

SOME TIPS FOR MAKING FRIENDS AND SUPPORTING FRIENDSHIPS

The aim of the Families Wellbeing project is for people to feel more connected, sharing ideas to encourage people to maintain and build connections and friendships in their communities. More information about the project can be found at <https://otbds.org/projects/families-wellbeing>

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

Seeing people in person and going out to activities is a great way to make friends but there are other ways too such as:

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

In the pack we have templates and tips to help you do these things.

We have collected some ideas from people and organisations we work with about making and supporting friends. They said:

- Think about what interests you and what activities you like doing. Some things have stopped for now but other activities are still continuing and may be starting up again soon. Local Facebook pages are a good way to find out what's happening in your area.
- Look for things you have in common with others rather than the differences.
- Try saying yes to opportunities to be with others. If you're not sure about any activity just stay for a little bit or turn up at the end of you hear about it and can join in the chat.

- Sometimes you have to be bold and take the initiative - say hello and smile to start off the conversation or offer to phone them or send a message later in the week.
- Good ideas for conversations for people you don't know well are things like, the weather, television soaps, films and what's happening locally.
- Listen to what people are saying and try to remember what they are interested in and then that will help next time you see or talk to them.
- It helps if we see or talk to people regularly – that way we can pick up the conversation we had last time and move it on slightly.
- Begin to make suggestions to people about places and things you can go to when we can get out and about more.
- Friendships take time to develop so don't expect too much. And all friendships are different so don't compare.

KEEP YOURSELF WELL AND SAFE.

- Remember that most people are nice, but there are some people who target isolated or apparently vulnerable people, especially women and people who are older.
- Let any new friendship develop at a pace that is right for you.
- Be aware of signs that this may not be right for you – such as if the other person does not listen to you or respect you, or makes you feel uncomfortable.
- Don't rush to share personal information.
- Talk it over with someone you do know and trust if you are feeling unsure about anything.