

# The Friendship Workshop: Guide





An easy read guide to setting up a friendship group



# Friendship:

a wonderful connection between people based on shared interests or lived experience



# Where to start?



This guide is based on information by self advocates who have set up their own groups but there is no right or wrong way to do it.



Think about the **purpose**: why do you want to meet up?



What do you have in common?

Shared interests might be a good place to start.



Here are some examples of why you might want to start a group:

- To hang out
- Take part in a shared hobby
- Meet people with the same identity/lived experience



Talk to people and find out:

- What people would like to do
- What is stopping people going out
- What is going on in the area



## Where to start?



Ask people for ideas, see what they want to do. This could be anything from game nights and quizzes to outdoor stuff.



Be part of other groups to build selfconfidence and understand other peoples' needs. This will help when running your own group.



Think about the size of the group you might want to keep the first meet up small. This could make it easier for people to get to know each other.



People might be worried to meet up. How can you help yourself and others overcome their worries?



Do some people prefer places that are quiet? Could you choose somewhere you know well?



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## Where to start?



**PLACE:** Find a meeting place, such as a café or pub, that works for your group.



**DATE/TIME:** Choose a day and time. If you want to make a regular social event you could pick the same day each month.



**INVITES:** You might want to invite people you already know.

**FLYER:** Or you might want to meet new people so you can make and print a flyer.



**SHARE:** Ask people you know to share the flyer (this could be your supporters, work friends or other groups).



Do not be afraid to ask for help. Ask your support network and people who have done something similar before.



### Where to start?



Make sure you understand about safeguarding for yourself and others.



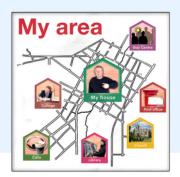
If people are nervous, ask them if they would like to call before.



Find out how people like to be contacted: text, phone call, emails, Whatsapp groups



Set clear group rules and share them with everyone. Such as: be nice, do not leave anyone out, people need to pay for themselves...



Make sure everyone has the correct address and can get there and back home safely.



# At the meet up



If you need more information about setting up social events, you can use the event planning checklist!



Manage the meet up:

- Introduce everyone
- Make sure everyone is included and listened to
- Share the group rules



Help people get to know each other if the conversation is slow. Have questions ready. There are some **Conversation Starters** on the next page.



Decide as a group how to stay in contact with each other like: WhatsApp, Facebook, emails...



Do not worry. Let people get to know each other and have fun! Keep it light, fun and supportive.



# **Conversation Starters**



Sometimes it can be hard to know what to say, here are some questions you can try:



What are your likes/dislikes?





How did you find out about the group?



What did you do at the weekend?



Do you have any pets?



What is your favourite restaurant, bar, cafe?



If your group has a theme or common interest you could ask questions about that topic.



# After the meet up



Find out if people are okay and how they feel about the meet up. Ask if they would they like to do it again.



Think about what went well and what could have been done better.



If you and the other people want to meet up again, make plans for another meet up.



Contact people about the next meet up. Remind them of the day and time.



See if any of the group have any questions or problems.



# Problems that might come up



#### People argue

If people fall out, calm the situation before it gets worse. Then talk to them both separately about: what went wrong and what they need to be friendly again.



#### People worry about money

Try and go to cheap places. Change venues or activities to keep the price down.



#### **Burnout**

Organising meet ups can be tiring. If you need to, find someone who you can share the responsibility with.





# The venue might not be right That is okay. Look for another one that does not have the same

problem.



Or ask if you can make changes to the venue (lighting, noise, access).



# Problems that might come up



#### One person can dominate

Someone may talk over everyone and be very chatty. They might not be doing it on purpose.



Gently remind them of the group rules. Explain that it is important everyone can talk, even if they are shy.



# People may share inappropriate or private information

Remind people of what is private information. Give examples of what is appropriate.



This might change as friendships develop and people get to trust each other more.



#### People might have different opinions

If someone says something mean, remind people of the group rules. Explain why it might be upsetting.

But allow people to have different opinions and be different.



# Remember



It does take a bit of work but it is worth it.



Ask for help if you need it but know that it is your group to run.



There is no perfect way to organise a meet up.



Things will change over time. That may mean more people or trying new/different things.



Friendships take time. Do not worry if you don't make friends right away, take your time and build trust.



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# Remember



There are plenty of places to discover - you might find a new hobby or interest.



Be open to learning new things about new people.



Be proud of the work that you've done!



If you have any feedback, email: info@ldengland.org.uk







The Friendship Workshop series is a project by:







