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Family Friends started 2015 on a high note with a visit by The Duchess of Cambridge. Her Royal Highness is a great advocate of both volunteering and early intervention work with families. She met families, volunteers, staff and trustees at a coffee morning in January, where she gained an overview of the charity and learnt about different experiences of our programme. Her visit gave great encouragement to those involved with Family Friends and boosted interest in volunteering among local people. Family Friends has helped 72 families over the year, including our first families in Brent, following commissioning of a pilot Parent Befriending scheme by Brent Council. Several of our families would like to report good news this year, as follows:

- Laura won grants for a new cooker and washing machine and bought beds to replace the mattresses her children were sleeping on.
- Violet, Lisa and Rosa now attend children's centres and their toddlers are socialising. Isabella has overcome her depression and takes her baby to music classes and swimming.
- Rahana developed a reading timetable so that her 4 girls each have a timeslot with Mum. Sofinia reprimands her son less and he says he is much calmer. Laura found her child, who has special needs, a place in a suitable school.
- Cali, Dean and Evelyn's families moved to more appropriate housing. Jean, Tessa and Rahana reorganised their homes to better accommodate their families.
- Renata began English Language classes, Julia started full time employment in retail and Ella passed her driving test.
- Sofinia and David are benefitting from counselling services, Malika's back improved after attending pain clinic and she started swimming with her twins. Hillary lost 4 stone, Sarah introduced vegetables into her 6 year old son's diet,
- David stopped having energy drinks. Nora, Natasha and Joelle learnt about new foods and made a cake entirely of fruit.
- Alan and Zak joined a football club, Chris made the hockey team, while Aaron and Ed are now proficient swimmers. Darren learnt to play tennis and Ina to bicycle.
- Michael joined the Air Cadets, and Matthew the Scouts.
- Agnes completed year 7 with straight As, Kali passed SATs with good results. Steve returned to full time education and settled in well. Dean went up 2 levels in reading at school and now reads to his Mum. Evan and Isla became library members.
- Sarah learnt to stand up to bullies. Martha completed National Citizens Service. Natasha won a grant for secondary school uniform. David took art classes and visited an art gallery over the Summer.
- Zak went to the theatre for the first time. Howard got to go behind the scenes at the Natural History Museum.



We welcomed two new trustees, Abi, a former service user and George, a former volunteer. Also, two new staff members, our Administrator, Graham and in the newly created role of Male Outreach Worker, Daniel.

Wishing you all a very happy 2016!



NOTICEBOARD

1

Victoria and Albert Museum Borrow a V&A back-pack and embark on an adventure across the Museum. The back-packs are full of brilliant hands-on activities, including jigsaws, stories, puzzles, construction games and objects to handle. Activities last approximately 45 minutes and are suitable for children aged 5-12. Back-packs are free to borrow and do not have to be booked. They are available everyday from the Learning Centre. The last back-pack issued is at 4pm. Visit www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/b/backpacks for further details. Ends Saturday 31st December.

2

The Natural History Museum pop-up ice rink is open until 3 January. The spectacular rink is nestled in front of the iconic South Kensington Museum, beneath 80,000 twinkling fairy lights and around a 40-foot-high tree. Visit the interactive Christmas chalet, with treats, prize giveaways and activities. For more information and tickets visit www.nhm.ac.uk/visit/exhibitions/ice-rink.html. It is best to book your tickets in advance. The Natural History Museum is located on Cromwell Road. The nearest tube station is South Kensington.

3

Westway Christmas Climbing Camps at 1 Crowthorne Road, London W10 6RP. Action packed climbing sessions are perfect for kids of all ages and abilities. They provide a fun, safe environment to take part in bouldering, top roping and belaying. 90 minute session run daily from 9.30am — 5pm from 14 December 2015 to 3 January 2016. Prices 5+: £6.25, Adults: £10. Visit www.sports.westway.org/events/childrens-christmas-climbing-camps for further details.

4

WWT London Wetland Centre, Queen Elizabeth Walk, Barnes, London SW13 9WT, is an urban oasis for wildlife and people. Stroll among the lakes, ponds and gardens to meet the otters and birds. There is also a guided tour running up to 31 December. The café is perfect for relaxing, and kids will love the play areas. Visit www.wwt.org.uk/wetland-centres/london for further details.

Christmas vegetable and orange cake

From www.bbcgoodfood.com



Use up root vegetables to bake a sweet, moist sponge with citrus flavours

Cooking Time: 30mins plus cooling

Ingredients

200g butter, melted, plus extra for greasing
140g sultanas or raisins
300g self-raising flour
300g light soft brown sugar
2 tsp mixed spice
2 tsp ground ginger
1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
4 large eggs beaten with a fork
300g carrots, parsnips, pumpkin, butternut squash or swede, or a mixture, grated
200g icing sugar or fondant icing sugar

Method

- Heat oven to 180C/160C fan/gas 4. Grease and line a 30 x 20cm baking or roasting tin with baking parchment. Mix the sultanas and zest and juice from 1 orange (or 2 clementines), and microwave on High for 2 mins.
- Mix the flour, caster sugar, spices, bicarb and pinch of salt into a large bowl. Mix the eggs with the melted butter and sultana mixture, then tip into the dry ingredients and stir in with a wooden spoon. Stir in the grated vegetables and scrape into the tin. Bake for 35 - 40 mins, or until a skewer poked in the centre comes out clean. Cool in the tin.
- Once cool sift the icing sugar into a bowl and stir in remaining orange zest plus enough juice to make a runny icing. Drizzle all over the cake. Leave to set, then slice into 15 squares to serve.

