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Helping Families to Help Themselves

A Year of Changes and Challenges

2020 has been a year of enduring challenges that has affected everyone. So much so that we thought it would be difficult to share our successes and achievements in this annual newsletter. On reflection we have seen as much if not more stories of resilience from our families and volunteers. We are proud of them, staying strong and supporting each other. In this time of hardship people still came forward wanting to help others, with volunteers joining our social distanced training, knowing that the work of befrienders and mentors is needed more than ever.

When we had to suspend our face-to-face support, families and volunteers showed adaptability to a completely new style of befriending/mentoring using video and telephone calls. Once restrictions were eased volunteers worked on building families' confidence in meeting face-to-face and outside the home. We opened a new programme 'Flourishing Families Beyond the Lockdown' to address the effects of lockdown on families and are see a strong uptake for this service. We look forward to reporting on the impacts of this in 2021.

Many of our volunteers took on extra roles and joined our Shop & Drop Scheme to help families who were shielding, self-isolating or struggling to get out of their homes. This service offered families essential items that were needed especially as families faced financial hardship, unemployment and children staying at home full time. This free shopping scheme was a lifeline and continues to be well used, both by supported families and new families referred. In total the Shop & Drop Scheme helped 327 individuals from 88 families including 192 children.

Family Friends would like to take this opportunity to thank all our amazing volunteers and families for their commitment to our programmes.

Annual Newsletter 2020



Wishing You All A Very Happy 2021!



Family Friends is a charity registered with the Charity Commissioners under Charity Number 1028214 and a company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales under Company Number 02863464.

Registered office: 73 St Charles Square, London W10 6EJ

Ideas for Visits and Activities



Visit London's Christmas Lights:

We could all do with a little cheering up this year and no better way to do it than to visit London's outdoor Christmas lights. Oxford street as ever is a must, with 27 LED 'light curtains' draped down the length of the street and made up of a total of 222,000 lights. The installations will work in unison to showcase a poem dedicated to the city of London. For more info go to:

www.oxfordstreet.co.uk/whats-happening/news-events/celebrating-christmas-london/

Activities for a family to do together at home - make an advent calendar

Materials

- * An empty jar
- * Felt balls/stickers
- * Glue
- * Decorative paper
- * Pens/marker
- * Paints

1. Gather your supplies to make this advent calendar jar, where each day you will pull out a different message from the jar.
2. Begin by making sure the jar is well cleaned and dry. You can then be as creative as you like with the decoration.
3. Cut out 25 strips of paper, (or however many days left of advent you have). Write a message on each piece of paper. Some could be activities you want to do, such as play a game, some could be a joke or a funny picture, some could be a clue of a gift you have hidden in the home and some could be a nice message to your family. Get the whole family involved in writing these so everybody gets a surprise when it is their turn to pick one out.
4. Glue felt balls to each piece of paper. The felt balls will make it easier to pull the messages out. After you glue the balls on to the paper, fold the paper to hide the message. Write the numbers on the outside of the paper strip for easy searching.
5. Toss the messages in the jar and screw on the lid. Each day find the appropriate date, and see what your gift is.



Strawberry Santa's

A simple and quick festive treat you can make as a family

Ingredients:

- * Strawberries
- * Bananas
- * Ricotta (or cottage cheese, cream cheese, coconut yoghurt)
- * Edible gel icing or raisins (for the eyes)



Method:

- * Take a strawberry and cut a slice from the end with the leaves so it stands up.
- * Cut the strawberry into two.
- * Take a slice of banana and spread ricotta or yoghurt etc on it and put it between the two pieces of strawberry
- * Add the eyes using edible gel icing or raisins
- * Repeat and eat!



A Parent: 'Look forward to a brighter future'

So here I am nearing the end of my support with Family Friends and what a beautiful journey it has been with my befriender Annabel. She has become one of our family, supporting me during a tough time in my marriage and bringing peace to the home with my four children. My little one who is 4, really looked forward to seeing Annabel every week and was disappointed when we went into lockdown. Luckily our meetings continued online and you should have seen the delight on my daughter's little face when she saw Annabel again.

Hannah was lovely at Family Friends and really did find a most suitable match for our family. My children and I have been going through a tough time and Annabel, with loads of experience, would point us in the right direction to solve the difficulties. We had a lovely trip to the Globe Theatre which gave me a chance to have a break from the children and do something different. Annabel encouraged us to adopt a healthy and active lifestyle with all the amazing long walks and her yummy recipes she shared with us. Overall I would like to thank Annabel and Family Friends for the support which went really well and look forward to a brighter and more peaceful future. Thank you and best of luck!

Ameera

A Child: 'Makes me feel special'

I started seeing my mentor Mary from Family Friends about a year ago and in that time we have built up a strong relationship. I really look forward to the visits. We have done lots of things together like playing games, cooking, doing school work, going out to the library, going to the museum, and even trick or treating at Halloween. I love that Mary takes time out of her life to make me feel special.

When the country went into lockdown due to Covid-19, despite Mary not being allowed to come and visit me she still called and face-timed me. She helped me with my homework and introduced me to avocado and other fantastic foods and vegetables. I taught her how to play chess, and now she is extremely good and beats me every time we play it! She was there for me when I got mad with someone and I needed to talk with someone else about it. I enjoy talking to her and sharing stories on what I have been up to recently. If I had not seen her for that week I would have even more stories to tell and share the following week.

Grace



by Mya

A Befriender: 'I've loved my time as a befriender'

For the past year I have befriended a 10 year old girl who lives with her Mum and Dad and four siblings, including two younger brothers. They are a very loving family and it's been such a joy to be part of their lives. The girl had been struggling a little at school and so we have done lots of learning activities around reading, writing and maths. She now has her own dedicated support at school and it's been wonderful to see how much more confident she has become in her academic abilities.

She has a wide range of interests including dancing and animals. Earlier in the year we were able to find a placement for her at a Saturday dance school and her excitement at finding out will always stay with me! We talk a lot about friendships and ambitions and I'm so glad that I've been able to provide a sounding board for her to talk about any problems she's having.

The Covid-19 pandemic has, of course, made things quite difficult. There were times during the first lockdown when it was hard to keep in touch and the amount of time off school was a concern. I think it's a testament to the family's close bonds that they have been able to come through this time so successfully. I've loved my time as a befriender and the support from Family Friends has been invaluable, they are an amazing group of people and it's been such a pleasure to be a small part of their work.

Joanna

Staff



We welcomed Vivek Joshi as Male Outreach Worker. We were sad to say goodbye to Flora Taylor, CEO of Family Friends for 15 years, and Natalie Rubio, who left to pursue a career in teaching. We look forward to announcing our new CEO in 2021.

Befrienders and Mentors

We were delighted to welcome all those who have become befrienders and mentors for Family Friends this year. During 2020, the following volunteers were successfully inducted: Andrea, Angela, Ayat, Bill, Carrie, Chris, Elena, Emily, Faith, Gregorio, Ishrat, Jenny, Julia, Kate, Kerry, Laura M, Mariela, Marsha, Nawaal, Sergey and Tracy.

We would like to thank all those who have volunteered for Family Friends in 2020 for their incredibly valuable work providing practical and emotional support to 'help families to help themselves': Agnese, Alex, Anna, Annabel, Catherine, Clare, Emilia, Emily, Fey, Fiona, Frankie, Jade, Jalen, Joanna, Katie, Kelley, Laleh, Luke, Manijeh, Mark, Mary, Michele, Peter, Phil, Raymond, Samar, Sara, Sophie I, Sophie W and Valerie.

We would also like to thank all those that provided a Shop & Drop to families that were shielding, isolated or financially hard up during this difficult time: Angela, Chris, Emily, Frankie, Gill, Ishrat, Julia, Kate, Michele and Nawaal.



by Mohammad



by Demar

Thank You's

As always, thank you to our funders and referring agents, without whom our work would not be possible. In 2020 we were delighted to receive first time funding from the following: United Hammersmith & Fulham, Sandler Consulting Ltd, Emily Goldner, Hugh Robertson and Patrick Ellis.

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Many thanks also go to the Kensington & Chelsea District Nursing Trust for their kind grant donations to individual families. We are grateful to Usborne Publishing for providing children books and Harrow Club W10 for face masks towards our Christmas Hampers, which were generously donated by The Junior League of London and thank you to David Parry-Williams for helping staff deliver these to the families. We would like to thank Galit Haviv-Thomas, UKCP Systemic & Family Psychotherapist for being guest speaker at volunteer support group meetings held this year and supporting staff with supervision.

Lastly we would like to thank our Trustees for all their support and securing an exciting new chapter for Family Friends with a new CEO.

Please Note... Family Friends' office will close on Thursday 24th December 2020 until 9.30am on Monday 4th January 2021. For emergencies, contact Family & Children's Services on 020 7373 2227 (Kensington & Chelsea), 020 8748 8588 (Hammersmith & Fulham) and 020 8863 5250 (Brent).