Appendix A

“It’s changing people’s lives” Professional
“The person I know, their confidence grew and meeting friends at the club was the thing he looked forward most to, as he is very lonely at times. The friendship club means an awful lot to him, especially since the closure of his day centre. It is a way of keeping in touch with everyone” *Professional carer*

“The friendship club gives opportunity to meet, share and be together for short time, help people feel some normality about their life. Carers see other carers, people meet people & chat, play & interact; helps develop a sense of belonging to a community. I think it’s a very much needed activity” *Professional carer*

“It gives people the opportunity to become involved in social activities and feel part of the community. And feel safe in the knowledge that things are organised for them on their behalf or they would not go by themselves and could feel isolated” *Professional carer (service provider)*

“For the first time, they have 'real' social life – something that is regular and looked forward to. For many, it has given them the confidence to access social activities (pubs, discos, clubs) independently and outside of the club” *Professional carer (service provider)*

“The activities have offered the opportunity to socialise, learn social skills and practise independent travel. Since the start of the Friendship Club, I have noticed a huge improvement in the social skills and confidence of many of the service users attending the club events” *Professional carer*

“She has met a friend at the club, who has become an important part of her life. They spend a lot of time together and go out socially. They help each other practically, emotionally and motivate each other. When she had to move, he helped her to find a new place near to him. J has also gained in confidence, managing her tenancy and using public transport and going out and enjoying herself” *Professional carer*

“Confidence in socialising with each other, even developing the art of conversation. Often people who have a learning disability, they live a very structured life within the institution of home, residential care and day centres. So the freedom a social occasion allows people to think for themselves, initiate their own actions, feel safe, supported and not judged for their actions. I.C.E cards - really became part of the local community” *Professional carer*

“My client has become more confident in making new friends and becoming integrated within the community. He takes more pride in his appearance and will instigate more conversations. He has become much happier in himself and has been confident enough to take on roles within the friendship club. He is no longer lonely, isolated or self conscious. Many of my other previous clients have befitting tremendously as well” *Professional carer*

“Our residents have severe learning disabilities as well as physical disabilities. As part of their human needs and the need to be stretch, events put on by the friendship group provide this” *Professional carer*
"The Friendship Club means an awful lot to him, especially since the closure of his day centre"  
*Carer*

"He is no longer isolated but has a social circle which provides him with common bonds"  
*Carer*

"Members gradually gain confidence and feel they are learning new skills all the time, so are much more relaxed and ready to attend new situations"  
*Carer*

"The Club gives opportunity to meet, share and be together, helping people feel normal about their life"  
*Carer*

"It covers a wide geographical area and prevents isolation"  
*Carer*

"By varying venues, it allows a person to gain more opportunities"  
*Carer*

"I feel the Friendship Club is an innovative and committed, well organised club that offers the opportunities for adults to engage in age related activities with their peer group, which in the case of X, has reduced his isolation and built his self esteem, personality, image, self confidence and I feel is good for his mental health"  
*Carer*

"A chance to enjoy himself, free from discrimination"  
*Carer*

"She has met a friend at the club, who has become an important part of her life"  
*Carer*

"He has learnt about his home town and how to deal with emergencies"  
*Carer*

"The differences are that M gets out in the community experiencing the wider environment he lives in. He has the opportunity to meet new people and maintain current friendships. He has had an increase in self confidence and independence which can also be seen at home also. If he didn't attend the club he would not be able to achieve what he has already achieved and continues to do so"  
*Carer*

"The events are often in the evening - very important"  
*Carer*

"Can see the increase in wellbeing and self image improve through regular social contact with friends"  
*Carer*

"Initially I was concerned that A would not mix with others in a social setting as often he prefers his own company or at school would consciously choose to play be himself. After a few visits to the friendship club I have seen his confidence grow and he actively likes attending the club. This is a significant outlet for him and a chance to do something independent of home"  
*Carer*

"I don’t see any downsides of this Club. It caters for what’s best for individual members and people are free to choose"  
*Carer*

"She has gained confidence, managing her tenancy and using public transport to go out and enjoy herself"  
*Carer*
“Feel safe knowing things are organised for them, or they would not go by themselves and could feel isolated” Carer

“She feels secure knowing the leaders are there to oversee the time” Carer

“He enjoys being part of the local community. It raises his self esteem and improves life skills” Carer

“He now goes out in the evenings a lot more than he used to, as well as his daytime activities. The evening activities are in ordinary places, and he feels safer at the friendship club events, and he’s become much more confident when out. He is meeting up with people outside his usual daytime activities and is now meeting up with old friends from previous groups who he would otherwise have lost touch with. He has met up with friends he has met outside of friendship club on several occasions. His life is fuller and he is not so bored or lonely. He says ‘I have made a mate called Chris we have fun together” Carer

“He has learnt about health issues from guest speakers” Carer

“He has made new friends, including a girlfriend. He is more confident, to be left on his own, buys his own drinks etc. It makes him feel more like his brother” Carer

“Training offered to deal with difficult situations” Carer

“This group has now started meeting outside of club nights, a testament to their confidence. Feel secure as a group to try different venues” Carer

“He is now more chatty, motivated, confident and optimistic” Carer

“It’s allowed him to recognise his difficulties, given him confidence to voice his problems but also find solutions, turning negative into positive. He is no longer isolated but has a social circle that provides him with common bonds. This group has now started meeting outside of club nights, a testament to their confidence and feeling secure as a group to try different venues” Carer

“It has reduced his isolation and built his self esteem, personality, image and self confidence. I feel it is good for his mental health” Carer

“Having opportunities to meet friends, feeling socially integrated and not isolated. Feel safe, secure and free from discrimination. Staying healthy both in mind and body” Carer

“C looks through the club programme as soon as it arrives and notes meeting dates on his calendar. The club has given C confidence in meeting people and socialising. The club’s activities have given C a very worthwhile extra to his life and he is more outgoing. He has learnt about his town and about emergencies and health issues from guest speakers” Carer
“S is 33 years old and has Down’s Syndrome. Before the friendship club she was socially isolated, withdrawn and found it difficult to communicate. The only time she went out in the evening was in the company of her parents. Because of attending friendship club (by herself) she has made lots of new friends and has learned a number of social skills such as using money herself in a social environment and learning to communicate to different people in different environments. Going to friendship club events has helped both her speech and personality, her confidence has increased and she enjoys learning new skills like bowling, keep fit and healthy eating. The friendship club keeps pace with current affairs like the Queen’s Jubilee and Olympics and S feels that taking part in these type of current events makes her more part of the community in turn making her a happier person” Carer

“He has become much happier in himself, takes pride in his appearance and will instigate more conversations”

Carer

“J has become more outgoing, independent and has met new people. He feels safe in environments that the Friendship Club uses. Without the Friendship Club I think he could become isolated” Carer

“The Friendship Club has enabled G who has some learning difficulties to enjoy a sense of independence. The venues are well considered, for normal social gatherings, and she is often able to walk there. Otherwise she organises a taxi for herself and a friend - which she had never taken responsibility for in the past. Going over to the pub makes her feel very grown up and she feels secure knowing the leaders are there to oversee the time, who have ensured on occasions her safety on returning home. G says ‘I can chat to all the members as though they are friends, Even though some of them are less able than me. I recognised an old college friend and we asked each other if we’d like to meet up for a coffee and we did!’ And so now she has a special friend who has similar limitations to her and this friendship is ongoing and enjoyed outside the friendship club. It has offered her opportunities to have a voice where her ideas and suggestions are encouraged and listened to by the leaders.

G says ‘I felt motivated and jolly within myself when I have been asked to do things, as I feel I’m being valued.’ It would seem she feels very welcomed and valued at this special group” Carer

“All outcomes met. Feels independent without carer. Really looks forward to the Friendship Club” Carer

“I think the work put into running the Friendship Club is heaven sent. To its members, it’s the best. Because many of the people attending would never mix, relax and enjoy with community affairs as they do at the Friendship Club” Carer

“I have seen a tremendous advance in many at the club” Carer

“It is giving independence and fun” Carer

“He has learnt how to behave in social situations” Carer
“I truly believe as the community comes to accept that these young people need a life too, and seeing them enjoy themselves in these venues, it’s a step in the right direction to tolerance and inclusion” *Mother*

“My son is now more motivated, chatty, confident and optimistic” *Parent*

“T plans all her friendship events and it is major event when the latest flyer about events arrives at our house. She writes all the events she wants to attend on her calendar in her bedroom. This helps her planning her English skills. She makes sure I book all the events that need to be booked. It has given her a very strong social life that she develops well, along with her daily care events. The friendship club plays a major part in her life” *Parent*

“My daughter didn’t have a social life outside of her usual day care placements. She now has two social activities to look forward to each month – bowling and a disco. She gets a lot of joy out of planning what she is going to wear and who she’s going to see. Her confidence has grown – when we’re shopping now, she will pay by herself instead of expecting me to do it for her” *Parent*

“It gives me a few hours a month respite to have time with my husband in a social place” *Parent*

“Broadens their horizons” *Parent*

“The club is amazing and has achieved so much in the few years it has been running” *Parent*

“R has really enjoyed going to the club, it’s taken a very long time to get him to join in. He looks forward to events and even reminds me of dates and times. He now has the opportunity to go out and see friends in a social setting. He’s not so isolated as there are not many places that are available for young adults with learning disability to go. He’s always very happy. It’s building up his confidence. He feels that he’s treated as an adult in his own right” *Parent*

“At a Friendship Club meeting where nurses were giving advice, my son was found to have very high blood pressure and is now being treated” *Parent*

“Gives me freedom for two or three hours!” *Parent*

“My son has benefited greatly by belonging to the friendship club. He is happy to take the train to Weymouth meetings or the bus to the ones in Bridport. He enjoys the mixture of events. He and another member have formed a ‘Friday’ club where they meet for a meal at a pub with friends. At a meeting where nurses were giving advice, my son was found to have very high blood pressure and is now being treated” *Parent*

“Increase in motivation” *Parent*

“I am less stressed knowing they have more people to talk to about any problems and life in general” *Parent*

“Clear, detailed programme of events, easy to read” *Carer*
“There was so little for D who lives in rural and isolated area. He was quite depressed watching tv at home with little to do and nothing to look forward to, wanting a social life and friends, which money can’t buy. Since going to the Friendship Club he has benefitted so much more than we could ever have imagined. You don’t realise how much help the Friendship Club has given us in the short time it’s been going.

We, as parents, have worked our socks off to try to get him a life. We’d take him to things but a 28 year old man doesn’t only want to be going out with his parents. We couldn’t ever give him the opportunity to get out and meet all the people he has met at the Friendship Club and do all the things he’s doing now.

He was totally isolated before and now he has genuine (not paid), peer group friends who get together regularly in a pub, where they feel safe and accepted. It’s fantastic that they go out and about and it also lets the public know that they exist. As a result we’ve noticed them more accepted by the community because they go out as a group of friends. On his own he would have no chance.

He almost always goes unnoticed, like a piece of furniture.

But as a group the public take notice.

The Friendship Club completely opened up his mind and life to other things for him to do. He and his new friends support each other and are even organising things on their own with support from the Friendship Club. It’s amazing. Just because they have learning disabilities why shouldn’t they have a chance.

He’s put on some weight sitting here at home nothing to do but this has even inspired him to join the gym, which he goes to once a week now.

The Friendship Club has started something and given them the opportunity and support to do things for themselves. It’s changing their lives. He is no longer depressed and has something to look forward to. This is a wonderful club where members are not controlled but supported to be what they want and get what they want. Just like the rest of us – to have a healthy, normal and enjoyable life. When you see them all together out doing what they want, they’re truly having a life. Money just can’t buy friends.

