work. You have been a great team to work with.

I have written notes for each OF in their files for the new AC. I have sent Ruth details of which referrers/social workers for the new AC to contact. I have already given to Fiona OF's files from the Warwick/Harbury area and a couple of OFs who would benefit from a call to check all is going well. Majority of Stratford OFs are established in their friendships and do not usually need a lot of support – unless there is a Safeguarding issue!

Here's wishing the new AC all the best with the role, they will certainly have a supportive, friendly and lovely team to work with. My thanks to Cheryl, Angela, Ruth, Richard, Esther and Chris Buck for all their support.

Case Studies

Volunteer 1 (female) - Matched with E (female) on 1/12/21. YP is 8 years old. Referred by SS and school. YP's brother has complex needs and takes up Mum's time. Also 2 half-siblings in the house. Single Mum. Required outcome: for E to benefit from focussed 1:1 time with a trusted adult and the opportunities to engage in her chosen activities.

Comment from Mum from safeguarding review: E and her volunteer have a special bond and it's time just for E.

Comment from E - E thinks she is more confident too and that she has fun with her volunteer. E is always asking her Mum when her volunteer is coming to get her.

Volunteer 2 (Male) – Matched with A (male) on 8/7/22. YP is 11 years old. Referred by Shipston Primary School. YP Dad's is very ill in hospital. Half-sister has complex needs which impacts on family life. Parents were made redundant. Mum suffers from anxiety. Required outcome: for A's self esteem to grow and for him to find happiness in a hobby. A's volunteer (male) has a small holding with animals, a car workshop and many acres of land. They enjoy building dens, looking after the animals and making light sabers together!

Volunteer 3 (female) – Matched with C (female) on 27/6/2019. YP was 10 years old. Referred by Parenting Project in Stratford. YP lives in a busy household with 1 brother and 3 sisters ranging from 2 – 20 years old. Her sister takes up most of Mum's time due to her behaviour. Required outcome: for C to benefit from 1-2-1 time with a trusted adult.

Comment from Mum - YP enjoys seeing her volunteer and it's making a difference to her, it's her time out. YP especially enjoys baking/cooking with her volunteer.

Volunteer 4 (female) – Matched with H (female) on 27/10/2021. YP was 7 years old. Referred by SS. YP has a brother who is awaiting a diagnosis of ADHD/ASD and has a younger sister 4 years old. Due to brother's behaviours the YP may lose out on everyday things and activities of her interest. Required outcome: for the YP to benefit from time away from home and enjoy things that interest her.

YP and volunteer enjoy: going to the theatre, disc golf, butterfly farm, Moreton Morrell visit.

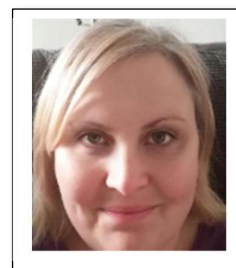
Volunteer 5 (female) – Matched with A (female) 12/08/2020. YP was 9. Referred by Shipston Primary School. Both parents suffer from poor mental and physical health. They find it hard to engage in activities that A might like to do. A tends to worry and can become obsessive about certain things. Required Outcome: For A to be able to have a happy and relaxed experience on a regular basis. YP and volunteer enjoy: walking the dog, cooking, baking, theatre, National Trust houses. Prior to this YP, this volunteer had another YP from age 7 to age 9.

A note from new Area Coordinator Harriet Crawford

I live in Stratford with my husband and two children. My professional background has been mainly in Operations and Managing a support team for a large health care charity. I was elated when I was offered the position as the new Area Coordinator for the Stratford district. I know I have big shoes to fill taking over from Heather, but I am excited to bring my professional experience and knowledge to help continue to support and assist the project.

AGM Report 2023

Hannah Peattie – Area Coordinator for North, Nuneaton and Bedworth hannah.peattie@friendshipproject.co.uk



Older Friends: 12
Younger Friends: 13
Pipeline: 2

In General

I joined the Friendship Project in January this year – its been a fantastic few months so far. I have really enjoyed getting to grips with the role. Everyone on the team has been so supportive. I have recently interviewed and matched my first friendship from start to finish with a volunteer and that has been great. It's been fantastic getting to know some of the Older Friends we currently have and hearing from the parents and carers how much of a difference they are making to the children's lives.

Events attended

- Safeguarding Training (Jan and May)
- Bi-monthly ops meetings
- Socially Shared monthly meeting
- Volunteer event at Rugby Library
- Saints Coffee Mornings for Retirees

Friendships

There was already some well established friendships when I joined. I have spent a fair amount of time cultivating relationships with the existing older friends to ensure that these relationships continue and that everyone is happy. I have had a few friendships end over the last few months. Some due to the time commitment changes for the volunteers, and some because of the child has got older and wants to see own friends and do other things at weekends. There have been a few safeguarding issues to report from OF but these friendships have been able to continue. I currently have 2 new older friends in the pipeline, and I hope these will go through and be matched in the next few weeks.

Referrals

I have received a lot of referrals recently. It is really good that schools have now heard about the service and seem to be using us more. Some of these have needed a higher level of support and so I couldn't take them but in general they are children that will really benefit from the service.

Marketing

Due to the high level of referrals its vital to be finding new volunteers. I have done a few press releases. One in the Colehill Post and one in the Bedworth and Bulkington Local magazines. Both of these have said they will be willing to print something for us on a regular basis- so these are good contacts. I have attended a few local coffee mornings and events for retirees in order to set up a stall and get our name known. I have done some posting on social media and this is something that I will be putting more time into.

Group Supporters

Judy Sims and Stephanie Wade have been group supporters in the North for a while. We have also recently recruited a new Group Supporter- Kay Aldersley who together with myself look after the older friends. This has given me vital support- especially as I was learning the role.

Case study

J is a farmer with a passion for all things outside. He was keen to volunteer for the friendship project to share his passion with others and inspire them to live a more outdoors lifestyle. His farm has many animals including cattle and horses. J's own children are more grown up now and J was excited to become a volunteer and make a difference in children's lives. C started meeting with J at the farm on a weekly basis in April 2021 and has been thoroughly enjoying it. C confidence has increased so much and his foster carer says that he looks forward to visiting the farm every week. He is learning so many skills whilst on the farm. Including the empathy and responsibility that comes from looking after animals. He has even learnt how to lead horses. In March 2023 J took on a second younger friend who also attends the farm weekly. W has got really stuck into the farm and has been learning some really practical skills from his time there. His foster carer says he is more helpful at home and looks forward to every weekend. He has gained confidence in what he can do and has recently erected a greenhouse by himself for his foster mum with the skills that he has learnt at the farm. He was extremely proud of his achievement. He has also got more interested in plants and growing things. Both boys have had the opportunity to fix up bikes whilst they have attended the farm which they can now use during their visits. The visit to the farm is the highlight of both of the boys' weeks.



Case Study

At the age of 59 I was introduced to the Friendship Project by a friend who was already an Older friend. I never had children but always did lots of things with nieces and nephews so was perfectly at ease with young people.

The FP seemed to be such a worthwhile charity and I felt/hoped I could make a difference to a young person's life.

After the initial interview and vetting process I was matched with L, a young boy who lived quite close to me. Our initial meeting was at his school, who I believe had referred him to the FP as he found it difficult to make friends and needed some 1 to 1 time with someone outside of the family.

First impressions of L were that he was very intelligent, remembered every small detail and loved pushing the boundaries of doing risky things!

He didn't like loud noises or any physical contact at all and several years later was actually diagnosed with ASD and anxiety for which he is receiving medication.

He was always very happy to see me and loved our trips out. There were many days where on his return home he told his mum he'd had 'the best day EVER'!

For the first couple of years we saw each other almost every weekend.

It became more difficult during the Covid period, but we did what we could within the rules.

So, what did we do...this is by no means an exhaustive list but I tried to vary our outings!

We went to

Jump xtreme

Cycling at Kingsbury water park and on cycling trails near Ashby.

Climbing wall at the Snowdome

Narrowboat trip (FP)

Motorbike museum

Classic car show

He loved steam trains so we went to Statfold Barn railway several times where there is a steam train museum and you can ride on the trains. We also did the North Pole Xmas experience here.

We did the Bosworth steam train (Battlefield line) several times and one day just stood at Tamworth railway station and watched trains!

His favourite car was a Lamborghini Eventador, so I arranged for him to go to the Lamborghini garage at The Fort Birmingham and they allowed him to sit in one, and gave him gifts too! This was free!

He liked feeding goats and small animals so we went to Hoar Park farm and Ash End Play barn to do this.

We went to Thinktank Birmingham science museum and also did the Bear Grylls adventure at Resorts World

He loved fishing and FP arranged 2 fishing days which he absolutely loved!

Somedays we just got in my car and went on a mystery tour. He would be in charge of whether we turned left or right at each junction. We occasionally went round in circles but usually managed to get somewhere we'd never been and then stopped at a McDonald's on the way home!

Our final trip had to eclipse everything we had done so I booked him a junior super car driving experience. Yes he got to actually drive a Lamborghini on a race track, something he will never forget.

Quite early on in our friendship there were reports from his parents and his teachers of the difference in L. He was far more engaging with people and so full of stories of what we had done together.

I've loved this experience and I know I've made a difference to this young man's life

He is now 15 and even though I'm not seeing him anymore I took him a birthday card last week. He hugged me.....quite an emotional experience.



AGM Report May 2023

Sarah Edge – Area Coordinator for Rugby

sarah.edge@friendshipproject.co.uk



Older Friends: 14
Younger Friends: 14
Pipeline: 3

In General

A good year for new friendships and established friendships blossoming! We had a great number of volunteers join us last year and they are all still going strong and have made wonderful connections with their younger friends which is great to see.

I was sad to see Heather moving on to pastures new as she has been a great mentor and guide to me, and we have now got two new fantastic AC's who are becoming a lovely addition to the team.

Matchings

I have a solid 14 matches at the present time, this number has gone up and down with either children becoming too old for the project or circumstances changing at home, and some even just needing that support for a short amount of time but all the while making a difference.

I currently have 3 new people to interview and hoping to complete these in the next month which will then enable us to match a few more children.

Group Supporters

Judy and Kelly are my Group Supporters as well as myself looking after some OF's.

They both do a fantastic job and have both recently taken on a couple more for me which helps enormously.

Events Attended

- Bi-monthly Ops Meetings
- Regular meet ups with other AC's
- Volunteer Recruitment Fair in Rugby through CAVA
- Away Days with the team
- Due to attend Napton Cidery Summer Fayre
- Police Community Day – TBC

I have made contact with my local Tesco Superstore who have advised us to apply online for the Community Fund where we can receive a donation through the coins that people put in after they have shopped.

I have also been doing outreach in my local area with posters going up in shops, etc.

Case study

I began my friendship with my Younger Friend aged 7 in May 2022. He is very quiet & thoughtful, doesn't say much but he is clever & asks questions about all sorts of things. He is the youngest of 3 children. He speaks French & attends French classes as well as swimming & drama. We have visited many places together such as Caldecotte Park, Rugby Library for the Lego club, swimming, Draycote Water, Ryton Pools, the Adventure Zone & Par n Bar.

He also likes to eat McDonalds & Pizza, we sometimes go out for tea. We add things to his scrap book, like the scorecard from Par n Bar or photos I've taken. He loved the Pumpkin Patch where there was a maze made from hay bales, we also bought Pumpkins.

We went to the Xmas party where the Magician made great entertainment. My young friend was trying to work out how the magician did his tricks!

He is quite a serious boy with me but I think he enjoys my company & I enjoy his. Recently we have met up with an Older & Younger Friend & I see a child who is happy & confident playing with a child his own age.

We are looking forward to going to an Art Gallery & Museum to see an Underwater exhibition.

Case Study

Ever wondered what an 'Older Friend' is or how it works – well I'm now almost a year in & here's my newbies introduction to it.

In my simplistic words, being an Older Friend, is to help a 'Younger Friend' experience things that they wouldn't normally do. Now there are many things that can be included into this 'experience'; 1-1 adult focus, conversation, being listened to, having fun, do something new or just doing something & I'm sure the list goes on.

For me I liked the idea of helping to guide/change/support a young person, showing them & doing things with them which they wouldn't ordinarily get to do & so I bit the bullet & reached out to find out becoming an Older Friend. The process started in April/May time & it's now the end of July & tomorrow my Younger Friend & I are meeting for our 4th outing.

Once I was accepted as an Older Friend, I met with our Regional Coordinator a few times & we talked about what I like to do/my interests, this allows the team to find matches that have similar interests. We then met again to talk about some potential matches & from those 2 or 3, there was 1 match which I felt a connection with. (Be it a name, a similarity to someone you know, something that you've experienced, it could be anything but something that just says 'yeah' that's the one.) A meeting was arranged at the school with the Young Friend we talked a bit about what the project means & suggested that the Young Friend has a think about what they like to do, it was also my opportunity to ask what they like to do & say what I like to do & if everyone agreed we'd move forward & start our friendship. For our first Outing, we went for a Hot Chocolate & I'm not sure if it was the Hot Chocolate, going out or just being with someone but my Younger Friend was very excited. They had thought about the meeting at school & came with a whole list of ideas of what they'd like to do, was very talkative & not shy at all. The list of things to do included; Go Ape, Trampoline Park, Exploring, Ten Pin Bowling, Swimming, Boating.

For our 1st few outings I was trying to do things where we could look around & discover things. Thankfully, it was the summer, so we had plenty of outside adventures to work on. We went exploring along the canal & did a Scavenger hunt, who could see something Red first & whoever got it, then chose what the next colour or shape was. Visited Ryton Pools & had a walk around; counted 6 Dragon Flies, lots of butterflies, 5 swans & wrote our name in the path using bits of grass. We're going to go back at some time & hire Bicycles as you can also ride around the park. We're off out for dinner too to celebrate them finishing Primary School & that was all last summer.

With winter & the darker nights & as I work Full Time we started to think about some 'inside things' to do. We've been bowling a few times, after the 1st game they soon picked up their technique & almost beat me. (I must try harder next time!). We've also had a few games of Table Tennis & I found a book on the rules, so that in our next time we may actually have a game & start to score, rather than just see how higher a rally we can achieve. I have found that he likes to cook, coming from a busy household there isn't much time to help mum in the kitchen & so we've done some baking. I started with the cheat pre-made mixes & made Brownies, Cookies & Tray Bakes. We then ventured into making dinner for the 2 of us & Fajitas were a winner & we have Pizza making on our list. At Christmas I found that friends from 'down south' were coming up to Warwick Castle to do the light trial & after talking/checking with the charity we met up with them & had a great late afternoon/early evening in Warwick Castle &

then found a great Pizza restaurant for Dinner. We went to the SnowDome in Tamworth & went Tobogganing. (I'm sure the sight of an almost 50, overweight lady falling into a blown up rubber-ring tyre & going down the slope made plenty of people smile but it we both really enjoyed it & that's what counts.

As we've started to come out of winter, we done some 'Rock Painting' 1 week, & then went & planted the rocks in the woods the following week & we even went & tried Air Rifle Shooting, which was very good fun & I can highly recommend it. I was pretty useless myself, but my Younger Friend soon got his eye in & was shooting at a bell at the end of the range.

The people there were extremely friendly & helpful & they even gave us some 'target's which when hit explode in Smoke.

With summer approaching, I'm sure we'll revisit Ryton Pools & hire some bikes & we may even go further afield with a picnic somewhere.

I myself am enjoying finding all these different activities to try & am starting to learn that my Younger Friend, likes the bits that we have to concentrate on – they seem to get some 'peace' from the focus of the mind. I am also enjoying trying these new activities myself, or reminding me of my childhood holidays playing table tennis with my brother in Spain. It's also great seeing their confidence grow & in getting them to try 'new' things. These are all experiences that they wouldn't be able to do without the help & support of the Charity & the volunteers. I can thoroughly recommend it & I haven't looked back since.



The Friendship Project
REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 517684
Financial Statements
For the year ended 31 December 2022

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5	Independent examiner's report
6	Statement of financial activities
7	Balance sheet
8 - 12	Notes to the accounts

The Friendship Project
Trustees' Annual Report
for the year ended 31 December 2022

Full Name:	The Friendship Project
Other names:	The Friendship Project for Children
Registered charity number:	517684
Principal address:	Myton Park, Myton Lane, Warwick, CV34 6PX
Trustees:	Cheryll Rawbone, Chairperson Ken Smith, Honorary Treasurer Jon Gibbons, Honorary Secretary Chris Buck Richard Barrett Angela Dawn Truman Esther Jones Patricia Miller, Ashima Rani Chander, appointed 16 June 2022 Sarah Stallard resigned 16 th June 2022 Gurmaj Singh Dhillon, not put forward for re-election at AGM on 16th June 2022
Honorary Treasurer:	Ken Smith
Honorary Secretary:	Jon Gibbons
Bankers:	Lloyds TSB, Stratford upon Avon
Independent examiner:	Paula Wilson, 2 Hickman House, Hickman Road, Galley Common, Nuneaton, CV10 9NQ

Governance & management

The charity is operated under the rules of its constitution adopted 12th May 1986 as amended 7th September 1993, 6th March 1995 and 11th May 2005.

Overall management of the charity is the responsibility of the trustees who are elected and co-opted under the terms of the constitution. Day to day management is carried out by paid staff and/or volunteers.

The Friendship Project

Trustees' annual report (continued)

for the year ended 31 December 2022

Aims and objectives

To provide facilities for the social and physical training of children particularly disadvantaged children between the ages of 6 and 16 years who by reason of their social circumstances are in need of developing social skills by such means as the project thinks fit including the organisation of contacts between such children and reliable older persons able to help them develop such skills.

Summary of the main activities undertaken for the public benefit

With developing confidence and enhanced self-esteem, gained from the friendships, the young people are more prepared to develop new interests and achieve a wider range of skills. They grow personally and socially enabling them to forge better relationships with peers and family members. Generally, they are more settled at school but, above all, they develop a greater sense of self-worth. This is priceless and will have a positive impact on every aspect of their lives.