A Parent's Experience

I am Mum to 14 month old Sepehr. I have health issues that cause me pain and difficulty walking so that I find it hard to get out of the flat and to go to appointments. This is why I wanted support from Family Friends.

I was matched to my befriender, Kate, in July and meet her every week. When I met Kate for the first time it was like I had known her for a long time already. She makes me feel comfortable and is friendly. She is also very good with Sepehr who has started to trust Kate and now likes to play with her. English is not my first language and Kate has supported me to make important letters and phone calls to the job centre, the council and the hospital. Kate is able to explain things to me in a way I understand. Kate listens to me properly and I feel that she really understands me. She is able to help me pick the best way to do things. I have a big operation coming up in January 2016. Kate has been there for me to talk to about this. She has also been flexible with her visits by offering to visit when I have appointments, so that she can come with me. I feel that the visits have been very helpful and supportive.

Sepideh

A Child's Experience

I am 13 years old and started seeing my volunteer mentor about a year ago. I was struggling with organisation at home, situations at school and I really needed my own space because it is busy at home. A teacher at school told me about Family Friends. They said that I would get someone who would help me with these things.

I felt shy when I met Alison for the first time but it was ok on our second visit, even though I forgot her name at first! I've liked having a Family Friend because it has helped me decrease the amount of detentions I get, I've grown in confidence and it gave me space from home. On our visits, we always go out. We've read a book together, worked on my maths, done homework, talked about things and played games. I even taught Alison how to play chess! For our treat visits, we've been to the theatre, rock climbing and to a really amazing magic show (that was my favourite). Family Friends have confidence in me and I've had the opportunity to visit new volunteers who were in training and I told them about my experiences with Family Friends. It was fun to teach adults for a change. I'm sad that my year is nearly over because I've really enjoyed having Alison. Moving forward, I want to carry on reading more and getting my homework done on time. I'm really grateful my teachers knew about Family Friends and I was lucky enough to have volunteer.

Dayjean

A Volunteer's Experience

I am a mother of 3 grown up children and grandmother to a little boy. I chose to volunteer because I wanted to make a difference within my community and wish to develop skills in working with families. I saw the advertisement for Family Friends in the Evening Standard and did my training in March 2015.

My family includes Mum, Dad, an older brother and a little boy aged 6. On my first visit I was a bit anxious and didn't know what to expect, but I needn't have worried as the family made me welcome. At my visits Mum usually briefs me about their week. I try to plan activities in advance but sometimes flexibility is important. Visits include baking, a trip to the park, homework and playing games. The 6 year old looks forward to my visits especially when we have an activity planned. He meets me at the door with a smile. Overall it has been a pleasure and I think we make a difference to each other's lives. I am enjoying being around a child and it brings memories of spending time with my children when they were little.

Cynthia

Hellos and Goodbyes

Thank you very much to all the volunteers who have become befrienders and mentors for Family Friends this year. During 2015 five new groups of volunteers were inducted: Alice, Aparajita, Carolina, Catherine, Charles, Cleyenne, Cynthia, Diana, Elena, Eleni, Geraldine, Gianluca, Hugh, Jenni, Jessica, Kate, Kelly, Lauren, Lindsay, Maxine, Miles, Natalie, Nishamani, Sarah, Tariq and Vittoria. We have said 'goodbye' to several volunteers: Alessandra, Alize, Amina, Anna, Antonio, Cecile, Christine, Danielle, Debra, Delia, Eleanor, Gillian, Ilaria, Jacqueline, James, Janette, John, Josie, Katrina, Melanie, Stephen, Trina, Vanessa and Veronica.

Congratulations to Claire for Hammersmith & Fulham and Eunice and Eleanor for Kensington & Chelsea who won 'Make A Difference Awards' from the Volunteer Centre.



Nadine, Nadya, Jasmine and Esah send Christmas greetings.

As ever, thank you to our funders and referring agents, without whom our work would not be possible. In 2015 we were delighted to receive funding from the following organisations for the first time: London Borough of Brent, La Petite Ecole Francaise and Treebeard Trust. Special thanks go to; BBC Children in Need, The Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund, The Dischma Charitable Trust, Douglas-Morris Charitable Trust, The Grove Trust, Hammersmith United Charities, John Lyon's Charity, Lloyds Bank Foundation, The Girdlers' Company Charitable Trust, The Hollick Family Charitable Trust, The Kensington & Chelsea Foundation in partnership with The CMF Charitable Trust, DMGT Plc and The John Armitage Charitable Trust, The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea (Family & Children's Services and Public Health) and Waitrose West Kensington.

We are extremely grateful to Furnish for storing and delivering hampers which were kindly donated by The Junior League of London with additional goodies from Bookstart, LAW Ltd and Angellique Sunter.

We are grateful to Sophie Parry-Williams of Parkside Clinic, Christina French of MIND and Liz Warren of SE2 for being guest speakers at our volunteer support group meetings.

PLEASE NOTE: The office will be closed from 5.30pm on 23 December 2015, until 9.30am on 4 January 2016.

For emergencies, contact Family & Children's Services on 020 7373 2227 (Kensington & Chelsea), 020 8748 8588 (Hammersmith & Fulham) and 020 8937 4300 (Brent).