We know of others benefitting like D across the county which just proves what a valuable, groundbreaking and much needed service this is.

It’s also really helped us as parents to see D so much happier”  

**Parent**

“**My son has joined the Friendship Club this year and we are now seeing in him that his self esteem has improved. Just by not feeling isolated through his disability and having the opportunity to meet with and socialise with others, has been of such benefit to him. It’s a step in the right direction to tolerance and inclusion**”  

**Mother**

“The activities have broadened his social life. As C lives with his aged parents it is important for him to mix with his contemporaries.”  

**Parent**

“As a result of the Friendship Club I now get a happier, more motivated, more confident child”  

**Parent**
“The provision of having the club at ‘mainstream’ venues, be it pub, bowling club or coffee shop means my son is accessing somewhere that normally he wouldn’t feel comfortable going into. He feels safe in these venues because he knows he is supported by the team but it gives him the opportunity to try to achieve something new. This may be just buying his own drink, but the fact it is at a public bar where he knows regular people go too, is the esteem boost. As with any young person with learning difficulties, it is usually small steps taken over a long period of time. But with sustainability comes the confidence that the club is there for them, for as long and when they need or want to use it. It’s a service that is tailored to fulfil their social needs” Mother

“He’s very happy when he returns home” Parent

“He behaves better when he is at home” Parent

“He’s also better in social situations” Parent

“A sense of moving forward appropriately into adult life” Parent

“It addresses a main worry, making friends and not being lonely. Please, more often!” Parent

“S and I both feel the Friendship Club has encouraged S to get out and make friends, bridging a gap. S never wants to miss an event” Mother

“Is good to see him leaving TV behind and going out” Parent

“When she is at the Friendship Club we can relax and do not have to worry about her” Parent

“Pleased that he has new friends” Parent

“At the Friendship Club I get to meet new people with the same problems” Parent

“R, my son, enjoys going to this club as it enables him to meet new friends and old ones. He enjoys the activities and the mental challenge. He likes to be involved with the committee and helping with the more disabled friends in wheelchairs. He likes to be able to go out in the evening without me. Be independent and safe without me. Making his own decisions and be involved with the club discussions and debates” Parent

“Thank you and your volunteers for giving J such a great day out. He absolutely loved it and said it was one of the best days of his life!” Parent
“I thought I would write and let you know how much difference the Friendship Club has made to my son, Z’s life. Since attending the Friendship Club, Z has had social events to look forward to that also allow him to meet new people. He keeps the colourful, well thought out fliers on his notice board next to his bed. He then writes all the events into his diary so he can show and remind friends and family at every opportunity! I feel the Friendship Club events have boosted his confidence and self worth. The opportunity for him to be a club mascot for the Dorchester Football Club and to meet and play with all the players was an incredible and rewarding experience that he will never forget. Thank you for developing and facilitating such wonderful opportunities to enable Z the same social opportunities that he deserves as a young adult.”  

Parent and Social Worker

“Volunteering for the Friendship Club has been a very rewarding experience. I spend time with many members during the week and know how important they feel the group is. It gives the guys a valuable social life many had not experienced before. One of the most overwhelming things that has happened is to have witnessed the confidence growing among members across the county and the new friendships that have developed. It is wonderful to see members experience situations not possible before and to take control of organising so many events at venues within the community “ Professional carer and volunteer

“H has benefited in multiple ways. She has experienced the respectful consolation and support of other friendship club members during moments of acute upset i.e. on the anniversary of her mother’s bereavement. This warmth dignified her experiences and she was able to ‘open up’ and explore her feelings safely with a volunteer and a few members, rather than the situation escalate to hopelessness. Please bear in mind she has a history of self harm.