Summary of the main achievements during the period

- ✓ Continued to provide the invaluable 121 volunteer support and fun for disadvantaged children despite the ongoing challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic
- ✓ We have helped 105 children directly during 2022, and many more in the wider family and school's environment.
- ✓ Risk Assessments for COVID-19 and Q & A provided for volunteers and team have been regularly updated as regulations changed, to enable us to continue to function as the law allowed, and with more freedom in the latter part of the year.
- ✓ We have returned fully to face to face support during 2022.
- ✓ We held several successful outside events including craft event, and a Christmas party at OLRFC with over 100 attending the latter event
- ✓ Safeguarding training has been undertaken online, including refresher training. Our policies and procedures have been reviewed and updated too.
- ✓ Our income achieved was £67,629, against previous year of £63,366, and with expenditure higher at £78,349, including Older Friends expenses up to £22,751, almost double the previous year, when there were more restrictions on going out.
- ✓ The carry forward to 2023 of unrestricted reserves £31,048 was significantly lower than in 2022, though still leaving us with the ability to continue, with some established funding in our pipeline, albeit with much lower reserves. We have restricted funds of £14,500 in addition.
- ✓ Our investment account has been closed, and monies moved to a lower risk deposit account from Charibond, owing to the economic climate.
- ✓ Our salaries have increased as we have now employed an Operations team manager, so as to remove the day to day responsibility for line management from the trustee board, which is good governance.
- ✓ We agreed to review our insurance provider and HR payroll costs in 2023, with a view to making savings in overheads for the coming year.
- ✓ We have also been kindly given free basic archive storage for 2023 at SSD in Stratford.

The Friendship Project
Trustees' annual report (continued)
for the year ended 31 December 2022

Financial Review

The charity made an unrestricted deficit of £13,770 plus a loss on investments of £3,977 in the year, ending the year with unrestricted reserves of £31,048.

The Trustees have reviewed the financial position of the charity in light of the current economic environment and the forecast costs of its operations and fund raising. They believe that with the funding commitments made and plans for 2023, it has the necessary funding to continue providing its services for at least the next 12 months. The trustees review this at each of their quarterly meetings.

The charity's policy on reserves

In line with the guidance provided by the Charities Commission the Friendship Project has reviewed and revised its policy on the holding of financial reserves.

The majority of our monthly expenditure relates to the salaries and expenses of our staff and the expenses of our Older Friends.

As our income varies considerably month by month it is important that in order to provide continuity of support for our Younger Friends that we have sufficient financial resources in place for the timely and regular payment of salaries and expenses.

In order to ensure our ability to achieve this, the trustees believe that it is essential to hold financial reserves, excluding restricted funds, of a minimum of six to nine months forecast expenditure. A proportion of these funds is held in an interest earning deposit account. Investments with M&G Charity Investments were sold during the year.

This policy will be monitored and reviewed annually.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:

Signed 

Date 16/05/2023

Cheryll Rawbone, Chairman

Independent Examiners Report to the Trustees of
The Friendship Project
Year Ended 31 December 2022

I report on the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31 December 2022, which are set out on pages 6 to 12.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act;
- follow the procedures laid down in the general directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act, and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect, the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Acthave not been met; or
2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Signed:

Paula Wilson, MAAT

Date: 16/05/2023

The Friendship Project
Statement of Financial Activities
For the year ended 31 December 2022

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2022 Total Funds £	2021 £
Incoming resources					
Grants	2	7,500	41,975	49,475	40,251
Donations	3	12,707	-	12,707	14,377
Fundraising events	4	4,759	-	4,759	8,047
Gift Aid	5	-	-	-	-
Investment income	6	688	-	688	691
Total incoming resources		<u>25,654</u>	<u>41,975</u>	<u>67,629</u>	<u>63,366</u>
Resources expended					
Salaries, NI	10	18,498	24,464	42,962	35,424
Staff expenses		2,949	995	3,944	3,008
Volunteer expenses		9,285	13,466	22,751	11,786
Insurance		3,616	-	3,616	3,230
Events/Christmas parties		1,137	-	1,137	861
Other expenditure	11	3,589	-	3,589	4,945
Independent examination fee	13	350	-	350	350
Total resources expended		<u>39,424</u>	<u>38,925</u>	<u>78,349</u>	<u>59,605</u>
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources		(13,770)	3,050	(10,720)	3,761
Gains & (losses) on investments		(3,977)	-	(3,977)	(1,343)
Total funds brought forward		48,795	11,500	60,295	57,877
Total funds carried forward	9	<u>31,048</u>	<u>14,550</u>	<u>45,598</u>	<u>60,295</u>

Expenditure is allocated between Unrestricted and Restricted funds on the basis of actual expenditure incurred along with an element of judgement on indirect items of expenditure.

The Friendship Project

Balance Sheet

For the year ended 31 December 2022

	Note	£	2022 £	£	2021 £
Fixed assets					
Investments	6		-		37,871
Current assets					
Cash at bank and in hand		47,692		25,274	
Debtors	7	304		270	
		<u>47,996</u>		<u>25,544</u>	
Current liabilities					
Creditors	8	(2,399)		(3,120)	
Net current assets			45,598		22,424
Net assets			<u>45,598</u>		<u>60,295</u>
The funds of the charity					
General Funds			31,048		48,795
Restricted Funds			14,550		11,500
Total Funds	9		<u>45,598</u>		<u>60,295</u>

The trustees declare that they have approved the accounts above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:

Signed: 

Date: 16/05/2023

Cheryl Rawbone, Chairperson

The Friendship Project
Notes to the Financial Statements
For the year ended 31 December 2022

1. Accounting policies

These financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention with items recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant notes to these accounts and with the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) issued on 16 July 2014 and with the Charities Act 2011.

Incoming Resources

All material incoming resources have been included on a receivable basis – ie they are included if the date receivable falls within the period covered by these accounts.

Resources expended

These have been analysed using a natural classification.

2. Grants

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2022	Total Funds 2021
	£	£	£	£
Warwickshire Police & Crime Commissioner	-	8,000	8,000	7,713
Heart of England 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust	-	-	-	1,000
King Henry VIII Endowed Trust	-	3,900	3,900	3,750
29th May 1961 Charitable Trust	-	-	-	3,000
National Lottery Community Fund	-	9,650	9,650	8,559
L&Q Foundation	-	-	-	- 333
Heart of England Community Foundation	-	-	-	4,335
FC Stokes Trust	-	-	-	1,000
Four Acre Trust	-	-	-	8,227
Warwickshire CrimeBeat	-	-	-	3,000
AVIVA Community Fund	5,000	-	5,000	-
Stratford Town Trust	-	6,000	6,000	-
Warwick & District Council	-	12,500	12,500	-
ITF O'Brien Trust	2,500	-	2,500	-
Warwickshire Police Charitable Trust	-	1,925	1,925	-
	<u>7,500</u>	<u>41,975</u>	<u>49,475</u>	<u>40,251</u>

The Friendship Project
Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)
For the year ended 31 December 2022

3. Donations

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2022	Total Funds 2021
	£	£	£	£
Bates Trust Claverdon	1,000	-	1,000	1,000
Anonymous Donors	2,000	-	2,000	1,000
FC Stokes Trust	1,000	-	1,000	-
Charities Trust	2,400	-	2,400	-
Callum Designs	-	-	-	1,500
Masonic Charitable Foundation	-	-	-	1,000
Countrywide Builders	-	-	-	5,000
Leamington SW	-	-	-	1,000
Donations under £1,000	6,307	-	6,307	3,877
	<u>12,707</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>12,707</u>	<u>14,377</u>

4. Fundraising Events

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2022	Total Funds 2021
	£	£	£	£
Warickshire Police Cadets	2,696	-	2,696	-
Anonymous	1,000	-	1,000	-
Alsters Kelly Solicitors	-	-	-	1,727
Fundraising Events under £1,000	1,063	-	1,063	6,320
	<u>4,759</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>4,759</u>	<u>8,047</u>

5. HMRC Gift Aid

Gift Aid received £0, (2021 - £0)

6. Investments

Our Investment Account with M&G Charibond has been closed, due to increased investment risk in the current economic climate. Monies were moved to a lower risk deposit account with Lloyds Bank.

The Friendship Project

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)

For the year ended 31 December 2022

7. Debtors

	2022 £	2021 £
Insurance Prepayment	304	270
	<u>304</u>	<u>270</u>

8. Creditors

	2022 £	2021 £
Volunteer Expenses	1,836	1,853
Staff Expenses	213	41
Independent Examination Fee	350	350
WPCC underspend to be returned	-	687
Oasis	-	189
	<u>2,399</u>	<u>3,120</u>

9. Movements in Funds

	Opening Balance £	Incoming Resources £	(Resources expended) £	Gains & Losses £	Transfers £	Closing Balance £
General funds	<u>48,795</u>	<u>25,654</u>	<u>(39,424)</u>	<u>- 3,977</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>31,048</u>
Total General Funds	<u>48,795</u>	<u>25,654</u>	<u>(39,424)</u>	<u>(3,977)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>31,048</u>
Restricted Funds						
Warwickshire P&CC	1,975	8,000	(7,975)	-	-	2,000
HoECF Coronavirus Resilience	1,084	-	(1,084)	-	-	-
National Lottery	3,566	9,650	(3,566)	-	-	9,650
King Henry VIII Endowed Trust	1,875	3,900	(4,800)	-	-	975
Warwickshire Crimebeat	3,000	-	(3,000)	-	-	-
Warwick & District Council	-	12,500	(12,500)	-	-	-
Stratford Town Trust	-	6,000	(6,000)	-	-	-
Warwickshire Police	-	1,925	-	-	-	1,925
Charitable Trust	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Restricted Funds	<u>11,500</u>	<u>41,975</u>	<u>(38,925)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>14,550</u>
Total Funds	<u>60,295</u>	<u>67,629</u>	<u>(78,349)</u>	<u>(3,977)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>45,598</u>

The Friendship Project
Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)
For the year ended 31 December 2022

10. Staff costs and numbers

	<i>2022</i>	<i>2021</i>
	£	£
Wages, NI & Pension	42,962	35,424
	<u>42,962</u>	<u>35,424</u>

No employee received emoluments of more than £60,000.

The average weekly number of part time employees during the year was 6 (2021: 5)

11. Other expenditure

	<i>2022</i>	<i>2021</i>
	£	£
Storage of documents	672	454
Telephones	469	540
Printing, stationery & advertising	388	46
Database / IT	26	694
Payroll	1,307	1,246
CIO accreditation	-	1,800
Sundries	727	165
	<u>3,589</u>	<u>4,945</u>

12. Trustees' remuneration, benefits and expenses

During the accounting period, the charity obtained insurance cover including Public Liability, Employer's Liability, All Risks for Assets, Personal Accident for volunteers and younger friends and Trustee Indemnity Insurance for a total of £3,218.

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The management committee and other trustees did not receive any remuneration during the year (2021: nil).

The Friendship Project
Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)
For the year ended 31 December 2022

13. Independent examination and accountancy services

During the period, the cost of the examination and accountancy services was £350.

14. Controlling parties

The charity is under the control of the management committee.

15. Glossary of terms

Restricted funds: These are funds given to the charity, subject to specific restrictions set by the donor, but still within the general objects of the charity.

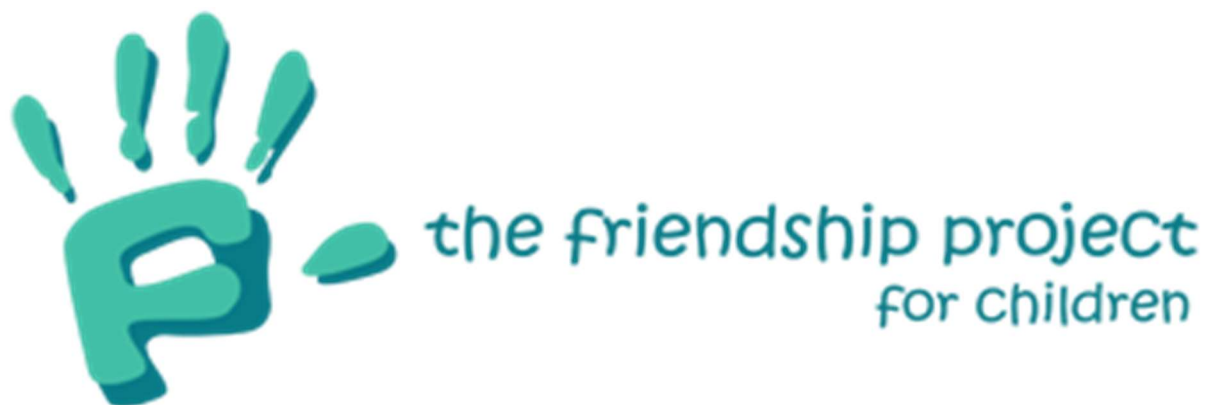
Debtors: These are expenses paid in the year with some of the benefit arising in the following year

Creditors: These are amounts owed by the charity, but not paid during the accounting period.

THE FRIENDSHIP PROJECT

England & Wales - Charity number 517684

Accounts



ANNUAL REPORT 2021

Published in June 2022



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INTRODUCTION

This report reflects our achievements during 2021 and our plans for 2022.

Our thanks go to the many volunteers, employees, funders, and supporters for helping children in need throughout the various challenges the Pandemic and regulation changes in the last twelve months, enabling them to still have some much-needed fun, aiding their personal development, confidence, and improving their self-esteem, and in particular coping with their new challenges.

Additionally, I would like to thank the contributors to this report which helps give an insight into the work undertaken by members of our Operations team, fellow trustees, plus importantly some case studies to help show the impact and difference that we and more importantly our volunteers are making.

The overall purpose of the Friendship Project is to improve the social and emotional well-being of children, aged 6-16, disadvantaged by virtue of their own or family circumstances. An Older Friend provides experiences lacking in the child's life, builds a trusting relationship and raises the self-esteem of their Younger Friend. Volunteers, over the age of 18, are drawn from Warwickshire communities and come from all walks of life. They are carefully vetted as to their suitability for this work, including DBS checks.

Volunteers meet with their Younger Friends weekly for between 2-3 hours to be involved in mutually enjoyable and jointly planned activities and visits. Examples include playing in the park, building dens, craft activities, cooking, fishing, bird watching, climbing, golf, sewing, library, swimming, cinema, growing vegetables etc. which, their school contemporaries take for granted.

Volunteers maintain that the 1:1 attention, with the capacity for the child to talk to a listening adult, is the most valuable aspect of the activity. Such activities are at the heart of what the Project does.

The average length of a friendship is 2.5/3 years and over time the Younger Friend gradually becomes more open and confident in discussing worries and concerns about family, school, friends and themselves. Older Friends offer support and, increasingly, guidance on more sensitive and personal issues. This has helped Younger Friends gain a better understanding of their problems; develop better relationships with family members; and cope more positively with challenging situations at school.

Positive feedback and encouragement, invariably missing in the child's life, is a constant feature of the weekly activities and of major importance in raising self-esteem. This usually results in the young people developing new interests and acquiring a wider range of skills.

Volunteers enjoy the company of their Younger Friends and going to places they would not otherwise go to. They enjoy providing new experiences and knowing they are a trusted confidante but, above all, they gain satisfaction from seeing their Younger Friend develop socially and personally.

One-to-one befriending carries a potential risk in relation to child protection. Safeguarding procedures, in relation to recruitment, vetting, briefing, training and supervision of volunteers are given the highest priority and kept under constant review with Children's Services. The Friendship Project is an Associate Member of the Warwickshire Safeguarding Children's Board and an Assistant Head of Service acts as an Advisor to our Trustees.

There is quality research available advising the importance of early intervention to help both mental and physical health outcomes in later life, making our contribution in the sector extremely valuable.

We hope that you find this report of interest, and for further information please visit our website: www.friendshipproject.co.uk Please also follow us on: – **@friendshipproj** on twitter and Instagram or on Facebook: www.facebook.com/TheFriendshipProjectForChildren

CHAIRMANS REPORT

My report is focused primarily on our activities and achievements in 2021, our last financial year, plus our plans for 2022. Last year was our 35th anniversary, and although not possible to hold a celebratory event we were still able to organise outside activities for the children we support. Hopefully by the time we reach our 40th anniversary in four years' time we will be able to celebrate more.

First and foremost, I would like to extend a big thank you on behalf of all the children (Younger Friends) that we are supporting and have helped to all our excellent current and past volunteers, employees, benefactors/funders, and trustees. Without whose dedication our small local charity could not continue to help the lives of children in need throughout Warwickshire. Since 1986, we estimate that there have been more than 1,500 children helped over this period.



I would particularly like to commend and thank our operations team for the way in which they have adapted to work with new conditions and continued to support our volunteers and vulnerable children in Warwickshire despite the additional challenges throughout the pandemic. We have been able to again hold collective events during 2021, though our focus has been on outside activities including fishing with BBQ, Den building at WWT at Brandon, and the Christmas light show at Coombe Abbey with over 100 attending this and kindly funded by Callum Design.

We have successfully recruited two new members of the operations team, Sarah Edge joined us in Rugby to replace Kelly Furness, who remains with the project as a volunteer. Additionally in early 2022 we have recruited for a new post of Operations team leader/manager, and Ruth Blunt started with us in April. Sarah has also recently taken responsibility within the Operations team for social media and marketing.

From a trustee perspective Louise Hasler has had to regrettably stand down, as unfortunately her two sons are facing significant health challenges. Louise is thanked for the all the work she has done, and we hope that things become brighter for her and her family in the future. Louise is happy to do a handover once we have a new trustee in place with the portfolio of Risk, Compliance & Governance. Sarah Stallard has contributed greatly whilst with us but stands down at this AGM, as she has a new job with increasing hours and some evenings, so is not able to continue. Tina Chander (head of Employment law at Wright Hassell) is delighted to join us taking over the HR trustee portfolio, as a new trustee to be elected at this year's AGM. Gurmaj Dhillon has not been able to be involved as he had hoped owing to long term family commitments, so is not being put forward for re-election this year, though if things settle for him, then we would be happy for him to be re-engaged again.

Pat Miller has joined the trustee board as our new Older Friends' representative, replacing Jon Gibbons, who is no longer an Older friend following his move to Northampton. and he has kindly agreed to take on the mantle of Hon Secretary from Michelle Machin and remains on the board in this new capacity.

The Highlights of what we have achieved in 2021 are as follows: -

- ✓ Continued to provide the invaluable 121 volunteer support and fun for disadvantaged children in spite of the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, who continued to work, showing great care, resilience and adaptability throughout the year.
- ✓ We have helped 107 children directly during 2021, and many more in the wider family and school's environment
- ✓ Risk Assessments for COVID-19 and Q &A provided for volunteers and team have been regularly updated as regulations changed, to enable us to continue to function as the law allowed.
- ✓ When face to face was not permitted, we have continued to successfully pivot, so as to give online, telephone and pen pal support
- ✓ Our 35th anniversary year was lower key than we hoped, as it was not really the right environment or sensible to risk having a collective indoor celebration

- ✓ We held several successful outside events including fishing, Den building with WWT and Coombe Abbey Christmas Lights extravaganza, with over 100 attending the latter event
- ✓ Safeguarding training has been undertaken online, including refresher training.
- ✓ Our training for new volunteers has been refreshed with a new booklet produced to support the training given by our area Coordinators.
- ✓ Our volunteer application paperwork updated too, with an online option included.
- ✓ Our income achieved was £63,366, against budget £65,350, as expenditure lower than anticipated the carry forward to 2022 of £60,588, was slightly higher than in 2021, leaving us in a healthy financial position
- ✓ We have recommenced our journey for CIO status, as agreed at previous AGM, as have confirmation we can continue with our Queens Award in new entity.

In 2022 our plans include the following: -

- ✓ Continue to provide the invaluable 121 volunteer support and fun for disadvantaged children. Aim to increase the numbers supported and reduce our waiting lists. Target to have 80 still matched by end of 2021, though the quality is still more important than the numbers matched.
- ✓ Specifically, to increase the number of Older Friends as volunteers, particularly in North Warwickshire, Rugby, and Stratford upon Avon
- ✓ Our budget is to raise £65,000, with target income of 70,000.
- ✓ Recruit a trustee for Portfolio Risk, Governance & Compliance, also for Operations, and to identify a new vice-chairman too for future
- ✓ Continue work with our Trusted Charity project.
- ✓ Attend periodic networking events to increase the profile of the Friendship Project.
- ✓ Further improve our social media presence
- ✓ Organise regular sessions through the year for Safeguarding Training for volunteers, both as refreshers and also for new volunteers, online and face to face.
- ✓ Continue to hold periodic Older Friends get-togethers/training/support sessions.
- ✓ Complete the Procedures Manual including Trustees Responsibilities too, in "How to" format for contingency planning.
- ✓ Continue to encourage and support training for the operation team.
- ✓ Recruit additional Group Supporters, as required as our Older Friends increase

Trustee vacancies

We are looking to recruit two trustees, one for portfolio Operations, and one for portfolio Risk, Governance, & Compliance, if you know of anyone who may be interested, please email below.

Big thank you.

Whilst writing my report I would like to again personally thank both past and present the many Older Friends, Group Supporters, volunteers, operations team, employees, and trustees, who give their time freely to help our Younger Friends have important 1-2-1 attention, emotional support, friendship and the opportunity to explore new activities and have some fun, particularly through these most challenging times.

Cheryll Rawbone

Chairman Email: cheryll.rawbone@friendshipproject.co.uk

Safeguarding Report

Esther Jones – Email esther.jones@friendshipproject.co.uk

Safeguarding is and has remained at the heart of the work of the Friendship Project over the last year: promoting the welfare and wellbeing of children and young people is the very essence of the Project's purpose.

Volunteer Training

Training our volunteers to understand their responsibilities with regards to safeguarding is an essential part of ensuring we are enacting our safeguarding duties. I have had the pleasure of delivering this training over Zoom, which has, to my surprise, presented positive opportunities to present the training in a different way. Sessions are delivered 3 times a year with a 'full session' and a 'refresher session'. The full session is delivered over 2 evenings and explores the Project's Safeguarding Policy and Procedure in the first session and then gives volunteers a chance to apply this learning through the examination of a set of scenarios in the second session. The refresher session covers only the scenarios.

Feedback from attendees included:

Most Useful	Least Useful
<p><i>"Understanding the roles and responsibilities of an older friend"</i></p> <p><i>"The practical examples were most useful and make it easier to remember how to handle a particular event".</i></p> <p><i>"It was reassuring and good to hear that if you have any concerns at all you can call your Area Coordinator."</i></p> <p><i>"How to deal with any difficulties with your YF and the support that is there to help. Having the support network is great and the flowchart is very helpful."</i></p>	<p><i>"Reading off the screen or others dominating the conversation"</i></p> <p><i>"Personally, identifying different forms of abuse, however this is only due to previous training I have had and think it is still important as apart of the training sessions"</i></p> <p><i>"Found session 2 a lot more helpful. Maybe session 1 could be shortened to allow session 2 to be at a slower pace."</i></p>
Other Comments	Other Training
<p><i>"I appreciate we were under time pressure to finish but it would be nice to have gone through the case studies and maybe even do a roleplay example of a child disclosing"</i></p> <p><i>"Very informative & also good to see the faces of other Older Friends on the zoom meeting"</i></p> <p><i>"I would like to thank Esther for running such a well informed and easy to understand safeguarding refresher training session. Also Heather for her advice and reassurance that any concerns we have, we can talk to our area coordinator."</i></p> <p><i>"The training is good and helps to reinforce how to manage any situations where you may need to take action and escalate. It gives you confidence about how to interact with your YF."</i></p>	<p><i>"Would like to see resources for trips that have been used before"</i></p> <p><i>"Maybe a short list or checklist of possible vulnerable situations that have come up in the past and the best way to deal with them. I appreciate this a million different scenarios but generally they will boil down to to a few main groups of examples."</i></p> <p><i>"As it is brought up in the training, active listening skills and what exactly this entails."</i></p> <p><i>"Once you start being an older friend do we have "a catch up" every now and then with our co-ordinator and other older friends to see if we have any questions or things we might be able to help each other with?"</i></p>

For 2022/23 we will be delivering a mix of virtual and face to face training sessions.

Updated Safeguarding Policy and Procedure

The Safeguarding Policy and Procedure was reviewed in February 2022 with minor updates to reflect staff changes.

A Mobile Phone Usage policy was created and updated to provide guidance for volunteers to understand what is 'ok' with regards to using their mobile phone to contact their young friend. The Project recognises that as this is how people communicate the Project should provide guidelines to ensure safe boundaries were in place for both older and younger friends.

Safeguarding Concerns Raised

Over the year there have been a range of concerns brought to me by the Area Co-ordinators. There have been 2 emerging themes to these concerns: Volunteers overstepping boundaries and becoming 'too involved' and the younger friend's situation becoming too complex or even unsafe for the Older Friend to manage

I remain impressed by the Area Co-ordinators approach to managing these concerns: seeking out advice, provision of support to their older friends, reflecting on what could be done differently or better to prevent the same thing happening again, tracking down appropriate professionals, working with social workers and being tenacious in ensuring concerns are responded to by the appropriate professional, where required.

My thanks also needed to be given to the Older Friends who have discharged their safeguarding responsibilities by doing what we ask: sharing their concerns.

Other Activity

We have continued to meet with Calvin Smith from Warwickshire County Council, who provides updates and guidance on the local safeguarding agenda and who has been a helpful source of information and advice on more specific issues.

I had the pleasure of being part of the new(ish) Area Co-ordinators induction: we met on a number of occasions to identify safeguarding training opportunities and ensure Sarah felt comfortable with the safeguarding responsibilities for the role.

Grant, Trust and Local Fund Raising

Richard Barrett May 2022. Email: richard.barrett@friendshipproject.co.uk

In 2021 our total income grew by 13% as all the main sources of our income partially recovered from the low point of 2020, when our overall income fell by 25% due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

We are very grateful for the continuing support of existing grant funders, The Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner, The National Lottery Community Fund, The King Henry VIII's Endowed Trust, The Heart of England Community Foundation and the 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust. In addition to applications made to existing grant funders, we were also successful in applying to new funders Warwickshire CrimeBeat and The Four Acre Trust. The latter provided us with a fantastic opportunity for matched funding of new donor income which in total raised £16,454 for the Friendship Project.

We were delighted to welcome new corporate supporters Alsters Kelley Solicitors and Countryside Properties who along with the Claverdon Fields Charitable Trust and a new private donor, contributed to the success of the matched funding appeal referred to above. It was also good to develop our relationship with CR Callum Limited who also contributed to our fundraising during the year.

We are thankful to David Eaton who raised £856 running the Milton Keynes Half Marathon and to all who raised money on our behalf or contributed to our other fundraising activities in 2021.

We are extremely grateful to all our corporate and individual donors who have supported us through large and small donations and also for the ongoing support of all our grant funders:

- | | |
|---|---|
| ✓ 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust | ✓ King Henry VIII's Endowed Trust - Warwick |
| ✓ Amazon Smile | ✓ Leamington & District Rotary |
| ✓ Anonymous donors | ✓ Masonic Provincial Grand Lodge |
| ✓ Aviva Community Fund | ✓ Mr & Mrs. M Parton |
| ✓ Bravissimo | ✓ Ralph Heeley |
| ✓ Charities Trust | ✓ Ruth Bowie |
| ✓ Coventry & District Cricket Club | ✓ Shipston Rotary |
| ✓ CR Callum Limited | ✓ Sophie Parker |
| ✓ Crowdfunder | ✓ Terence Hague |
| ✓ David Eaton | ✓ The Four Acre Trust |
| ✓ Froggle Parties | ✓ The National Lottery Community Fund |
| ✓ Gallagher Ltd | ✓ UK Corona Virus Resilience Fund |
| ✓ Georgina Rawbone | ✓ Village Voices |
| ✓ BM & SJ Hall | ✓ Warwickshire CrimeBeat |
| ✓ F C Stokes Trust | ✓ Warwickshire Police & Crime Commissioner |
| ✓ Heart of England Community Foundation | |
| ✓ Just Giving | |

Thanks also go to Gallagher Insurance Broking Limited who continue to give administration support and to Leamington Lawn Tennis and Squash Club for use of their meeting room, and SSD for their archive storage.

We have continued to raise our profile, particularly through social media, Facebook and our website, alongside attending local networking events, virtually and in person when permitted. It has been particularly pleasing to see how this activity has resulted in growth in the numbers of volunteers coming forward to be Older Friends.

As normality returns following COVID, we look forward to continuing our work and to growing our friendships, supporting more disadvantaged children. This will require us to raise further funds as our costs grow, but we are confident that we can continue to grow our income through the support of our donors and grant funders.

Fundraising is a team effort and thanks go to the whole team for all their hard work in supporting our fundraising.

Marketing Report for AGM on 16th June 2022

Angela Truman – Email angela.truman@friendshipproject.co.uk

Social Media

The past year has seen 2 people try to give more dedicated to raising our social media presence and following, firstly Michelle Machin as a volunteer and now Sarah Edge as an additional part of Area Coordinator role. It has proved a success and new Older Friend volunteers have come forward and donations being made after seeing our posts. It is definitely an important part of our marketing and we see our following continuing to grow.

Male Volunteers

We have made a concerted effort to recruit more male volunteer Older Friends, so this has been a theme in our press releases, case studies and social media posts, which has paid dividends and we have seen our male numbers increasing.

Local Businesses

Callum Designs, a prestigious car design and engineering company business based in Warwick, donated £1000 to fund an outdoor Christmas event as many people were still nervous about attending an indoor gathering. This was a great success and was held early in December at the Coombe Abbey light trail, where everyone admired the stunning lights along the trail and got to enjoy toasting marshmallows and a hot chocolate too. It was well attended by 45 children and 43 adults made up of Older and Younger friends from across the whole county along with employees from the Friendship Project and Callum. Each child also received the gift of a selection box.

There were sufficient funds remaining from the Christmas event that Callum's donation also funded an Animal Welfare visit to Morton Morrell College in May. This was attended by 15 children along with their Older Friends.

The relationship with Callum continues, and it was particularly nice that they brought their own children along to the light trail at the Christmas event.

The Friendship Project were the chosen charity for 2021 for Alsters Kelley law firm in Leamington Spa. In September they held a fantastic bingo evening at the Bulldog pub in Whitnash and raised £1727. It was well attended and great for raising awareness of the work of the Friendship Project as well as raising funds. We were fortunate that the event fell in September and therefore qualified for match funding from the Four Acres Trust.

All donations and partnerships with the Friendship Project have been celebrated in the press and across all social media platforms.

PR

We have received good PR coverage in the local press over the last year. Our coverage included articles on:

Our Bank Life Fishing events which were hailed as a great success by our Older and Younger Friends.

The increase in community spirit since the pandemic hit, resulting in more volunteers for the charity.

Alsters Kelley successful bingo night for the Friendship Project.

The need for more male volunteers.

Local Radio continue to be very supportive of the charity, with several interviews being aired with Older Friends and Area Co-ordinators.

Below is an article which was printed in the Stratford Herald in January this year. Having seen several press releases from the Friendship Project, they took the time to arrange an interview in order to gain a greater understanding of our work and produced this detailed article:

Charity brings friendship and fun to children and adults across Stratford, Alcester, Shipston, Warwick and Leamington

By Craig Gibbons cgibbons@stratford-herald.com

Published: 12:32, 22 January 2022

DESPITE the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, a county charity which matches children who are in need with adults for friendship and fun has seen a record number of volunteer applications.

Now in its 36th year, the Friendship Project will be providing support to 100 youngsters across Alcester, Atherstone, Leamington Spa, Kenilworth, Nuneaton, Rugby, Shipston, Stratford, Southam and Warwick – up from 70 before the coronavirus crisis hit.

The charity, which is based on the Big Brother – Big Sister movement in the United States, provides young friends with older friends who provide the children with regular fun activities, attention and an ongoing friendship for a few hours each week.

Often the activities which they enjoy together are things the children wouldn't otherwise get to experience. It can be as simple as a walk in the park or baking cakes together, or more of a treat like a trip to the cinema, swimming or wall climbing.

This simple concept has seen the children's self-esteem grow and even improved their attainment and behaviour at school and in the home.

To date the charity has supported around 1,500 children, who are all referred to the Friendship Project by children's services.



The Friendship Project volunteers support children for two to three hours a week for friendship and fun. (54165606)

What's more, given how Covid-19 restrictions have limited how the project can operate, marketing trustee Angela Truman told the Herald that the volunteers had gone above and beyond to ensure they kept in touch with their young friends at a time when face-to-face contact was virtually impossible.

"What we found in Covid-19 is that while the charity struggled financially and did not raise the £35,000 it hoped to last year, we saw that people wanted to give something back to their community," she said. "We had an increase in volunteers and that's why we're able to support more children at one time than we have ever done before."

“Pre-Covid we had about 70 children and now we’re up to 100, so that’s a massive increase for us. Covid-19 hit very hard and it still does today because the rules have not allowed the Friendship Project to operate as it should.

“The idea is our volunteers spend two to three hours a week together with children and pick them up in their car, but that was a no-no when the pandemic hit.

“Instead people wrote to each other and the older friends sent their young friends word searches and quizzes. Some of the children were keen to do that and others weren’t She added: “Some maintained relationships by FaceTiming. Some of our older friends sent seeds in the post to the children and planted them together and watched sunflowers grow over FaceTime. Some children don’t have the technology to communicate like that or the privacy to do it because they’re in a busy household.

“The older friends worked really hard to try to maintain those friendships. It was hard and it still is with the new variant. We are constantly reviewing what we can and can’t allow the friendships to do as we might have volunteers who are vulnerable or live with vulnerable people, likewise with the children.

“You have to take your hats off to the volunteers, though, as they have done an amazing job trying to build friendships through other means during the pandemic.”

Although the support ends when a child turns 17, Angela told the Herald that some friendships have gone on to last for many more years.

“We’ve had some fantastic stories,” she said. “Although the friendships end on the 17th birthday, the volunteers and children often stay in touch because they have become a part of each other’s lives.

“Two years ago we got the Queen’s Award for voluntary service and we had a few older friends that were speaking, and one of them is now a godparent to her young friend’s children which is just lovely.

“We also have another lady who is an American living in Stratford and she was part of the Big Brother – Big Sister project in the USA. She moved to the UK and is still an active member with the Friendship Project.

“We also have some adults who were young friends that now act as ambassadors for us, as they’ve gone through the Friendship Project and want to give something back.”

The hope for the Friendship Project is that 2022 will enable them to operate to as close as normal as possible, whilst also raising much-needed funding.

Angela also told the Herald that the charity is on the lookout for more volunteers, in particular men.

“Our eldest older friend is well into their 80s while others are just past the age of 18,” she said. “We have men and women older friends, but we could do with more men because more women come forward to volunteer.

“We feel men are a little bit worried about how it looks taking out a child that isn’t theirs because of how society is today.

“We assure men there is a lot of safeguarding training and that we have support for them from area co-ordinators.



Getting crafty. (54165602)

The charity does some fantastic work across the county and it's all about providing children in need with that much-needed attention others take for granted.

As Angela points out, pretty much any activity goes: "It has been proven that by just having a few weeks of undivided attention for that child boosts their self-esteem," she said. "Under-performing or misbehaving children at school have been shown to improve because their confidence grows by having an older friend.

"We tend to match older and young friends who have like-minded interests – we would not put an 84-year-old with a 13-year-old who wants to go rock climbing."

She added: "One of the nice things which is phenomenal about the older friends is the sheer variety of what they do for their young friend. We had one child who wanted to be a member at Warwick Hockey Club, so his older friend took him there after school and also took him to matches.

"Whenever there was no hockey on due to the weather or it was out-of-season, she did different activities with him.

"There's always food involved too and I know some of our older friends do baking with the children or teach them how to make a full English breakfast.

