

Interest Link Borders. Adult Project Case Studies

This is a selection of case studies collected from across the branches, showing the difference Interest Link has made. All names have been changed.

Berwickshire Befriending Group

Rowan is a 39 yr old lady who has Downs Syndrome and lives independently. Her sister lives in the same small rural village. She is shy and retiring and reluctant to try new things but is, in any event hampered because of lack of local opportunities or transport to go further afield. Other than necessary shopping etc Rowan is involved in no other social activities on a regular basis.

Rowan was eventually persuaded to try out our social group in Coldstream by a professional who was concerned about her high level of social isolation and her lack of activity which compounded her poor health. Luckily, one of our volunteers was willing to pick her up from home so she came along and has come every time since.

Initially, Rowan kept herself physically removed from the other group members only wanting to help volunteers in the kitchen as she 'liked to be helpful'. Over time she has gradually joined in with the badminton, crafts, conversations and general jollity. At a recent BBQ she was heard to actually initiate conversation with other members and did not need any encouragement to join in.

Rowan describes the group saying she 'loves it a lot', 'looks forward to meeting with her new friends' and 'making crafts to give to others'. Rowan's sister says Rowan is 'thoroughly enjoying' the social group, is 'definitely benefitting' and is also 'interacting more socially out-with the group now too', which the sister is very pleased about.

Central Borders 1:1 Link: Susan and Martha.

Susan was originally referred to Interest Link for our newly launched youth service back in 2008 and joined our group. At the time she was living at home with her father. Her family unit is strong with Susan also being very close to her sister, Rosie who, as a trained beautician, also recently helped us out at a volunteer pamper night.

Susan was a very popular member of the youth group with her happy go lucky approach and she soon came out of her shell. After her 2 year spell in the youth group, Susan transferred into our adult service and attended evening leisure classes at Borders College with a linked volunteer.

Susan then moved into her own supported tenancy and during her settling in period, we stayed in touch but she did not attend further classes or groups until we launched our own evening sessions with baking, crafts, floral art and knitting. Susan has joined us every term so far and enjoys the classes. The sessions are very informal and through the classes, Susan and Martha developed a very natural friendship and decided that they would ask me if they could go out 1:1. I was delighted and we set everything up. They have been together for nearly a year now and regularly go out for tea, cinema, walks etc. Susan is a very good tennis player and plans to get Martha on the court at some point. They are both helping out with our new Muddy Buddies gardening scheme and also hope to attend lawn bowls soon.

Both Susan and Martha very much enjoy their times together and both enjoy their friendship and the activities they do together. Susan benefits from an aspect of her social life which is purely her own, out with family and her circle of support.

Central Borders Befriending Group.

John lives with his father and they are very close following the sad death of his mother some years ago. John has enjoyed college and work placements and various activities in the past. He is a popular and charming lad, great fun to have within any group. John was one of our first “graduates” from our youth service into our adult services. He was much missed in the youth group so it was great to have him in the adult evening sessions we run ourselves. John is a regular attendee at our baking classes and even presented our tutor Debbie with a beautiful bouquet of flowers that the floral art class made especially. His chatter keeps the whole class going.

John had regular and significant seizures when he first joined us and we had to risk assess this and ensure that his father was happy with our procedures as he was nervous. He used to stay within ten minutes of the venue we were at just in case, but now drops John off and goes off to run errands or put his feet up whilst John is baking up a storm in the kitchen for their supper. It’s a win-win situation.

Arthur and Jim: Roxburgh 1:1 Adult Link

Jim came through my door at Interest Link approximately 5 years ago offering his own time as he wanted to give something back. Jim has a child with a learning disability and felt that his son had been very privileged growing up with the support from a loving family. Now that he is living independently it was time for Jim to offer the same support to someone who was not so lucky.

I linked Jim with a very vulnerable young man called Arthur who was desperate for a lucky break. A special volunteer was required to offer support, friendship and reliability, and Jim was that volunteer and that was 5 years ago.

What a 5 years they both have had: their relationship is very strong, it is built on reliability, respect and regard for each other. There is not one activity and place that this link has not tried and tested. They even decided on a Bucket List of activities and have just about finalised that list 5 weeks before Christmas. These activities have included The Royal Yacht, Bus Tour around Edinburgh, Falkirk Wheel, Keilder Birds of Prey, Whithaugh Outdoor Activity Centre, National Museum, several theatre visits to the Playhouse in Ednburgh, Concerts, Old Gala House, Hawick Museum, Drumlanrig Tower, Jedburgh Jail, Gym visits.

They meet up every fortnight faithfully apart from holiday commitments. The experiences they have had together have been very special, and Jim has been a reliable volunteer in Arthur life when life for Arthur had been turmoil. 5 years on

Arthur is now living independently, and Jim is one of many special people who support Arthur to fulfil and live a normal and happy life.