She walks to every club meeting (approx. 1.5 miles). She is learning the value of commitment and punctuality. She says she feels valued for her contribution, i.e. that people listen and clap when she tells jokes, which is really important to her as she has no other friends or family nearby”  

Professional and volunteer

“It has definitely targeted a niche in the LD service provision. I can’t imagine what things would be like without it…hopefully something will happen to prevent this?”

Volunteer and Trainee Psychologist

“In my job I was involved in research around ‘Developing Community Based Services’. A number of service users commented on how much they enjoyed the Friendship Club. When I heard the FC needed volunteers I thought it would be an extremely rewarding club to be involved with. Volunteering for the FC allows you to see how valuable the service is to carers and how much they appreciate the additional support, but more significantly how much members enjoy meeting new people, learning new skills and integrating with society. It allows members to socialise, develop relationships and participate in a range of stimulating activities in a safe and friendly environment. Seeing how positively this impacts on members and their carers lives makes volunteering extremely rewarding.”

Volunteer and Professional
| “It’s overwhelming to see members confidence growing county wide and friendships developing” Professional |
| “All many people require is to ‘touch base’ on occasion. Small worries are sorted out before they become larger issues. Value for money is gained” Professional |
| “I witnessed event after event, members grow and grow” Professional and parent |
| “Needs less support at home. Able to communicate better” Professional |
| “Most important thing is having opportunities to do activities they choose. A service user led approach” Professional |
| “Reduces reliance on CLDT workers to support people and develop their social skills” Professional |
| “Most important things people get from the Friendship Club are education of health, welfare & improved social skills delivered by trusted, supportive leaders” Professional |
| “For some service users the Friendship Club meets their outcomes including socialisation, building relationships, social inclusion & maintaining independence, without the addition of statutory services” Professional |
| “For some service users the Friendship Club meets their outcomes including socialisation, building relationships, social inclusion & maintaining independence, without the addition of statutory services” Professional |
| “They can access Friendship Club events independently as book taxi to attend. They have really benefitted from the club and it would be a disaster if this discontinued. They would become socially isolated and probably get depressed” Professional |
| “The Friendship Club offers preventative care. Less resources needed as problems solved before becoming more serious” Professional |
| “Spending time within local community and feeling a part of it” Professional |
| “Giving her a social life, having new things to talk about and not feeling so isolated” Professional |
| “Happier service users means my service is easier, happier and offers better value for money” Professional |
| “A place to signpost adults who are socially isolated. The Club is well organised and run by a professional, caring team” Professional |
“An important facility, giving carers respite. Especially helped by fact that group membership across all sites is fluid” Professional

“The Club offers preventative care, less resources needed because some problems are solved before they become more serious” Professional

“We are able to give Friendship Club as an option for service users to access as part of their reviews. There isn’t much else out in the community for them to access” Professional

“All many people require is to touch base on occasion. Small worries sorted out before becoming big issues” Professional

“I work in statutory services and well appreciate the financial constraints faced by Dorset County Council.

I imagine the Friendship Club has an inestimably positive impact on members emotional wellbeing, giving them further confidence to speak with their carers, GPs, social workers, to articulate their needs. As the Friendship Club is so person-centred, I believe members are able to employ their own self-advocacy skills elsewhere in their lives” Professional

“It gives users more independence and choice in the services they receive. However, does not run regularly enough to reduce reliance hugely” Professional

“The Club promotes learning disability, breaks down barriers with public” Professional

“Pride Dorset one of few places in England with a Friendship Club” Professional

“Provides good social opportunities and assists them in developing their social skills in a real setting therefore reducing some need of support from DCC” Professional

“Provides respite for carers, enabling them to continue in their role, thereby reducing some need of support from DCC” Professional

“I’m sure it improves the confidence of those who attend events, helping them to mix more easily and therefore reducing the need to rely on statutory services so much” Professional

“There isn’t anything else locally that provides this service” Professional

“One member repeatedly suggested there were problems at home, that her caring responsibilities were becoming increasingly burdensome. To my understanding, Friendship Club leaders conferred with GP and referred her to Dorset Advocacy for one to one support. Friendship Club volunteers continued to check how things were going for her” Professional
D is a 28 years old with cerebral palsy, moderate learning disabilities, confined to a wheelchair and living in North Dorset with his parents. He very rarely went out socially due to lack of suitable activities in his area. He now attends all the Friendship Club events in his area and has met up with people he already knows but also lots of new ones. He really looks forward to the events and thoroughly enjoys himself.