"If a young friend is struggling with reading, the volunteer will help them and go through it together.

"There was also one man who had a bike in bits and his young friend helped him build it back together and they now go bike riding together.

"Some children just want to go for a walk, go swimming, go to the cinemas or have a McDonald's. Whatever is on that child's wish list we try to give them."

For more information about the charity, visit <https://friendshipproject.co.uk>.

Operations Team Manager AGM Report May 2022

Ruth Blunt - ruth.blunt@friendshipproject.co.uk

I joined the Friendship Project in March 2022 as the Operations Team Manager. I am responsible for leading the Operations Team and my role is to promote the interests of and contribute to the effective running of the Friendship Project.

Working closely with the Operations Team to ensure that the Project's processes and objectives are met, implemented, and maintained at a local level. It is also my responsibility to provide guidance, supervision, and support to the Operations Team.

I have been made to feel very welcome by everyone at the Friendship Project and it is great to be part of a team where it is clear that everyone really cares and is passionate about what they do.

I have been out on visits with the Area Coordinators to sit in on some of their interviews and have carried out their 6-monthly one-to-one meetings.

Looking forward to working with the team over the coming year and getting more involved in the Project's activities.

AGM Report April 2021

Fiona Roche Warwick District email Fiona.roche@friendshipproject.co.uk:

Older Friends: 24
Younger Friends: 26
Pipeline: 8

In General

This year has seen us go from Covid restrictions back to some sort of normality and face to face outings. It has been a challenge for OFs and YFs to get back to a routine of seeing each other after so long. Positive covid tests and a lot more colds have cancelled numerous outings.

We have had a steady flow of new OFs apply. We are seeing more younger people volunteer and I believe this is because we have a bigger presence on social media, as well as the pandemic changing the way people look at their life. With more home based working it has given people more hours to use to volunteer.

Friendships

Friendships matched 14

5 of these only lasted 1-6 months but the rest are going strong. 10 girls and 4 boys were matched. Many of our volunteers are female hence a lot of them do like to be matched with girls. We have had a big push to recruit more male volunteers via social media/press and male OFs speaking at get togethers. A few more males have applied, and we will continue to try and recruit them.

Friendships ended 18

7 natural end - the YFs have matured into the older teens and either reached 17 or no longer needed an OF.

4 safeguarding reasons – changes in circumstances have created more complications and it has been felt that the friendship should end for safeguarding reasons. Esther has been extremely supportive with these, as they have been challenging endings.

3 illness – unfortunately ill health of the OF or a family member has meant it has ended.

4 Change of personal situation ie job/relocation – a special mention to Gemma who joined us as a student at 22 and went on to be a fabulous friend to a young girl for 5 years, but is now relocating with a work promotion! For another OF covid restrictions in her job as a carer meant she had to stop volunteering for us.

COVID-19

The extra paperwork with Covid has felt huge. We have had Risk Assessments, Carer guidance, car forms to fill in for each friendship existing and new friendships. It has changed several times through the year, this has then needed updating.

Matches have been delayed with either the family or volunteer getting covid. Some schools haven't wanted us to do matches at school, but in the last 6 months this has been easier as restrictions have got less and less.

Referrals of children have been a lot more complex and so sadly I haven't been able to accept and match these children. I have been trying to find less complex referrals but it does seem that services and schools are very stretched at the moment, so they haven't been easy to come by.

Events attended

- Team Away day
- Cava volunteer fair
- Christmas Illuminated Event

- Zoom get togethers
- Face to face get togethers
- Presentation to WI Leamington Lillies
- Met with Warwick Councillor Terry Morris

Radio

I have spoken on CWR several times in the last year. It has been good to speak to a different audience via this media. On one occasion I organised for male OF Gary Larner to come on the interview with me to try and reach out to more males to come forward and volunteer. It was great to have his input and speak about his experience of being an OF in the Friendship Project.

Duchess of Cambridge Carol Concert

I put forward and received tickets for one of my Older Friends and their Younger friend for this amazing opportunity. It was all very last minute and hush hush! This friendship had been going for 5 years. They had a brilliant time, please do read the write up in our newsletter written by the other OF who went along.

Summary

It has been great to welcome our new AC for Ruby, Sarah and Ops Manager, Ruth. The year has held a few challenges which I have over come with the support of the team and the trustees. I continue to feel passionate about my role at the Friendship Project and look forward to the next year.

Case Study

Over Christmas 2020 I started to think about the year ahead and what it would bring, we had just had a year of the pandemic and like everyone I was reflective on what life was all about.

I am a Marketing Manager of 55 years old and have been very lucky to have a comfortable life. I am single and don't have any children. I have 2 nieces, 2 great nieces and a great nephew, who I love spending time with. I thought it would be great to get involved with other children in the community, so I did a Google search – and found the Friendship Project.

I made contact by email and got a reply very quickly from Fiona Roche (Area Coordinator for Warwick and Leamington region). She was so supportive and encouraging so I thought I would love to become an Older Friend. I sent all my paperwork, had an Enhanced DBS check and attended safeguarding sessions on zoom. Heather Shipley (Area Coordinator for Stratford region) came round to see me – in the garden, as we weren't allowed to go indoors at the time. I was all ready..... then in May I was matched with my Younger Friend who is 15 years old. I am sure this is happening much quicker now, but it was a strange time with COVID. My Younger Friend and I met for the first time on Zoom. Then, my Younger Friend, her Dad, Fiona and one of the teachers at School met in the playground in person and we signed our commitment contracts.

Since we met, my Younger Friend and I have had so much fun, I love our time together. At first, I wondered what a teenage girl would want to do – but we soon got to know each other, and I got a feel for what she likes to do. I think I've got it right as she wants to come every week without fail. We have great conversations about what's been going on in her world and how she feels and most importantly do new fun things together.

So where have we been – well....badminton, swimming, lunches and dog walks are in the always in the mix.

We've also been to Blenheim Palace (at Christmas when the Nutcracker exhibition was in the house) and Baddesley Clinton, Stoneleigh Abbey, the Herbert Museum and The Box at Fargo Village – as my Younger Friend is very interested in history.

We attended a fishing trip organised by the Friendship Project which was a great hit as my Younger Friend loves to fish with her Dad. She earned the silver award with her skills for casting, putting bait on her line and catching fish. The coach she had on the day was so patient and encouraged her no end.

We went to The Coombe Abbey light trail funded by Callum Design which was another great experience. My Younger Friend got to bring her sister with her, and we all had a lovely evening with the other 50 children who attended. It was a very special event.

Craft is something my Younger Friend loves, and she has made cakes, lunches for the two of us, baubles for the Christmas tree at St Mary's Church, a Christmas wreath, a silver ring at a ring making workshop and painted stained glass.

One of the highlights for my Younger Friend recently, has been going to Six the Musical in Wolverhampton. She knows all the words to the songs and was beaming the whole time we watched the show. We booked in September and went in February – she looked forward to it and gave her something to spur her on during her GCSE mock exams.

One trip I really enjoyed was taking my Younger Friend to Warwickshire College to the open evening, so she could learn about the hairdressing course. She was so animated and excited about the course, it's given her a reason to get her GCSEs, as she wants to do an apprenticeship. She has been working on Saturdays in a local hairdresser since she was 13, so she has a real passion for hairdressing. I am sure she will be a very talented hairdresser.

I have enjoyed every outing with my Younger Friend, she is great, and when people say 'ooh you are good for taking her out' I say 'no I love to see her, we do some great things together.' I am so glad I found the Friendship Project and I would recommend anyone who has some spare time to join.



AGM Report May 2022

Heather Shipley Stratford District - Email heather.shipley@friendshipproject.co.uk

Older Friends:	27
Younger Friends:	17
Matched:	17
Pipeline:	10

In General

A roller coaster of a year, coming out of lockdown, handing the Rugby area over to Sarah with lots of friendships starting, ending and having issues! We are seeing that our referrals are becoming more and more complex since COVID. In talking with other professionals, they are having the same issues. We have had some complex safeguarding issues – and thank you to the Team, Esther and Ruth, for their support.

Matchings

I had 17 friendships that have been matched for a while and are stable relationships working well. One of these may end towards the end of the year as the younger friend is now a teenager (they have been friends for over 4 years) and is testing the boundaries of the friendship. Steve is matched with a 15 year old boy and it has been difficult to start a routine of meetings as the young man had detentions at school and he was not communicating well with Steve. This has now improved and Steve is supporting him with his transition from school to college. Sandra was matched with a 13 year old girl for a few weeks and the younger friend decided they did not want a volunteer anymore. Sandra has now been matched with an 8 year old girl who is CIN. The friendship is going very well. Sandra has over 20 years of experience working with young people and was not phased by the CIN and has built up a lovely friendship with her younger friend in a short time. Three of my friendships stopped on the same day as one of the children was taken into care and the Dad of the other two children was not happy with them having volunteers. He was very abusive to myself and the referrer on the phone, so I finished the friendships due to our volunteers safety. Unfortunately, two of these Volunteers do not want to be matched again. Luckily, the other volunteer is a Deputy Head at a Primary School and is well used to these sorts of issues, so is happy to be matched again.

Group Supporters

Pat is Group Supporting three OF's and I will be Group Supporting all the other OF's.

Interviews

5 full interviews for Older Friend applications and 7 2nd interviews for Fiona.

Events attended

- Online Get Together's for new and current Older Friends
- Bi-monthly Ops Meetings
- Regular meet ups with other AC's
- Regular online Safeguarding Training with Esther (plus second session training with volunteers who were not able to attend the second date with Esther)
- Restorative and Relational Practice Zoom workshop
- Shipston Area OF's Get Together October and January
- Face to Face OF Get Together Leamington October
- Face to Face OF Get Together Stratford November
- Coombe Abbey Light Tour December

Community

I have attended both face to face and online workshops with local networking groups and Foundation House in Stratford. I am having conversations with the Community Team at the RSC to see how we can work together moving forward.

Other

- Mentor to Sarah Edge in the Rugby area.
- Review of Interview Forms for the Ops Team
- Proof reading of Guidelines
- Working with Sarah to update social media
- Putting together press releases and case studies
- I am currently training in Advanced Clinical Supervision for my counselling role.

Case study



I am a 46-year-old man with one son (6yrs).

I have always enjoyed a simple life, a gifted life really. I had a great home life growing up, I had a good school life, a fun teenage time, an action-packed 20s, an adventurous 30s, and then hit my 40s and realised I could give more to others as I had been focusing on myself for so long. Actually, I really enjoy helping others and realised that was not a weakness as I had thought for 40 years, but a strength, so maybe I could do it in a more useful way than just doing some DIY for a friend, or picking up some shopping for a neighbour.

I saw a post on www.neighbourhood.co.uk not long after a charity walk. I completed it and it really hit home for me that I could support a local kid that for whatever reason needs a helping hand through their school years.

My first meeting with the Dad of my then possible friendship match was a nice meeting in the Younger Friend's school and it went well. The Dad was behind the project and could see how it might help his son. When I think about it, I would have loved having a friend with a car that wanted to do fun stuff with me one day a week too!

So, 6 months into the friendship and it's going great. We have walked, talked, swam, explored, jumped, paddled, created, bowled, sewn, built, ran, dined, shopped and had Birthdays.

I thought it would be a hassle and that I would not have time, I mean, one night every week, that's a lot to ask, isn't it? I have a son and run my own business, how will I be able to make the time? But actually, when it's in the diary, you just make space for it and it becomes the new normal very fast and easy, just like a 'curry night' or a weekly meeting at work. The difference being, you have someone who is really looking forward to seeing you and spending time with just you and you are making a positive difference in their lives and your life at the same time!

They say "givers gain" and I totally get it now.

I have learnt so much about myself and my Younger Friend who is a wonderful kid, with a real passion for creativity and storytelling, so much so that we are trying to make a comic together when we have quieter meetings and don't go and do the bigger stuff. We have a great time planning, drawing and writing sat on a park bench looking over the river in which is one of our favourite places as there is always something going on which helps the creative cells keep flowing.

The Friendship Project is a gift for a younger person but also for you, their family and the community all rolled into fun times out!

AGM Report April 2021

Viv Kelsey, Nuneaton, Bedworth and North Warwickshire – email viv.kelsey@friendshipproject.co.uk

Older Friends: 12
Younger Friends: 13
Pipeline: 2

In General

it has been a busy period firstly maintaining friendships through the pandemic and slowly getting the Older Friends back on outings with their Younger Friends. Most of the first activities were outside to help reduce the Covid risk.

There has been a lot of Friendships finish as the children reached their 17th birthday. It was sad to say goodbye then to some of the Older Friends, they had all done a fantastic job with their Younger Friends. The families were all grateful for the friendships that had been and the positive impact on their child's lives.

Facebook is still proving to be the biggest area to recruit new volunteers for this area. The posts asking for volunteers has generated a lot of interest with between 30 and 40 enquiries about what is involved. 5 new Older Friends have now been matched. We have interviewed more, but for a variety of reasons they have not continued.

We also attended a volunteer fair in Nuneaton which resulted in 2 applications being submitted and recruiting one new Older Friend. We are planning on attending a similar event again later this year.

One Older Friend has had to finish her friendship with her Younger Friend due to health issues making driving at this time difficult. However, I am delighted that she wanted to continue to be part of the The Friendship Project and is continuing as a Group Supporter to the Older Friends.

Events attended

Bank Life fishing is a family run fishing clothing company who are passionate about fishing. They contacted me as they wanted to give something back to the community, as Matt had found memories of Nuneaton as a child they wanted to collaborate with us to offer the children working with the Friendship Project the opportunity to experience the joys of fishing. Working together we organised a fishing trip for 12 children with their Older Friends on 22nd August 2021. It was so popular with more friendships than places asking if they could attend. After discussions with Bank Life they then offered a 2nd date which again was fully subscribed. The event was beyond any of our wildest expectations. The friendships arrived at 10am ready for a day's fishing. They were matched with a fishing expert to take them through the ropes and help them for the day. Lunch was provided, burgers and hot dogs along with the fishing tales and lots of happy faces and laughter. The day was supposed to finish around 3 – 3.30, we were dragging the children, Older Friends and their fishing coaches off the lake around 4pm telling them they had to go home!

Following these two successful dates, a further date was added before the colder weather arrived. Bank Life are hoping to offer regular monthly or bi monthly fishing events for children in 2022. The first event has been organised for 23rd April 2022 and the Friendship Project has been offered and filled 7 places. It has been a wonderful experience for the Younger Friends and their Older Friends not only enjoying the new experience of fishing but being outside, making new friends and having lots of fun. None of this would be possible without the support of the fishing family, the bait shops and tackle shops providing bait and fishing tackle free for the children to use, the supporters of Bank Life buying raffle tickets and contributing towards the fund raising to make these events happen and of course to the lovely Matt and Hannah for the initial idea and contributing a proportion of their sales to the events. Last but not least to the fishing coaches who have willingly given up their time to help the children showing them how to fish. The benefits have been not only the expected enjoyment of the children and their Older Friends but also the coaches who had not realised how much pleasure they would get from this experience. A huge thanks to everyone involved and here is to a continued enjoyment of this new sport.

The Riding for the Disabled National Training Centre, Shrewley, Warwickshire are reorganising a pony event for The Friendship Project following the cancellation of a proposed event before lockdown. They are looking to introduce the children to ponies, brushing, handling and spending time with them before then having a wonderful experience on 'Charlie' their mechanical horse.

We are speakers for the WI and have attended meetings in and around the area giving talks about what The Friendship Project does.

Case study 1

C is in foster care with his brother from a young age. Both boys have different father's. His brother's father wanted to take the children on and the children were returned to his care. However, the circumstances were not good, the father's parenting skills were not good and he lacked the understanding of how to care properly for the children. They were then returned to the foster care family. C felt a bit abandoned, the experience had not been a very happy one. His Foster Care family are very supportive and get on very well with both boys. C's brother has additional needs so can take more time from the family. It was felt that C would benefit from his own special friend to do activities with. Our Older Friend is a lovely male who has lots of experience working with children. He and C spend lots of time together doing fun activities. C can sometimes feel overwhelmed and not want to go out. His Older Friend understands this and doesn't pressure him when he cancels a visit. C has had covid and was isolating, this meant that he had to cancel his trip out with his Older Friend. However, his Older Friend was very thoughtful and make up a treat bag for him and dropped it at the door.

The family say the Older Friend is a wonderful, caring person who never complains if they have to cancel at short notice. He is always there when he says he will be and the two of them have some great trips out together. The Older Friend tried to take C and his brother to the local firework display in November, however there was a huge traffic problem so they never actually got to the official display. Not to be outdone by the traffic, they watched the fireworks in the sky from lots of small local events. C said that it was great fun and they really enjoyed the trip out even if it wasn't quite what was planned.

Case study 2

I first became aware of the Friendship Project for Children (FP) back in 2006 when I saw an article about the charity in my local newsletter. At that time I could not commit to a regular weekend day so decided it was best not to take it further.

In January or February 2018 I saw another plea from FP in my local newsletter and thought, "I now have the weekends free" and decided to enquire further. Before doing so I had noticed two references were required which wasn't a problem. So, I phoned the number, spoke to a very nice lady and arranged for her and another lady to come round to my home to have a chat about the charity and its aims. It was also a check by them to see if I was suitable.

From that chat I decided to go ahead with the training and hopefully become an OF.

The training, a safeguarding course, was very informal but very thorough and, surprisingly, enjoyable. Meeting fellow, prospective OF's and experienced OF's doing a refresher course gave me the chance to chat and learn more about the charity. The next step was an Enhanced Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check. This is a necessary check to make sure I have no criminal record. The check is also done on people living in your house too.

So, having passed the DBS checks in early April I was sent an e-mail with three children's names and a very brief history of their life and situation. I was to choose one from the three which was extremely hard to do. I finally selected a thirteen year old boy.

The final stage was to meet the parents and the boy in mid April to see if they and he were okay with me being his OF. I was glad that a representative of FP was there and she knew all the right questions to ask. All went well at the meeting and, as normal, a six month probation period was set to see how things would go.

In late April 2018 I took my Younger Friend (YF) to Astley Book Farm. It was a little awkward, but we decided to continue. It is now nearly four years since that first meeting.

From that day onwards we have been the best of friends.

I can honestly say that we have never had a cross word and the fun and enjoyment we have both gained with our friendship has been wonderful.

Some of our adventures include Frisbee Golf, Ten pin bowling, Snooker, watching football and during the lockdown period lots of walks. Also visits to Bosworth Battlefields, The Space Centre, The Black Country Museum, Hartshill Hayes Country Park and many more.

He has achieved ten GCSE's and is now in his second year of 6th form studying for three 'A' levels.

He has been provisionally accepted by five universities, provided he gets the grades of which I'm sure he will. Now that he is seventeen and doesn't qualify for FP I hope to be looking for another YF when he finishes 6th form this summer.

The pleasure of seeing a young, troubled boy developing into a pleasant, kind and respectful young man is something I can't put into words.

I would say to anyone thinking about becoming an OF, if you can give the time then do it.

The sense of pride in helping a young person turn their lives around is priceless.

AGM Report May 2022

Sarah Edge - Rugby – email sarah.edge@friendshipproject.co.uk

Matched OF 15

Waiting matching 5

Waiting first interview 1 – completing on 18/05

Waiting second interview 2

Total 23

In General

Well, I have now been with the FP for 10 months and it has been fantastic! A few ups and downs along the way but I am learning every day and really enjoying my role.

I have had a great mentor in Heather and all the team have been so welcoming and supportive.

Since January we have had a influx of volunteers coming forward for Rugby which has been great but also a learning curve in me being super organised.

Matchings

When I first started, I had 13 friendships that were quite established so making contact and keeping communication going with the OF was key in keeping these going and making sure everyone was happy. We have lost a few along the way due to some reaching 17 and also a few safeguarding issues, as well as some children pursuing other activities so a mutual agreement to end was made.

The new friendships that have started are going well and it has been lovely to hear about outings and having updates from the parents of how happy the children are and what an impact it has had not only on the child but also the carer and the volunteer.

One friendship had to end after the first meeting due to the child no longer interested but I am hoping that Tracy our OF will be re-matched as she is going to make such a great OF with lots of experience and a great love of arts and crafts!

Group Supporters

Judy and Kelly are my Group Supporters as well as myself looking after some OF's.

Interviews

9 interviews for new applicants since I started.

Events attended

- Bi-monthly Ops Meetings
- Regular meet ups with other AC's
- Safeguarding Training in person with Heather
- Bank Life Fishing Event x 2
- Wasps vs Worcester flag bearing event
- Away Days with the team
- Attended Rotary Club dinner for International Women's Day

Community

I am making contact with the 'Circles Network' to talk about their services for our OF to possibly book on individually – activities include horse care, arts and crafts and outdoor activities.

Planning more outreach and networking events to promote and market our charity not only to recruit more volunteers but also to find sponsors and donors where we can.

Other

- Increasing my hours to make sure our social media channels are getting traffic and we are posting regular updates. (thanks to the team for the content)
- Ruth is looking in to some training/support on learning more about the referral/assessment system through Children's Services.

Case study

I heard about The Friendship Project through a family member who thought it may be something I would be interested in. I was working in a childcare setting and have always been passionate about working with children and helping others out, so I applied straight away. I had a meeting with Kelly (who was the Rugby Area Coordinator then) and Cheryl (the Chairman). They said they had found me a match with a little boy who needs someone who enjoys being active and can keep up with him. Initially I was a bit worried but once I met R who was 8 when we first met, I knew we would be a great match just as they had said.

My first meeting with him was at his school, I got to meet him and his Mum and some of his siblings. He seemed quiet at first but also really keen to be part of The Project himself.

With R being the eldest of 5 it was great for him to be able to get out and have some time for himself and enjoy things without the responsibility of being "big brother".

For our first few outings we went to the cinema and swimming. R likes films, and being active so we always try to do something that will keep him busy and entertained. That was in 2018. I would try to have R every weekend. We would either go to the park, soft play, swimming or a planned event provided by The Friendship Project. In Jan 2019 I fell pregnant with my son but still continued my outings with R. He was so excited and happy for me to be having a baby and both him and his Mum were so understanding. I was certain I wanted to continue with The Project both during my pregnancy and after. When my little boy was born, I took a little break while I settled into the life of a parent. R came to visit me and my little boy and I was relieved at how happy he was for me. I continued taking R out, going swimming, taking him to the park and soft plays and then Covid hit. I was in regular contact with R and his Mum and ordered a sunflower growing kit for something that we could both do together whilst being apart. This was a great activity as it gave R something to focus on during lockdown. R is quite a reserved boy and doesn't really talk much about himself or any worries he may have, so I always like to make sure that he knows where I am should he need anything. R's Mum on occasion has asked me to speak to him regarding his behaviour as she feels that he listens to me more, as when we go out, it is a treat for him and he needs to behave for these to continue. During the lockdown I welcomed my second child and again R and his family were happy for me. I went and visited them on the door step a few times once we were allowed just to catch up and see how they were getting on and took him a present for his birthday.

Once the lockdown had been relaxed, The Friendship Project organised a fishing activity. R had often spoken about fishing with his Dad and I saw this as an opportunity for him to really do something I know he feels passionate about. He was really hands on and wanted to get involved straight away and was a lot braver than I was when it came to handling maggots and fish! We can't wait to attend another outing like this and it is lovely to see him come alive in a situation like this, and I also realised that it was something I enjoyed too.

Over the 3 years that I have been R's Older Friend I have seen him grow and change in himself. He is a confident and fun loving little boy who has a lot of love for not only his own family, but my 2 boys that he has got to know throughout our journey. I enjoy the time we spend together, and he will always hold a special place in my life as I hope I will in his.



The Friendship Project

Trustees' annual report (continued)

for the year ended 31 December 2021

Aims and objectives

To provide facilities for the social and physical training of children particularly disadvantaged children between the ages of 6 and 16 years who by reason of their social circumstances are in need of developing social skills by such means as the project thinks fit including the organisation of contacts between such children and reliable older persons able to help them develop such skills.

Summary of the main activities undertaken for the public benefit

With developing confidence and enhanced self-esteem, gained from the friendships, the young people are more prepared to develop new interests and achieve a wider range of skills. They grow personally and socially enabling them to forge better relationships with peers and family members. Generally, they are more settled at school but, above all, they develop a greater sense of self-worth. This is priceless and will have a positive impact on every aspect of their lives.

Summary of the main achievements during the period

- ✓ Continued to provide the invaluable 121 volunteer support and fun for disadvantaged children despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic
- ✓ We have helped 107 children directly during 2021, and many more in the wider family and school's environment
- ✓ Risk Assessments for COVID-19 and Q &A provided for volunteers and team have been regularly updated as regulations changed, to enable us to continue to function as the law allowed.
- ✓ When face to face was not permitted, we have continued to successfully pivot so as to give online, telephone and pen pal support
- ✓ Our 35th anniversary year was lower key than we hoped, as it was not really the right environment or sensible to risk having a collective indoor celebration
- ✓ We held several successful outside events including fishing, Den building with WWT and Coombe Abbey Christmas Lights extravaganza, with over 100 attending the latter event
- ✓ Safeguarding training has been undertaken online, including refresher training.
- ✓ Our training for new volunteers has been refreshed with a new booklet produced to support the training given by our area Coordinators. Our volunteer application paperwork updated too.
- ✓ Our income achieved was £63,366, against budget £65,350, as expenditure lower than anticipated the carry forward to 2022 of £60,588, was slightly higher than in 2021, leaving us in a healthy financial position

The Friendship Project
Trustees' annual report (continued)
for the year ended 31 December 2021

Financial Review

The charity made an unrestricted deficit of £786 in the year with net unrestricted reserves of £48,795.

The Trustees have reviewed the financial position of the charity in light of the impact of COVID 19, the current economic environment and costs upon its operations and fund raising. They believe that with the funding commitments made and plans for 2022, it has the necessary funding to continue providing its services for at least the next 12 months. The trustees review this at each of their quarterly meetings.

The charity's policy on reserves

In line with the guidance provided by the Charities Commission the Friendship Project has reviewed and revised its policy on the holding of financial reserves.

The majority of our monthly expenditure relates to the salaries and expenses of our staff and the expenses of our Older Friends.

As our income varies considerably month by month it is important that in order to provide continuity of support for our Younger Friends that we have sufficient financial resources in place for the timely and regular payment of salaries and expenses.

In order to ensure our ability to achieve this, the trustees believe that it is essential to hold financial reserves, excluding restricted funds, of a minimum of six to nine months forecast expenditure. A proportion of these funds is invested on an interest earning basis with M&G Charity Investments and is repayable on demand.

This policy will be monitored and reviewed annually.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:

Signed 

Date 08.06.2022

Cheryll Rawbone, Chairman

Independent Examiners Report to the Trustees of
The Friendship Project
Year Ended 31 December 2021

I report on the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31 December 2021, which are set out on pages 6 to 12.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act;
- follow the procedures laid down in the general directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act, and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect, the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Acthave not been met; or
2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Signed:

Paula Wilson, MAAT

Date: 08.06.2022

The Friendship Project
Statement of Financial Activities
For the year ended 31 December 2021

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2021 Total Funds £	2020 £
Incoming resources					
Grants	2	12,894	27,357	40,251	34,900
Donations	3	14,377	-	14,377	13,042
Fundraising donations/events	4	8,047	-	8,047	6,998
Gift Aid	5	-	-	-	-
Investment income	6	691	-	691	938
Total incoming resources		<u>36,009</u>	<u>27,357</u>	<u>63,366</u>	<u>55,878</u>
Resources expended					
Salaries, NI	10	14,101	21,323	35,424	35,953
Staff expenses		2,734	274	3,008	4,231
Volunteer expenses		11,072	714	11,786	8,419
Insurance		3,230	-	3,230	3,101
Events/Christmas parties		861	-	861	115
Other expenditure	11	4,446	499	4,945	3,034
Independent examination fee	13	350	-	350	350
Total resources expended		<u>36,795</u>	<u>22,810</u>	<u>59,605</u>	<u>55,203</u>
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources		(786)	4,547	3,761	675
Gains & (losses) on investments		(1,343)	-	(1,343)	259
Total funds brought forward		50,924	6,953	57,877	56,943
Total funds carried forward	9	<u>48,795</u>	<u>11,500</u>	<u>60,295</u>	<u>57,877</u>

Expenditure is allocated between Unrestricted and Restricted funds on the basis of actual expenditure incurred along with an element of judgement on indirect items of expenditure.

The Friendship Project

Balance Sheet

For the year ended 31 December 2021

	Note	£	2021 £	£	2020 £
Fixed assets					
Investments	6		37,871		39,215
Current assets					
Cash at bank and in hand		25,274		16,348	
Accrued Income	7	-		1,950	
Insurance prepayment	8	270		259	
Debtors		-		1,338	
		<u>25,544</u>		<u>19,895</u>	
Current liabilities					
Accrued expenses	9	(3,120)		(1,233)	
Net current assets			22,424		18,662
Net assets			<u>60,295</u>		<u>57,877</u>
The funds of the charity					
General Funds			48,795		50,924
Restricted Funds			11,500		6,953
Total Funds	10		<u>60,295</u>		<u>57,877</u>

The trustees declare that they have approved the accounts above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:



Signed: _____ Date: 08.06.2022

Cheryll Rawbone, Chairperson

The Friendship Project

Notes to the Financial Statements

For the year ended 31 December 2021

1. Accounting policies

These financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention with items recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant notes to these accounts and with the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) issued on 16 July 2014 and with the Charities Act 2011.

Incoming Resources

All material incoming resources have been included on a receivable basis – ie they are included if the date receivable falls within the period covered by these accounts.

Resources expended

These have been analysed using a natural classification.

2. Grants

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2021	Total Funds 2020
	£	£	£	£
Warwickshire Police & Crime Commissioner	-	7,713	7,713	7,500
Heart of England 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust	1,000	-	1,000	1,000
29th May 1961 Charitable Trust	3,000	-	3,000	3,000
King Henry VIII Endowed Trust	-	3,750	3,750	3,500
L&Q Foundation	(333)	-	(333)	3,900
Heart of England Community Foundation	-	4,335	4,335	-
National Lottery	-	8,559	8,559	-
FC Stokes Trust	1,000	-	1,000	-
Four Acre Trust	8,227	-	8,227	-
Warwickshire CrimeBeat	-	3,000	3,000	-
Allan Edward Higgs Grant	-	-	-	4,000
Heart of England Community Foundation Harry Payne	-	-	-	2,000
Heart of England Community Foundation Coronavirus	-	-	-	3,000
National Lottery Community Fund / Covid 19	-	-	-	7,000
	<u>12,894</u>	<u>27,357</u>	<u>40,251</u>	<u>34,900</u>

The Friendship Project
Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)

For the year ended 31 December 2021

3. Donations

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2021	Total Funds 2020
	£	£	£	£
Callum Designs	1,500	-	1,500	-
Masonic Charitable Foundation	1,000	-	1,000	-
Bates Trust Claverdon	1,000	-	1,000	-
Countrywide Builders	5,000	-	5,000	-
Leamington SW	1,000	-	1,000	-
Anonymous Donor	1,000	-	1,000	-
Anonymous Donors x 3	-	-	-	3,000
Village Voices	-	-	-	1,350
Bodies & Co	-	-	-	4,000
BDW Trading Barrett Homes	-	-	-	1,000
Donations under £1,000	3,877	-	3,877	3,692
	<u>14,377</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>14,377</u>	<u>13,042</u>

4. Fundraising Events

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2021	Total Funds 2020
	£	£	£	£
Alsters Kelly Solicitors	1,727	-	1,727	-
Fundraising Events under £1,000	6,320	-	6,320	6,998
	<u>8,047</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>8,047</u>	<u>6,998</u>

5. HMRC Gift Aid

Gift Aid received £0, (2020 - £0)

The Friendship Project

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)

For the year ended 31 December 2021

6. Investments

Market value of surplus funds is invested in the Charibond Charities Fixed Interest Common Investment Fund (“Charibond”) with M&G Investments. Investment income 2021 - £691 (2020 - £938).

7. Accrued Income

	2021 £	2020 £
L&Q Foundation	-	1,950
	<u>-</u>	<u>1,950</u>

8. Debtors

	2021 £	2020 £
Insurance Prepayment	270	259
Other Debtors	-	1,338
	<u>270</u>	<u>1,597</u>

9. Creditors

	2021 £	2020 £
Volunteer Expenses	1,853	859
Staff Expenses	41	24
Independent Examination Fee	350	350
WPCC underspend to be returned	687	-
Oasis	189	-
	<u>3,120</u>	<u>1,233</u>

The Friendship Project

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)

For the year ended 31 December 2021

10. Movements in Funds

	Opening Balance £	Incoming Resources £	(Resources expended) £	Gains & Losses £	Transfers £	Closing Balance £
General funds	50,924	36,009	(36,795)	(1,343)	-	48,795
Designated funds	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total General Funds	<u>50,924</u>	<u>36,009</u>	<u>(36,795)</u>	<u>(1,343)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>48,795</u>
Restricted Funds						
Warwickshire P&CC	-	7,713	(5,738)	-	-	1,975
HoECF Coronavirus Resilience	-	4,335	(3,251)	-	-	1,084
National Lottery	-	8,559	(4,993)	-	-	3,566
King Henry VIII Endowed Trust	-	3,750	(1,875)	-	-	1,875
Warwickshire Crimebeat	-	3,000	-	-	-	3,000
Warwickshire P&CC	1,657	-	(1,657)	-	-	-
National Lottery CF Covid 19	1,346	-	(1,346)	-	-	-
L&Q Foundation	1,950	-	(1,950)	-	-	-
HofECF Coronavirus	1,000	-	(1,000)	-	-	-
HofECF Harry Payne Fund	1,000	-	(1,000)	-	-	-
Total Restricted Funds	<u>6,953</u>	<u>27,357</u>	<u>(22,810)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>11,500</u>
Total Funds	<u>57,877</u>	<u>63,366</u>	<u>(59,605)</u>	<u>(1,343)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>60,295</u>

11. Staff costs and numbers

	2021 £	2020 £
Wages	35,424	35,953
	<u>35,424</u>	<u>35,953</u>

No employee received emoluments of more than £60,000.

The average weekly number of part time employees during the year was 5 (2020: 5)

The Friendship Project

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)

For the year ended 31 December 2021

12. Other expenditure

	2021	2020
	£	£
Storage of documents	454	185
Telephones	540	543
Printing, stationery & advertising	46	996
Database / IT	694	-
Payroll	1,246	1,213
CIO accreditation	1,800	-
Sundries	165	97
	<u>4,945</u>	<u>3,034</u>

13. Trustees' remuneration, benefits and expenses

During the accounting period, the charity obtained insurance cover including Public Liability, Employer's Liability, All Risks for Assets, Personal Accident for volunteers and younger friends and Trustee Indemnity Insurance for a total of £3,230.

The management committee and other trustees did not receive any remuneration during the year (2020: nil).

14. Independent examination and accountancy services

During the period, the cost of the examination and accountancy services was £350.

15. Controlling parties

The charity is under the control of the management committee.

16. Glossary of terms

Restricted funds: These are funds given to the charity, subject to specific restrictions set by the donor, but still within the general objects of the charity.

Debtors: These are expenses paid in the year with some of the benefit arising in the following year

Creditors:

These are amounts owed by the charity, but not paid during the accounting period.

THE FRIENDSHIP PROJECT

England & Wales - Charity number 517684

Accounts



the friendship project
for children

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Published in May 2021



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INTRODUCTION

This report reflects our achievements during 2020 and our plans for 2021, though these may be subject to change depending on the success of the “Government roadmap”, and to the ongoing ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our thanks go to the many volunteers, employees, funders, and supporters for helping children in need throughout the various lockdowns in the last twelve months to have some much-needed fun, aiding their personal development, confidence, and improving their self-esteem, and in particular coping with their new challenges.

