

SOME TIPS FOR GETTING BACK TO SEEING FRIENDS

Borders Buddies is a project started in the Tweeddale area of the Scottish Borders, thanks to funding from Scottish Borders Council's Community Fund. The aim of this project is to reconnect people and groups post-pandemic, especially those who have become isolated and disconnected during recent months. Read more about it here: <https://otbds.org/introducing-borders-buddies>

It can be hard to make friends in the best of times but making and keeping friendships when there have been restrictions on where you go and who you meet have made it even harder.

Now that we are 'allowed' to start seeing people again – some of us may feel unsure or nervous about taking the first steps.

Remember you can still use virtual ways of keeping in touch such as:

- Phone calls and telephone circles – where you all phone one person each.
- Sending postcards or letters to show you are thinking of them.
- Texting - sending a quick message if you see or think of something that will interest them.
- Messaging - sending photos or quick messages to groups of people.
- Video calls - where groups of people can chat and see each other.

We have templates and tips to help you do these things.

We have collected some ideas from people and organisations we work with about getting back to seeing friends. They said:

Start small and build up. It's not just about the government rules – you need to do what feels right for you.

You could start by seeing one friend in a garden – or for a walk. If meeting for an outdoor cuppa – take your own mug and hand gel, and a mask. Ask your

friend if they would like you to wear a mask/use your own mug. Arrange seats so you are far enough apart.

If meeting for a walk – go somewhere you don't have to drive to – or each drive there separately. A place with a nice wide path is ideal.

Meeting other people indoors: if you feel ready for this, you can still stay socially distanced and ensure the room has doors and windows open. If these things aren't possible, or you don't feel comfortable with it – just say no! Friends should understand if you turn down an invitation.

Try not to feel that you are missing out – if you know other friends are meeting up and you don't feel quite ready. They will be glad to see you when you are ready, and in the meantime you can stay in touch in other ways.

Begin to make suggestions to people about places and things you can go to when we can get out and about more.

Try a couple of different venues with people from your household first – then try with a friend. If the weather is ok there may be outdoor cafes, community gardens and parks where you can meet safely and comfortably.

Travelling may feel strange at first too – again, start small and build up. Take a snack or sandwich if you feel nervous about having to go to a café for the first time.

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