D suggested ten-pin bowling, some 25 miles away, the nearest town with such facilities. He wanted to organise the event so gathered the necessary information - going to the train station to find out times and costs. Discovering the train did not go there he was not thwarted and took a bus to the local library to ask about bus services to Yeovil. He went to the bus stop which gave details of bus times and phoned the bus company to find out about bus fares. D then rang the bowling centre to find out their costs. Soon he had all the information but one more surprise up his sleeve. He’d abandoned the idea of public transport as he had discovered he could use the minibus from a local residential home instead, which could take his wheelchair and the cost would be a lot cheaper than public transport. He told the group of his plans. All agreed and they had a great night out. Since then D has organised several more events.

This is the first time D has displayed such enthusiasm, motivation and responsibility in his life. His increased confidence and independence has amazed all those who know him well. His parents commented that he is a changed man. He has become more relaxed and much happier generally. This fantastic achievement has been made possible because the Friendship Club gives D an outlet to mix socially in a safe and secure environment as well as the opportunity to discover new found skills and strengths about himself.”
“My role, working for West Dorset Mencap and Dorset County Council, is to develop and encourage leisure activities for adults with a learning disability. Since the Friendship Club started, I have been supporting people from Bridport and Dorchester areas to access the many and varied activities including pub nights, club nights, discos, and theatre trips.

The activities have offered the opportunity to socialise, learn social skills and practise independent travel. Since the start of the Club, I have noticed a huge improvement in the social skills and confidence of many of the service users attending the club events, and I have certainly found it easier to get people out to other events away from Friendship Club, now that they are accustomed to, and enjoying, their increased social life.

I have personally supported around 15 people to attend activities, a small proportion of the many people who now regularly attend events. The evenings have become more and more popular and widely attended over the months as Friendship Club events have touched and improved the social lives of very many service users.”  

“The programme was designed and funded by the Friendship Club for ten service users at the Fishermans Day Centre to attend Bridport Arts Centre for two hours on a Friday afternoon over six weeks. During this period of time the emphasis was based on the promotion of community activities and the active involvement of service users.

Throughout, it was evident that all those who attended enjoyed the opportunity participating in the activities, and clear from my observation the service users enjoyed the change of environment and the opportunity to interact with other members of the community. These carefully designed activities allowed each individual the opportunity to express themselves whilst learning new skills & promoting self esteem.

This has been an extremely worthwhile exercise in terms of service user community development and I believe that activities of this nature should become an integrated part of the programme offered at the Day Centre.”

“The Friendship Club is vital for our service users and also for many currently not accessing our services. Many in our society find social aspects of life difficult, our service users are no exception, and some with vulnerabilities and various support requirements find this a particularly challenging facet of their lives.

Dorset offers various challenges. It is rural and many miss out on opportunities only available in larger towns. The FC plays a vital part in people’s lives here. Many would simply be unable to enjoy the benefits of socialising unless there were organised events. Events at the FC are well managed and support is arranged as necessary to suit each person’s needs and wishes. I have seen many events over the years crumble because they are not organised properly but the Coordinator personally attends virtually all the gatherings offered.

The Club also acts as a great preventative asset. Many challenges and issues are often sorted before they become bigger or more worrying to service users, or more costly to services. Service users are also able to benefit from information, person centred pursuits and enabled to participate in a wide range of activities that ‘the system’ is not offering. People gain better social skills, more friends and increased confidence. I know that here at the Green Shed, the FC newsletters and events are a source of anticipation and joy. The Club must remain and if not, the void left will be considerable, in my opinion.”
“I would like to take this opportunity to make recognition and offer my full support for the valuable service provided within your charity.