Additionally, I would like to thank the contributors to this report which helps give an insight into the work undertaken by members of our Operations team, fellow trustees, plus importantly some case studies to help show the impact and difference that we and more importantly our volunteers are making.

The overall purpose of the Friendship Project is to improve the social and emotional well-being of children, aged 6-16, disadvantaged by virtue of their own or family circumstances. An Older Friend provides experiences lacking in the child's life, builds a trusting relationship and raises the self-esteem of their Younger Friend. Volunteers, over the age of 18, are drawn from Warwickshire communities and come from all walks of life. They are carefully vetted as to their suitability for this work, including DBS checks.

Volunteers meet with their Younger Friends weekly for between 2-3 hours to be involved in mutually enjoyable and jointly planned activities and visits. Examples include playing in the park, building dens, craft activities, cooking, fishing, bird watching, climbing, golf, sewing, library, swimming, cinema, growing vegetables etc. which, their school contemporaries take for granted.

Volunteers maintain that the 1:1 attention, with the capacity for the child to talk to a listening adult, is the most valuable aspect of the activity. Such activities are at the heart of what the Project does.

The average length of a friendship is 2.5/3 years and over time the Younger Friend gradually becomes more open and confident in discussing worries and concerns about family, school, friends and themselves. Older Friends offer support and, increasingly, guidance on more sensitive and personal issues. This has helped Younger Friends gain a better understanding of their problems; develop better relationships with family members; and cope more positively with challenging situations at school.

Positive feedback and encouragement, invariably missing in the child's life, is a constant feature of the weekly activities and of major importance in raising self-esteem. This usually results in the young people developing new interests and acquiring a wider range of skills.

Volunteers enjoy the company of their Younger Friends and going to places they would not otherwise go to. They enjoy providing new experiences and knowing they are a trusted confidante but, above all, they gain satisfaction from seeing their Younger Friend develop socially and personally.

One-to-one befriending carries a potential risk in relation to child protection. Safeguarding procedures, in relation to recruitment, vetting, briefing, training and supervision of volunteers are given the highest priority and kept under constant review with Children's Services. The Friendship Project is an Associate Member of the Warwickshire Safeguarding Children's Board and an Assistant Head of Service acts as an Advisor to our Trustees.

There is quality research available advising the importance of early intervention to help both mental and physical health outcomes in later life, making our contribution in the sector extremely valuable.

We hope that you find this report of interest, and for further information please visit our website: www.friendshipproject.co.uk Please also follow us on: – @friendshipproj on twitter and Instagram or on Facebook: www.facebook.com/TheFriendshipProjectForChildren

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

My report is focused primarily on our activities and achievements in 2020, our last financial year, plus our plans for 2021, our 35th year, with hopefully an opportunity to celebrate our Coral anniversary later in the year, if the government restrictions allow. Additionally, how we have met and are approaching the ongoing COVID-19 challenges.



First and foremost, I would like to extend a big thank you on behalf of all the children (Younger Friends) that we are supporting and have helped to all our excellent current and past volunteers, employees, benefactors/funders, and trustees. Without whose dedication our small local charity could not continue to help the lives of children in need throughout Warwickshire. Since 1986, we estimate that there have been more than 1,500 children helped over this period.

At the end of February 2020, we were welcomed to Leamington Tennis and Squash club where I was honored on behalf of the charity to accept the Queens Award for Voluntary Service, and it was brilliant that we were able to celebrate, before the pandemic took hold, with so many volunteers, operations team, supporters, and funders. It was a tremendous accolade for us and a fitting tribute to all involved, and it does seem a long time since we were able to be together safely in this way.

In the autumn our Area Coordinator in Rugby, Kelly Furness, resigned, and is thanked for her contribution to the charity, and in particular her interest in safeguarding, our Trusted Charity Project, and helping to expand our volunteer base in Rugby. The remaining members of the operations team have kindly stepped up to cover the Rugby area, as we decided that we would wait to recruit until there was an easing of government lockdown conditions, when it will be possible to make effective training and integration into the team more attainable.

I would particularly like to commend our operations team for the way in which they have adapted to work with new conditions and continued to support our volunteers and vulnerable children in Warwickshire despite the additional challenges throughout the pandemic. We had to suspend our planned collective events during 2020, though we were able to deliver our younger friends activity packs, Easter eggs, and Christmas presents.

We have successfully recruited two excellent new trustees in 2020, Sarah Stallard, who is taking the portfolio of HR, and Louise Hasler who has taken the portfolio of Risk & Compliance and is working on our Trusted Charity ambitions. Our Hon Secretary, Michelle Machin, is stepping down in 2021, though continuing to volunteer for the charity going forward with helping with social media and remains in place whilst we look to recruit a replacement. She is thanked for all her significant contributions including stepping in when we were without a treasurer to dealing with salaries and expenses. Recently joining us as trustee designate with portfolio for Operations is the ably qualified Gurmaj Dhillon, who is welcomed to the team.

The Highlights of what we have achieved in 2020 are as follows: -

- ✓ Continued to provide the invaluable 121 volunteer support and fun for disadvantaged children in spite of the challenges presented by the current pandemic, without needing to furlough our operations team, who continued to work, showing great resilience throughout the year.
- ✓ We were presented with the Queens Award for Voluntary Service in February 2020
- ✓ Owing to the restrictions with COVID-19 when we had to suspend face to face meetings in March, and we have successfully pivoted to online, telephone and pen pal support.
- ✓ Get togethers for our volunteers have continued via Zoom, with wellbeing, craft, and chat

- ✓ Safeguarding training has been refreshed and undertaken, and a new scheme established over two consecutive sessions delivered online.
- ✓ A new Pen Pal/online matching service has been established for those volunteers not able to complete their training for face-to-face meetings, as a transition stage, which means that we have still been able to give support for new children referred.
- ✓ COVID Risk Assessments have been introduced alongside Q & As for volunteers
- ✓ Trustees have met more frequently to review our activity and financial position.
- ✓ Our budget income was £65,000, with target £70,000, which were set prior to the pandemic, and it was always going to be difficult to achieve, as the impact of COVID-19 become more serious. We are pleased that we were able to raise £52,526, with our expenses lower owing to COVID-19 restrictions meaning there were less volunteer and operational team expenses, our carry forward for 2021 is similar to 2020.
- ✓ Two new trustees were recruited and appointed.
- ✓ We have had an increase in the number of volunteers coming forward, and once we are able to complete the checks and training this will put us in a good place for 2021 and increase in demand.
- ✓ Sustained 80 friendships during the year, with 67 continuing into 2021, which mirrored the position at end of 2019 start of 2020 pre pandemic, which is amazing considering recruitment restrictions.
- ✓ Our pipeline of volunteers is stronger than ever going into 2021.
- ✓ Christmas presents for YFs were organised as we could not hold a party event in 2020.
- ✓ Continued to promote the Friendship Project, throughout the County; this was face to face at the start of the year then continued Zoom online attendance for various networking events, plus presentations on zoom to local Rotary too.
- ✓ Recruited 2 new trustees for portfolios of HR and Compliance.
- ✓ Our Ops team o started work on the Trusted Charity Project, which is now being lead by Louise Hasler, Trustee.
- ✓ Updated our publicity and marketing information following achieving the Queens Award.

In 2021 our plans include the following: -

- ✓ Continue to provide the invaluable 121 volunteer support and fun for disadvantaged children. Aim to increase the numbers supported and reduce our waiting lists. Target to have 80 still matched by end of 2021, though the quality is still more important than the numbers matched.
- ✓ Specifically, to increase the number of Older Friends as volunteers, particularly in Stratford and district, Rugby, and North Warwickshire areas
- ✓ Increase the number of Group Supporters
- ✓ Our budget is to raise £65,350, with target income of 70,000.
- ✓ Recruit a trustee for Hon Secretary role, and identify a new vice-chairman too
- ✓ Continue work with our Trusted Charity project.
- ✓ Recruit a new Area Coordinator for Rugby and district
- ✓ Reinstate post COVID-19 restrictions the roll out of personal visits to YFs and their carer/parent to for safeguarding and to validate worth. To potentially to extend this to include anonymous case studies to support fund raising.
- ✓ Attend periodic networking events to increase the profile of the Friendship Project.
- ✓ Further improve our social media presence
- ✓ Organise two more sessions through the year for Safeguarding Training for volunteers, both as refreshers and also for new volunteers.
- ✓ Continue to hold periodic Older Friends get-togethers/training/support sessions.
- ✓ Complete the Procedures Manual including Trustees Responsibilities too, in "How to" format for contingency planning.
- ✓ Continue to encourage and support training for the Operation team.
- ✓ Recruit additional Group Supporters, as required as our Older Friends increase
- ✓ "CIO" status, has been put on hold, as we are awaiting confirmation that the Queens Award can be moved across to the new entity, and also for funds to allow this to take place.

- ✓ Complete the review of publicity and marketing materials including the Queens Award logo

Trustee vacancy

We are looking to recruit a new Hon Secretary, as our existing one needs to stand down for work reasons, though it is appreciated she is going to assist with social media going forward instead. If you know of anyone who may be interested in joining our trustee team in this capacity, then we would be happy to talk further. There will be training and handover available too. Please contact me on my email below or 07769 727418 for more information.

Big thank you.

Whilst writing my report I would like to again personally thank both past and present the many Older Friends, Group Supporters, volunteers, operations team, employees, and trustees, who give their time freely to help our Younger Friends have important 1-2-1 attention, emotional support, friendship and the opportunity to explore new activities and have some fun, particularly through these most challenging times.

Cheryll Rawbone

Chairman

Email: cheryll.rawbone@friendshipproject.co.uk

Safeguarding Report

Trustee - Esther Jones

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.

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Grant, Trust, & Local Fund-Raising Report

Trustee – Richard Barrett

Due to the COVID 19 pandemic 2020 proved to be a difficult year for fundraising as all our main sources of income fell, resulting in a reduction in our overall income of over 25% from 2019 levels. We are thankful for the reserves that we brought forward from 2019, that enabled us to continue our work supporting disadvantaged children across Warwickshire during the pandemic, despite our falling income.

Many grant providers froze their funds, while others focused their grants on supporting those organisations and individuals most severely impacted by the pandemic. However, we were successful in applying for the Government's emergency support for charities and in attracting new funders in The National Lottery and the L&Q Housing Group.

We are very grateful for the continuing support of existing grant funders, The Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner, The King Henry VIII's Endowed Trust, The Heart of England Community Foundation and the 29th May Charitable Trust.

Our donations and events fundraising income reduced significantly from the 2019 level, although 2019 had been an exceptional year with Croft Primary School raising almost £11,000 for the Friendship Project. We were delighted by the fundraising activities that supporters ran on our behalf during the year. Of particular note was Grace and Sam's 350-mile cycle challenge which raised over £2,000 a magnificent result for which we are most grateful. We are thankful too to all who contributed to other fundraising activities in 2020.

We were pleased to welcome new corporate supporters CR Callum Limited and Procure 4 during the year and look forward to working with them further in 2021.

We are extremely grateful to all our corporate and individual donors who have supported us through large and small donations and for the ongoing support of all our grant funders:

- ✓ 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust
- ✓ Amazon Smile
- ✓ Anonymous donors
- ✓ Barratt Homes West Midlands
- ✓ Mrs. R Benion
- ✓ Bodies & Co
- ✓ Coventry & District Cricket Assoc
- ✓ Coventry Building Society
- ✓ CR Callum Limited
- ✓ Gallagher Ltd
- ✓ Garfield Weston Charitable Foundation
- ✓ BM & SJ Hall
- ✓ Hatton Park WI
- ✓ Heart of England Community Foundation - Harry Payne Fund
- ✓ King Henry VIII's Endowed Trust - Warwick
- ✓ Jaguar Land Rover
- ✓ Lapworth Ladies Super Club
- ✓ L & Q Group
- ✓ Manchester United Foundation and Leamington Spa Supporters Club
- ✓ Mr & Mrs. M Parton
- ✓ Passioneers Limited – Make Good Grow
- ✓ Procure 4
- ✓ Ridge Lane WI
- ✓ Sam and Grace
- ✓ Soroptimists Kenilworth
- ✓ Terence Hague
- ✓ The Alan Edward Higgs Charity
- ✓ The National Lottery Community Fund
- ✓ UK Corona Virus Resilience Fund
- ✓ Village Voices
- ✓ Warwick Court Leet
- ✓ Waitrose
- ✓ Warwickshire Police & Crime Commissioner

Thanks also go to Gallagher Insurance Broking Limited who continue to give administration support, postal mail shots and loan of equipment and to Leamington Lawn Tennis and Squash Club for hosting the presentation of our Queens Award for Voluntary Service and use of their meeting room.

Despite COVID we have continued to raise our profile, particularly through social media, Facebook and our website, alongside attending local networking events, virtually and in person when permitted. It has been particularly pleasing to see how this activity has resulted in significant growth in the numbers of volunteers coming forward to be Older Friends.

As lockdown restrictions ease, we look forward to continuing our work and to growing our friendships, supporting more disadvantaged children. This will require us to raise further funds as our costs grow, but we are confident that we can grow our income again through the support of our donors and grant funders.

Fundraising is a team effort and thanks go to the whole team for all their hard work in supporting our fundraising.

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Marketing Report

Trustee – Angela Truman

Events

Events have clearly been something lacking in the past year owing to restrictions placed by the pandemic so the focus to raise awareness of the Friendship Project has focused more in other areas.

Social Media

In response to the inability to host events during the pandemic there has been big push, particularly in the last 6 months to grow our following and connections on social media. This is proving successful, and since the beginning of March we have a dedicated volunteer making all on the posts across LinkedIN, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. It is hoped that through better profiles on social media it will assist with volunteer recruitment and community fundraising.

With the Friendship Project turning 35 years old this year, this is our big project:



PR

The comprehensive list of local publications and radio stations continues to be updated to act as a tool in helping to distribute our stories across the whole of Warwickshire. Historically, North Warwickshire featured less publications to approach than other areas of Warwickshire to share the Friendship Project story, and this has been addressed with a raised awareness of some parish and village titles which now feature on the list.

When a press release is written the Area Coordinators distribute it to their own local press.

Darwin Media Company wrote and distributed a press release for the Friendship Project in December detailing how the Friendship Project was continuing during lockdowns. Feedback on this coverage was good.

Anne Marie Lambert kindly donated free online cookery classes for our Younger Friends – this article received good coverage in mid and south of the county.

Several case studies were featured explaining how our older and younger friends were staying in touch during the pandemic.

Local Radio continue to be very supportive of the charity, with several interviews being aired with Older Friends and Area Co-ordinators.

Local Businesses

Barrett Homes donated £1000 from their local community fund.

Callum Designs, a prestigious car design and engineering company business based in Warwick, donated 100 Hot Wheels cars to the Friendship Project which have been distributed amongst the Younger Friends. Press Release attached.

In January 2021 Callum also donated £1500. They continue to support the Friendship Project and would like to offer visits to Younger Friends to see the cars once face-to-face group meetings are allowed.

Alsters Kelley law firm in Leamington Spa has chosen the Friendship Project as their appointed charity for the year.

All donations and partnerships with the Friendship Project have been celebrated in the press and across all social media platforms.

CAR DESIGN AND ENGINEERING COMPANY REACHES OUT TO HELP VULNERABLE CHILDREN CHARITY

14th October 2020



To celebrate its one-year anniversary, a design and engineering business which creates bespoke products has partnered with Warwickshire-based charity, the Friendship Project For Children to donate 100 Hot Wheels toy cars to local children within the project.

Callum Design's donation marks the beginning of a growing partnership between the two organisations, with Callum hoping to instil its enthusiasm and passion for cars into the next generation and raise awareness of careers in automotive design and low volume craftsmanship. The design and engineering business recently presented its first car project, the Aston Martin CALLUM Vanquish 25 by R-Reforged, which will be built at its Warwick facility. Co-founder, Ian Callum, who as well as an avid Hot Wheels fan, was keen to do something locally as an alternative way of celebrating its first year in business.



Supporting the local community seemed far a more appropriate way to celebrate our first year in these times," says David Fairbairn, Callum director. "We've also an opportunity to generate some sparks of interest in automotive design and manufacture as a possible career for these young people. Typically, they wouldn't get access to the design or prototype department of a major manufacturer. When conditions allow, we plan to show them first-hand the broad scope of roles available. We think they might be surprised."

The Friendship Project matches children and young people – who are in need, for a variety of reasons – with an older friend volunteer who spends time with them, on a weekly basis enabling them to enjoy activities such as sports, arts and crafts or music. For some, even playing in the park or going to the cinema is something they couldn't otherwise get to experience.

"We really appreciate the Hot Wheels cars that Callum has donated," said Angela Truman from The Friendship Project. "Giving young people a behind-the-scenes look at what goes into designing and making cars has the potential to spark new career ideas and is something I know many are already excited about."

Callum also plans to help the charity in other ways, lending its design skills to create posters and brochures for The Friendship Project. "It's important we attract more volunteers as we have a growing need for children in Warwickshire who require extra support and guidance," added Angela. "Having designers of this calibre for our charity will definitely help us the get the message out.

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Quality Assurance/Compliance Report

Trustee - Louise Hasler

My role as a trustee is to lead in all areas of quality and compliance, supporting compliance with legal requirements and Charity Commission Guidelines. The following is a summary of what I have focussed my efforts on since my appointment was approved at the AGM 2020; our Chairman shares with me sector news that supports me in my role but if anyone has any insight into how we may be able to further improve quality assurance and compliance I would welcome a direct approach with any suggestions you may have.

1. Trusted Charity Mark

The Trusted Charity Mark is a status that can be sought from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations which demonstrates achievement of the Trusted Charity standards. This nationally recognised award offers both users and funders external verification of the quality and credibility of an organisation. Since my appointment at the AGM 2020, I have been working to identify gaps in our evidence, taking each of the defined areas one as a time. With the help of our Human Resource Trustee, Sarah Stallard, excellent progress has been made with the Managing People section, with new versions of pre-existing documents/ new documents being created (Anti Bribery Policy, Bullying Prevention Policy, organisation chart and Employee Handbook.

The relatively small size of the Friendship Project means that some of the evidence proposed is not merited by the scale and nature of our operation; it is worth the heavy investment of time in the self-assessment stages to ensure that our submission is the best it can be. More investment will be made in furthering our Trusted Charity Mark submission, as time allows.

2. Trustee Job Descriptions and 'How to' Documents

Trustee job descriptions have been developed and are now included in the Procedures Handbook. These job descriptions are useful in respect of external scrutiny and also when a vacancy arises. We are now working on 'how to' documents which summarise in more detail the work of individual trustees in order to create contingency, particularly when someone needs to pick up tasks without the benefit of a handover.

3. Risk Register

Having taken on responsibility for the Risk Register, I have updated it to better reflect the status quo. At the February Trustees' meeting it was agreed that the Risk Register should be reviewed at each quarterly meeting of the Trustees and that any item with a residual risk of higher than 9 would be automatically discussed in order to identify anything that additional that could possibly be put in place to mitigate for the risk.

4. Conflict of Interests Policy

The most recent Charities Governance Code sets out an expectation that for reasons of transparency even small charities have a conflict-of-interest policy and that employees and trustees should be required to declare conflicts of interest annually. A policy was drafted based on a template from the Chartered Governance Institute and approved at the February trustees' meeting.

The agreed process is that the Honorary Secretary will circulate the declaration of interests form to employees and trustees in advance of the Annual General Meeting and collect forms for consideration

by the Trustee for Quality and Compliance who will make a report to the AGM. A register of conflicts of interest will be maintained by the Trustee for Quality and Compliance and this will be available on request via the Honorary Secretary.

5. Cyber-Security Guidance

National Cyber Security Centre guidance on cyber-security and working from home was received in October 2020; some amendments have been made to the Procedures Manual to reflect this.

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HR Report April 2021

Trustee – Sarah Stallard

In June 2020 I joined the Friendship Project as HR Trustee as I really wanted to help support a local charity. In the midst of a global pandemic, it has been unfortunate that I haven't been able to meet anyone in person however I would like to thank everyone for making me feel so welcome. Video calls are now normality and although they are not the same, I am grateful I have been able to meet people virtually and build an understanding of how the project works and operates.

Over the last 12 months I have reviewed all the HR documents, handbooks, and policies to check they are up to date and updated them where necessary. I have also added some additional policies and documents to support the Trusted Charity Mark application. These include:

Organisational chart

Bullying Policy

Anti-Bribery Policy

Amended parental bereavement leave information in employee handbook in line with latest legislation

Advised on COVID practices, PPE, policy, and risk assessments

I have conducted one to one meetings with the area-coordinators and will continue to do this on a 6 monthly basis. It was great to talk to each of the co-ordinators and get to know them better and learn more about what they do and what is going on in their areas.

I look forward to advising and supporting the team throughout 2021.

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Area Coordinators Report Warwick District

Fiona Roche

Older Friends: 31 (3 Rugby)

Younger Friends: 34 (2 Rugby)

Pipeline: 11 (1 Rugby)

In General

It has been a very different year this year! It has been one of my busiest in the 8 years I have been with the Friendship Project. I have seen a big increase in OF applicants particularly in the 25-35 year age group. My youngest OF is 21 and eldest is 86 years old!

COVID-19

Even though we have been in lockdown for half the year and had restrictions throughout, work has continued in the Operations team. There has been a lot of extra communication and support for our existing Older Friends. With regular phone calls and emails to check how they are doing. Emails with ideas of how to communicate remotely with their YF. Reassurance when the Older Friends were not getting responses from their YF. Understanding that some OF's didn't feel up to contacting their YF's due to the stress of being locked down and how it was affecting them personally.

Zoom has become a big part of the day, with new volunteers being interviewed by Zoom instead of face to face. This has been fantastic as it gave us the opportunity to meet our volunteers and get to know them and get most of the interview process done. We have had Zoom Operations meetings, catch up's with Older Friends and regular Get togethers for our volunteers.

Risk Assessments have been a big part of the job. Making sure everyone is aware of what they can and can't do. That the families understand this responsibility too. It has changed several times and we have constantly updated all the volunteers and families.

Now that we can see people in gardens, I have been to do the 2nd interviews for 5 of Heather's new OFs. It has been great to be out and do some face to face with these new volunteers, a nice change from Zoom!

Events attended – all via Zoom or Teams

- Get together Zooms
- Safeguarding training Zooms
- Early Help Networking group
- Motivation Mondays Talk Business
- Well being webinars by Illuminate
- Charity networking – Talk Charity
- Early Help family meetings.
- OF and YF activity Zooms

Older Friend and Younger Friend activity Zooms

This was a first for us to have an OF and YF group activity zoom. We held six 1 hour sessions. They were led by Katrina McDade, a family learning tutor from the Warwick Council that I had made contact with. It was quite a challenge getting everyone logged on so that they could be seen and heard as a lot of them hadn't done zoom before or were sharing devices with other members of the family. Katrina read stories, had a picture quiz, music making using recyclables, self portraits with pastels (which she supplied and I sent to all the OF's and YF's). The feedback was that it was very much enjoyed by everyone.

Remote Pen Pal friendships

With lots of new volunteers who had been interviewed and done their safeguarding training we felt that the next progression was to get them matched remotely rather than wait around until we could do this face to face. This was also on the back of the success that some friendships were having by being Pen pals and doing Whatsapp calls, so we thought we would give it a go. A zoom meeting was set up with the referrer, YF, OF, carer and Area Coordinator. I matched 5 pen pal friendships and they are all going really well. I am now organising for them to have a meeting in person at school so they can become full face to face friendships and start outing's. It has been a good way to keep volunteers involved and also with the YG's who have anxiety, a gentle way to get to know each other..

New Group Supporters

Now that the Warwick district has 31 friendships which is going to grow to 42 in the next few months, I am very please to have a team of 6 Group supporters. I have recently recruited 2 new Group Supporters, Gilly and Kerry. They all do an amazing job keeping in contact with their OFs or which I am very grateful. We all met on zoom for some training and a catch up.

Radio Interviews

I have done 4 radio interviews over the last year. I arranged for 3 Older Friends to speak on the interviews too.

Summary

It has been great to be able to keep working all year with my colleagues and volunteers. I have got to know the carers more which I feel has been very beneficial to supporting the friendship. I am now going to have a busy few months as I have 16 (5 Pen pals) to organise face to face friendships once restrictions allow us to meet in schools or homes. Thank you to the team and to Cheryl for her support through this tricky year.

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Case study 1

It was my first time, I was completely new to the idea of becoming a Older Friend. I was told that the 10 year old boy that I was befriending had ADHD and lots of energy, had problems with authority figures and had had a Older Friend before but it had not really worked out. I was then introduced to a quiet, subdued young man, quite small for 10 years, who immediately struck me as really wanting to be liked.

Our first trip out was to the local park with a football, which we kicked around for a while and then sat on some logs and talked about him, me and what we each enjoyed doing. I was left with the impression of a sweet, sensitive boy who loves his mum and his sisters (most of the time). We then had some running races and played tag around the park proving that he certainly did have boundless energy.

Our friendship gradually grew as we fell into a habit of about 90 minutes of some sort of activity each week either football or tag in the park, swimming, cycling (another Older Friend gave us a bike that their young friend had grown out of) and then a trip to McDonald's or KFC which would give us the opportunity to sit and talk for half an hour while he ate.

I knew we were doing well when his behaviour started to deteriorate. He was sufficiently relaxed with me to sulk when he didn't get his way, primarily when I said it was time to go home, or when he tried a trick on his bike but could not pull it off. We gradually learnt how to deal with each other. Sometimes I would buy him the extra drink or sweets we wanted, but he also learnt that a sulk was never going to persuade me to his point of view.

My work often takes me away from home. I send him postcards from wherever I go in the world, thinking this might raise an interest in the world outside of Leamington. He loves to browse the photos on my phone when we get back together again. But he has no interest in the places I go to. He does, however, love to know more about the people I meet and the animals in the different countries. What I thought might raise an interest in geography and the world has not, but it has drawn out his interest in people, his sensitive caring self.

This past year has been challenging. A weekly facetime call when we are not allowed to meet. Invariably he is playing on his X-box while we speak, leading to some prolonged periods in which our conversation goes nowhere. But I soon realised that he was never keen to finish the call even when neither of us had anything more to say. Just seeing each other and me being there while he played seemed to be important.

When we could meet, we were restricted to walking or cycling from his home. It worked out well in the summer months, we even had a few evening swims in the river. But things got harder as the evenings drew in and we found ourselves out in the cold and dark.

He will be thirteen this month. No longer the small 10-year-old I met just 2 ½ years ago. The bike that was a little big for him will be too small soon. He seems to have grown rapidly this last year, in stature and in himself. I am racking my brain now to think of new activities to do with a teenager rather than a young boy and am a little nervous about the teenage years to come.

I was touched just last week when he proudly told me that he had only had one fight at school so far this year. They used to be daily occurrences that he would boast to me about. We've had a number of conversations about whether hitting someone was a good thing or not and about how to avoid getting into conflict. I am proud of him, about how he is developing as a person and how he is learning to harness his energy and control his temper. I would also be lying if I didn't say I get a bit of a boost myself when I think that I may have had a small part to play in that.

Case Study 2

My connection with the Friendship Project started in 2018. Following retirement from my teaching job, I had started enquiring about charities that would allow me to continue supporting children. I think I met someone from the Friendship Project at an open-air event in Leamington Spa at a time when people were still able to mingle without face masks.

For a number of reasons I did not start volunteering until autumn 2019. Let me say at this opportunity that the Friendship Project carries out a very careful selection and preparation process and does a great job trying to match a Younger Friend (YF) and Older Friend (OF) with similar interests. The follow-on support and advice is excellent too and one never has to feel 'at sea' as an OF. Thank you all: most especially my fellow OFs, my insightful group supporter Tim and the ever-responsive and supportive Fiona!

I stated that I would like to support a girl aged 7-9 years of age. Fiona, the Area Coordinator, gave me two profiles to read. While I didn't know at this point very much about R and the reasons why she had been referred to the Friendship Project, some of the general remarks rang a bell and I was keen to meet her and find out whether we could form a friendship. I still remember sitting in a room with Fiona, plus the deputy head teacher of R's school and R's Mum. It was good to listen how R's Mum and the professionals in the room envisaged R could benefit from the Friendship Project. R was called into the room. I remember her looking a little stunned. I could imagine that she found the somewhat formal scene a little mystifying. To be fair, I did not feel exactly relaxed at this moment. Reflecting on this, I think it is probably good that such a meeting has a slight air of formality. Neither R nor her Mum nor I had to agree to anything other than undertaking to 'give things a go' and seeing what we may feel after a few meetings. How could we have known at this point that it would be a successful 'match'?

So, on October 10th 2019 I took R out for the first time. I had packed some of my art materials and we were going to find something to draw, followed by a warming drink. By that point I had already met some other Older Friends (OF's). One bit of advice from an experienced OF was to 'start the friendship in quite a simple way. Don't be too ambitious'. This turned out to be very useful advice. The weather was already quite cool. We went to Jephson Gardens and found that the subtropical plant house was open. We each drew some of the fabulous leaf shapes. It became obvious on this occasion that R was a chatty little seven year old who talked quite freely about various day-to-day experiences.

We did manage to visit some outdoor places such as local parks and Hatton Country Park, but the days were already getting shorter and cooler, so it was important to find inside spaces. We did visit museums (I can recommend the MAD museum in Stratford-upon-Avon), went to 'Cheeky Monkey', saw some animation films in the cinema, played Ten Pin Bowling and went to the swimming pool. The absolute highlight of activities was probably the clip and climb at Newbold Comyn. In a way I got to know R particularly well, when we both did some painting. As I did not have my own home at the time, we relied on public spaces. I made several telephone calls to libraries and other public bodies asking for a space to paint. In the end it was the Temperance Café in Bath Street who offered us part of their big basement room for an hour or two at a time. In fact they showed real interest in R's bright art. R's spontaneous help in tidying up our table and crockery at the end of our visits made her a popular visitor. Needless to say that the fabulous cakes in the café greatly enhanced these Saturday morning sessions. It was during painting that R wanted to talk about some of the truly difficult times she and her family had experienced. There was no prompting from my part, but it was the informal and quiet setting that encouraged her to share some events of the preceding year from time to time. She also talked of the effects of bullying that she had experienced at school but she showed already remarkable inner resources. It is also credit to her school for keeping an eye on difficult dynamics and being very supportive of R.

As we got into March 2020 we could obviously not meet up face-to-face any longer due to the pandemic. We exchanged a few letters and post cards. Talking on the phone was not always straightforward and her internet and IT resources were in demand for her older sibling's home work. Of course there was a much anticipated short period of socially distanced walks at the end of 2020, puzzles and treasure hunts, before everything went back into lockdown again.

R now has her own mobile telephone and from February 2021 we have been able to arrange times for chats and online activities much more easily. So, for R and myself this latest lockdown proved less challenging and we have managed to paint garden pots and other objects online and we have read each other some great stories. In fact we both felt very comfortable in each other's company when we recently took an early opportunity to meet face-to-face and played crazy golf in St Nicolas Park. R expressed in an Easter card which she sent to me 'Thank you for everything you have done for me'. This is lovely to hear and the sentiment is entirely mutual!

R has had very good progress reports from her school recently and I can sense that she is going from strength to strength at home and at school! Her confidence and resilience have greatly increased during the 18 months of knowing her.

Photos from the Warwick District



Area Coordinator – Stratford district

Heather Shipley

Older Friends: 25 (9 Rugby)
Younger Friends: 26
Pipeline: 14 (3 Rugby) Total: 39 (12 Rugby)

In General

How lovely it has been to have so many new volunteers wanting to have a YF! The new volunteers have said that they have been thinking of volunteering for a while and the COVID pandemic made them realise how many families need support and that they wanted to help. It has been a very busy time interviewing and trying to get hold of referrals to answer questions and arrange online meetings. Referrals are still very slow coming through for Stratford and Alcester.

I have enjoyed supporting the current OF's and interviewing/matching new OF's in Rugby. I will be glad when the new AC is on board, so that our Rugby volunteers can be supported by their own AC.

COVID-19

I have been grateful to be able to keep working throughout the last year. During the lockdowns, I was busy supporting our volunteers with activities to do online and post, attending online Wellbeing Webinars and Get Together' s, and supporting our families with regular phone calls, emails and sending them activity packs in the post.

I worked on increasing our marketing communications: Instagram competitions for our YF's and regular updates to all social media. My thanks to Michelle for taking over social media posting and scheduling – the posts are looking great!

I worked on various press releases: Volunteers keeping in touch during lockdown, Funds Raised, Volunteers helping with home schooling, as well as case studies.

I also worked with Kelly and Karen on reviewing our current documents and putting together new documents for Social Media for Trusted Charity status.

It has been frustrating trying to get hold of referrers during the pandemic and this has meant that some OF's have waited a long time to be matched. This is also not a bad thing as it allows for volunteers to be totally sure that they want to be an OF and gives them the opportunity to listen and talk to other volunteers on online calls and understand our Safeguarding training.

Events attended

- Online Get Together' s for new and current Older Friends
- Online Wellbeing Webinars for current Older Friends
- Online Safeguarding Training with Esther and Fiona
- Online Ops Meetings with the Team

Interviews

I have first interviewed 14 volunteers mostly online and recently face to face outside. I have completed

6 second interviews for Fiona for the Warwick district, I am really enjoying seeing volunteers face to face again! I have interviews to do for Simon (Stratford), Nikki (Stratford) and Anna (Harbury).

Matchings

I have completed 6 matchings online. 3 of these matchings are going very well (Sally - Rugby, Bob - Stratford and Gwen - Stratford). Andrew (Stratford) was matched with YF 'A' online with the Pastoral School Support and Social Worker. The family are going through a very difficult time and we are not having any communication back from the family. I am working with the referrer to see if we will need to end this friendship and look for another YF for Andrew.

I matched Veronica (Rugby) with a YF and was very pleased with the match. The family really need our support. Veronica then let me know that she will be moving – so we have ended this friendship and when she has settled into the area, hopefully we can match her with another YF. This YF is top of my list to be re-matched.

Gary (Barford) was matched with YF 'S'. We knew from the referrer and conversations/online calls with the YF's Dad that he may not engage with us, but Gary wanted to give the friendship a try. Gary wrote some excellent letters to S and the YF's Dad was very grateful for our support, but unfortunately, S was not able to engage with the friendship, so we have ended it and I am looking for a new YF for Gary.

I set up a matching meeting with Gail and David (Rugby) to be matched with twin girls. Unfortunately, one of the girls showed disrespectful behaviour on the online call and I was not prepared to match her. We have subsequently had another online call with a local school and another potential YF. The online call went really well and 'T' was very engaged in talking with David. We are going to be arranging a matching meeting in school in May.

Group Supporters

I have two Group Supporters, plus I am Group Supporter some of my OF's.

Email: heather.shiple@friendshsproject.co.uk

Case study 1

Casey was referred to us in August 2018. Casey was referred to us as he has attachment difficulties due to domestic violence in the home when he was younger and this can cause him to be distrustful of adults. Casey is being supported by school and external professionals for his emotional and anxiety needs. Casey was originally matched with an OF in 2018 and enjoyed seeing his OF until his OF was unable to volunteer anymore as he was moving abroad. Casey was then re-referred to us in September 2019 and he was matched online with Barrie in February 2021. Barrie had completed our interview process and had been ready to be matched for nearly a year! Barrie and Casey instantly found a common interest in super cars. Barrie started off writing cards to Casey and enclosing photo's of Lamborgini's – Casey's favourite cars. They speak regularly online and Barrie also talks to Casey's Mum to keep her aware of how the friendship is going. We have decided to keep the friendship via post and online at the moment, until lockdown eases again in May. We will then meet with Casey and his Mum face to face at school so that they can start enjoying outings face to face.

Case Study 2

Pam and Chloe have been matched since May '19. Chloe was referred to us in November 2018. Chloe lives in a very busy household and has 4 siblings ranging from 20 to 2 years old. Dad works long hours

and Chloe's sister who is 8 years old, takes up most of Mum's time. They enjoyed regular outings together before lockdown going to the library, playing in the park, having picnics and making jewellery in Pam's art studio. Throughout lockdown, they have stayed friends via: Pam sending photocards with her latest news and photo's of them together, FaceTiming together (when has had its challenges as Chloe's sisters have wanted to get in on the conversation and Chloe did not feel she had the privacy to talk), Pam has made cookies and delivered them to Chloe's house. When lockdowns have eased, they have enjoyed meeting up for picnics, painting nails and decorating cakes outside! They are now planning events for after lockdown, including a visit to the local theatre.

Photos from the Stratford District



Area Coordinator Nuneaton, Bedworth & North Warwickshire

Viv Kelsey

Older Friends: 15 – one waiting for new match later in year and 5 Rugby OF's
Younger Friends: 15 – 5 Rugby YF's
Pipeline: 2

In General

Have kept in touch with OF's regularly by phone during the past year, checking on their wellbeing as well as seeing if they have been able to maintain some contact with their YF's.

One OF is waiting a new YF as hers moved out of area about June 2020. Waiting for restrictions to be lifted more and it a bit safer to meet up with new people.

Have met with Innovating Minds which is a charity working with children who predominately come from Domestic Violence backgrounds but work with anxiety, stress. They have offered us access to their online training if we feel it would be relevant for our volunteers.

Currently working with Bank Life Fishing who are a Cambridge family run business who want to give disadvantaged children the opportunity to experience the joys of fishing. They have a lake owner in Rugby who has offered their lake for a day and they are looking to organise fishing for 12 children. In the process of finalising this opportunity. They have chosen us as they spent time in Nuneaton visiting with family in their youth.

COVID-19

Covid has created problems with keeping in regular contact with the YF's. Often the parent/carer is the main point of contact. The YF's don't always want to engage on the phone or video call. The OF's have maintained a presence to ensure that their YF's are aware that they are still there for them.

During the first lockdown I worked with a new local fruit and veg delivery service and negotiated a discounted price for a fruit box to be delivered to our YF's and their families.

I have a few OF's that have taken up visiting with their YF's but are restricted to walking from the YF's home address.

Most want to wait and be sure that everything is safe and would like to be able to collect their YF's and take them somewhere. Not all areas have good places to walk.

We are undertaking risk assessments prior to allowing OF and YF's to meet face to face.

I have matched 3 new OF's on a phone/text/video basis they have been in contact with their new matches for a few weeks. During the next few weeks I am meeting face to face with the new OF's, ensuring all the paperwork is signed off, once an risk assessment has been conducted they will be matched face to face with their new YF's. The advantage of this for these friendships has been an opportunity for the YF's to see who they will be going out with prior to them just turning up at their house for the first time. I feel that this is positive and beneficial especially for the slightly older children,

Events attended

- Nuneaton Bedworth Networking lunch group
- Innovating minds looking at services available and working together opportunities
- Bank Life Fishing
- CAVA Nuneaton and Bedworth Networking event

Email: viv.kelsey@friendshipproject.co.uk

Case study 1

A referral came in for a child who has been in care since August 2020 due to neglect and abuse from home environment. Police were involved due to the non engagement of parents. There was a lot of trauma for the children. The youngest of the children was referred into The Friendship Project, he was struggling engaging with everything and the Social Worker who referred into FP has had previous successful referrals with the Project.

At the same time the referral was received we were in the process of signing up an new volunteer who owns a farm. The new OF has children of his own and wanted to give something back to a child who has been less fortunate in their circumstances.

The Social Worker and Foster Carer were very excited when they learnt of the opportunity of matching this young man with the new OF. When the child was informed and asked if it was something he would be interested in the Foster Carer reported that he was 'excited, or rather smiled quite a lot which for him is excited'.

Due to covid restrictions our OF's were not permitted to have their YF's in their vehicles, activities were to be outside. The idea with this matching was to introduce the new YF to the outside life of farming and help with all the animals on the farm. The farm bred beef cattle, had goats, chickens, dogs and horses were also on the farm. So there were enough activities to safely be conducted outside. The location of the farm was not that far from where the Foster Carer lived and they were happy to take the YF to the location for a few hours each week.

The YF and OF were matched at the beginning of April 2021, the first visit the Foster Carer stayed to make sure the YF felt comfortable. They have met for a few weeks since. Early reports from the Social Worker are positive. It was felt that from the initial conversations where the YF was asked if he would be interested in this type of friendship he was completely engaged. The OF says he is a delightful young person and although a little bit quiet at the moment he can see that he is really enjoying helping and being with all the different animals.

It is a delightful match to have been involved with. Studies prove that interactions with animals and of course being outdoors has great healing properties and is beneficial to a person's well being both physically and mentally. This opportunity also gives this YF a new skill which he could possibly find useful in later life.

Photo from the Nuneaton, Bedworth and North Warwickshire District



FRIENDSHIP PROJECT FOR CHILDREN

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 517684

Financial Statements

For the year ended 31 December 2020

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6	Statement of financial activities
7	Balance sheet
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The Friendship Project
Trustees' Annual Report
for the year ended 31 December 2020

Full Name:	The Friendship Project
Other names:	The Friendship Project for Children
Registered charity number:	517684
Principal address:	Myton Park, Myton Lane, Warwick, CV34 6PX
Trustees:	Cheryll Rawbone, Chairperson John Hancock, Vice Chairperson, resigned 3 rd June 2020 Ken Smith, Honorary Treasurer Chris Buck Richard Barrett Michelle Machin Jon Gibbons Angela Dawn Truman Esther Jones Louise Hasler, appointed 6 th August 2020 Sarah Stallard, appointed 3 rd June 2020
Honorary Treasurer:	Ken Smith
Bankers:	Lloyds TSB, Stratford upon Avon
Independent examiner:	Paula Wilson, 2 Hickman House, Hickman Road, Galley Common, Nuneaton, CV10 9NQ

Governance & management

The charity is operated under the rules of its constitution adopted 12th May 1986 as amended 7th September 1993, 6th March 1995 and 11th May 2005.

Overall management of the charity is the responsibility of the trustees who are elected and co-opted under the terms of the constitution. Day to day management is carried out by paid staff and/or volunteers.

The Friendship Project

Trustees' annual report (continued)

for the year ended 31 December 2020

Aims and objectives

To provide facilities for the social and physical training of children particularly disadvantaged children between the ages of 6 and 16 years who by reason of their social circumstances are in need of developing social skills by such means as the project thinks fit including the organisation of contacts between such children and reliable older persons able to help them develop such skills.

Summary of the main activities undertaken for the public benefit

With developing confidence and enhanced self-esteem, gained from the friendships, the young people are more prepared to develop new interests and achieve a wider range of skills. They grow personally and socially enabling them to forge better relationships with peers and family members. Generally, they are more settled at school but, above all, they develop a greater sense of self-worth. This is priceless and will have a positive impact on every aspect of their lives.

Summary of the main achievements during the period

- ✓ Continued to provide the invaluable 121 volunteer support and fun for disadvantaged children despite the challenges presented by the current pandemic,
- ✓ We did not furlough our operations team, who continued to work, showing great resilience throughout the year.
- ✓ Owing to the restrictions with COVID-19 when we had to suspend face to face meetings in March, and we have successfully pivoted to online, telephone and pen pal support.
- ✓ Safeguarding training has been refreshed and undertaken, and a new scheme established over two consecutive sessions delivered online.
- ✓ A new Pen Pal/online matching service has been established for those volunteers not able to complete their training for face-to-face meetings, as a transition stage, which means that we have still been able to give support for new children referred.
- ✓ COVID Risk Assessments have been introduced alongside Q & As for volunteers
- ✓ Trustees have met more frequently to review our activity and financial position.
- ✓ Our budget income was £65,000, with target £70,000, which were set prior to the pandemic, and it was always going to be difficult to achieve, as the impact of COVID-19 become more serious. We are pleased that we were able to raise £52,526, with our expenses lower owing to COVID-19 restrictions meaning there were less volunteer and operational team expenses, our carry forward in accounts for 2021 is similar to 2020.
- ✓ Sustained 80 friendships during the year, with 67 continuing into 2021.
- ✓ Recruited 2 new trustees for portfolios of HR and Compliance/Risk.
- ✓ Our Ops team started work on the Trusted Charity Project
- ✓ Updated our publicity and marketing information following achieving the Queens Award.

The Friendship Project
Trustees' annual report (continued)
for the year ended 31 December 2020

Financial Review

The charity made an unrestricted deficit of £2,930 in the year with net unrestricted reserves of £50,924.

The Trustees have reviewed the financial position of the charity in light of the impact of the Corona virus upon its operations and fund raising. They believe that with the funding commitments made and plans for 2021, it has the funding to continue providing its services for at least the next 12 months.

The charity's policy on reserves

In line with the guidance provided by the Charities Commission the Friendship Project has reviewed and revised its policy on the holding of financial reserves.

The majority of our monthly expenditure relates to the salaries and expenses of our staff and the expenses of our Older Friends.


As our income varies considerably month by month it is important that in order to provide continuity of support for our Younger Friends that we have sufficient financial resources in place for the timely and regular payment of salaries and expenses.

In order to ensure our ability to achieve this, the trustees believe that it is essential to hold financial reserves, excluding restricted funds, of a minimum of six to nine months forecast expenditure.

A proportion of these funds is invested on an interest earning basis with M & G Charity Investments and is repayable on demand.

This policy will be monitored and reviewed annually.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:

Signed  Date 18th May 2021

Cheryll Rawbone, Chairman

Independent Examiners Report to the Trustees of
The Friendship Project
Year Ended 31 December 2020

I report on the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31 December 2020, which are set out on pages 6 to 12.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act;
- follow the procedures laid down in the general directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act, and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect, the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Acthave not been met; or
2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Signed:
Paula Wilson, MAAT

Date: 15 May 2021

The Friendship Project
Statement of Financial Activities
For the year ended 31 December 2020

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2020 Total Funds £	2019 £
Incoming resources					
Grants	2	8,000	26,900	34,900	39,618
Donations	3	13,042	-	13,042	22,762
Fundraising donations/events	4	6,998	-	6,998	13,171
Gift Aid	5	-	-	-	300
Investment income	6	938	-	938	315
Total incoming resources		<u>28,978</u>	<u>26,900</u>	<u>55,878</u>	<u>76,166</u>
Resources expended					
Salaries, NI	10	17,939	18,014	35,953	35,157
Staff expenses		2,445	1,786	4,231	4,079
Volunteer expenses		4,924	3,495	8,419	20,901
Insurance		3,101	-	3,101	2,825
Events/Christmas parties		115	-	115	435
Other expenditure	11	3,034	-	3,034	5,829
Independent examination fee	13	350	-	350	350
Total resources expended		<u>31,908</u>	<u>23,295</u>	<u>55,203</u>	<u>69,576</u>
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources		(2,930)	3,605	675	6,590
Gains & (losses) on investments		259	-	259	216
Total funds brought forward		53,595	3,348	56,943	50,137
Total funds carried forward	9	<u>50,924</u>	<u>6,953</u>	<u>57,877</u>	<u>56,943</u>

Expenditure is allocated between Unrestricted and Restricted funds on the basis of actual expenditure incurred along with an element of judgement on indirect items of expenditure.

The Friendship Project


Balance Sheet

For the year ended 31 December 2020

	Note	£	2020 £	2019 £
Fixed assets				
Investments	6		39,215	13,956
Current assets				
Cash at bank and in hand		16,348		47,248
Accrued Income	7	1,950		251
Insurance prepayment	8	259		-
Debtors		1,338		
		<u>19,895</u>		<u>47,499</u>
Current liabilities				
Accrued expenses	9	(1,233)		(4,512)
		<u></u>		<u></u>
Net current assets			18,662	42,987
Net assets			<u>57,877</u>	<u>56,943</u>
The funds of the charity				
General Funds			50,924	53,595
Restricted Funds			6,953	3,348
Total Funds	10		<u>57,877</u>	<u>56,943</u>

The trustees declare that they have approved the accounts above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:

Signed: 

Date: 18th May 2021

Cheryll Rawbone, Chairperson

The Friendship Project

Notes to the Financial Statements

For the year ended 31 December 2020

1. Accounting policies

These financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention with items recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant notes to these accounts and with the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) issued on 16 July 2014 and with the Charities Act 2011.

Incoming Resources

All material incoming resources have been included on a receivable basis – ie they are included if the date receivable falls within the period covered by these accounts.

Resources expended

These have been analysed using a natural classification.

2. Grants

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2020	Total Funds 2019
	£	£	£	£
Allan Edward Higgs Grant	4,000	-	4,000	-
Aviva Community Fund	-	-	-	5,000
Warwickshire Police & Crime Commissioner	-	7,500	7,500	7,348
Heart of England Tampon Tax Community Fund	-	-	-	5,200
Stratford Town Trust	-	-	-	7,070
29th May 1961 Charitable Trust	-	-	-	3,000
Masonic Charitable Foundation	-	-	-	5,000
Heart of England C Harry Payne Fund	-	2,000	2,000	2,000
Garfield Weston	-	-	-	5,000
Heart of England 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust	1,000	-	1,000	-
Heart of England Coronavirus Resilience Fund	-	3,000	3,000	-
29th May 1961 Charitable Trust	3,000	-	3,000	-
King Henry VIII Endowed Trust	-	3,500	3,500	-
National Lottery Community Fund / Covid 19	-	7,000	7,000	-
L&Q Foundation	-	3,900	3,900	-
	<u>8,000</u>	<u>26,900</u>	<u>34,900</u>	<u>39,618</u>

The Friendship Project

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)

For the year ended 31 December 2020

3. Donations

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2020	Total Funds 2019
	£	£	£	£
Anonymous Donors x 3	3,000	-	3,000	-
Village Voices	1,350	-	1,350	-
Bodies & Co	4,000	-	4,000	-
BDW Trading Barratt Homes	1,000	-	1,000	-
Playground Games	-	-	-	6,000
Balsall Common Lions	-	-	-	1,200
Heart of England Co-op	-	-	-	1,500
Contract Scaffolding	-	-	-	2,000
Woman Who Achieves Award	-	-	-	1,683
Heart of England 29th May 1961 Fund	-	-	-	1,000
Aubrey Allen	-	-	-	2,500
Retailers Donation Pennies Grant	-	-	-	1,000
Donations under £1,000	3,692	-	3,692	5,879
	<u>13,042</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>13,042</u>	<u>22,762</u>

4. Fundraising Events

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2020	Total Funds 2019
	£	£	£	£
Croft Preparatory School	-	-	-	10,935
Fundraising Events under £1,000	6,998	-	6,998	2,236
	<u>6,998</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>6,998</u>	<u>13,171</u>

5. HMRC Gift Aid

Gift Aid received £0, (2019 - £300)

The Friendship Project

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)

For the year ended 31 December 2020

6. Investments

Market value of surplus funds is invested in the Charibond Charities Fixed Interest Common Investment Fund (“Charibond”) with M&G Investments. Investment income 2020 - £938 (2019 - £315).

7. Accrued Income

	2020 £	2019 £
L&Q Foundation	1,950	-
	<u>1,950</u>	<u>-</u>

8. Debtors

	2020 £	2019 £
Insurance Prepayment	259	251
Other Debtors	1,338	-
	<u>1,597</u>	<u>251</u>

9. Creditors

	2020 £	2019 £
Volunteer Expenses	859	2,532
Staff Expenses	24	228
Independent Examination Fee	350	350
	<u>1,233</u>	<u>3,110</u>

The Friendship Project

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)

For the year ended 31 December 2020

10. Movements in Funds

	Opening Balance £	Incoming Resources £	(Resources expended) £	Gains & Losses £	Transfers £	Closing Balance £
General funds	53,595	28,978	(31,908)	259	-	50,924
Designated funds	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total General Funds	53,595	28,978	(31,908)	259	-	50,924
Restricted Funds						
Warwickshire P&CC	1,848	7,500	(7,691)	-	-	1,657
HoECF Harry Payne Fund	1,500	2,000	(2,500)	-	-	1,000
HoECF Coronavirus Fund	-	3,000	(2,000)	-	-	1,000
King Henry VIII Endowed Trust	-	3,500	(3,500)	-	-	-
National Lottery CF Covid 19	-	7,000	(5,654)	-	-	1,346
L&Q Foundation	-	3,900	(1,950)	-	-	1,950
Total Restricted Funds	3,348	26,900	(23,295)	-	-	6,953
Total Funds	56,943	55,878	(55,203)	259	-	57,877

11. Staff costs and numbers

	2020 £	2019 £
Wages	35,953	35,157
	<u>35,953</u>	<u>35,157</u>

No employee received emoluments of more than £60,000.

The average weekly number of part time employees during the year was 5 (2019: 6)

The Friendship Project

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)

For the year ended 31 December 2020

12. Other expenditure

	2020	2019
	£	£
Storage of documents	185	152
Telephones	543	531
Printing, stationery & advertising	996	1,016
Database / IT	-	1,938
Payroll	1,213	1,378
Sundries	97	814
	<u>3,034</u>	<u>5,829</u>

13. Trustees' remuneration, benefits and expenses

During the accounting period, the charity obtained insurance cover including Public Liability, Employer's Liability, All Risks for Assets, Personal Accident for volunteers and younger friends and Trustee Indemnity Insurance for a total of £3,241.01.

The management committee and other trustees did not receive any remuneration during the year (2019: nil).

14. Independent examination and accountancy services

During the period, the cost of the examination and accountancy services was £350.

15. Controlling parties

The charity is under the control of the management committee.

16. Glossary of terms

Restricted funds: These are funds given to the charity, subject to specific restrictions set by the donor, but still within the general objects of the charity.

Debtors: These are expenses paid in the year with some of the benefit arising in the following year

Creditors:

These are amounts owed by the charity, but not paid during the accounting period.