The Friendship Club provides a safe place for vulnerable people to meet, learn, engage and interact in organised activities, socialise and provide encouragement through friendship and fun.

Undoubtedly the charity has had a noticeable positive impact on the quality of life of people with learning disabilities including feeling more confident, feeling safer going out in their communities, less isolated, lonely, happier and less depressed as well as better well being.

The Club has proven to benefit the safety and awareness of your vulnerable members and has given us the chance to deal with any concerns you may have regarding issues within the community that may have an impact on your members, working together we can address any problems and allow your members to engage/interact safely within the community.

I feel that Dorset Police and the Friendship Club working together allow a safe and secure environment and continue to improve the quality of the lives for people who have learning disabilities.

Having an insight in the service you provide for our most vulnerable members of our community, I offer my full support to the charity and recognise the hard work, dedication and commitment your provide to care for your members”

Inspector Steve Marsh, Dorset Police

“The Friendship Club is one of the best innovations in support for the people with learning difficulties that I have seen.

Where people come together, build on their own passions and interests, and get stuck into community life, then we will see positive and sustainable solutions, fit for the twenty-first century.” Dr Simon Duffy, Centre for Welfare Reform

“We carry out quality checks in Day Centres and in people's homes. We ask about friends and relationships. The most common thing that people say they enjoy doing is "Friendship Club". Gateway Clubs are also popular, and these two activities often form peoples' entire social life.

We also encounter people who would like to go to Friendship Club but can't because of staffing rotas and thus lack of support. We highlight this in our "Quality Check" reports as something that needs addressing by service managers.”

Professional, Dorset People First
“The Friendship Club has changed my life. Before I joined the Friendship Club I had one friend. I have lots of friends now. I go on the bus to Bridport. I go on the train to Weymouth. It’s given me the confidence to go on public transport. I have organised my own pub night. The club has done a lot to help me, especially as I was getting lots of problems at home with neighbours and hate crime. I feel safer now at home. I don’t need my community nurse or my occupational therapist any more because I’ve got the Friendship Club. We need to keep the Friendship Club going. The Friendship Club has lifted my confidence a lot. I go out in public more at night times” Member

“It’s given me more confidence now I have more friends and it helps me feel safer knowing they are there” Member

“The co-ordinator listens to what we want to do and then sets it up. It feels so empowering! We go round the pubs ourselves asking questions to see if they are suitable for us and then we decide together as a group which ones we want to go to. It’s changed my life enormously and I look forward to it so much” Member

“It’s given me more confidence and I’m doing things now I would never have done before I came to the Friendship Club. It feels like a big family, like of friends and I feel very lucky because otherwise I wouldn’t have got to know them. I also feel much safer going out in the community and people have been really friendly at pubs and places” Member

“I’d be really upset and depressed if there was no Friendship Club. I don’t know what I’d do. Probably just stay in and watch tv on my own” Member

“It has helped me to be more confident. I talk to other people now and look forward to coming” Member

“I was feeling really low and fed up sitting at home on my own, especially in the snow, when the post arrived and there was a letter for me. It was the latest flier for the Friendship Club and seeing all the activities coming up over the next few months really cheered me up. I really enjoy coming and have met some very nice people” Member

“It’s like counselling for me. Good talking to people as it’s a way to help me feel better. Helps my mind get better and stop me thinking about things too much” Member

“I also meet up regularly now outside the club with some of the friends I’ve made there. Last week a few of us, from different towns, decided to have a day in Exeter. We all caught the bus and had a really good time. Exeter is two hours by bus and the furthest some people had ever gone without support. We have learnt we can support each other to make sure everyone is safe and included” Member
“I’d be devastated if the Friendship Club ended. I wouldn’t have my social base or the confidence I need in my social environment or to build friendships. I’d hate to rely on my colleagues, like I did before” Member

“It opens up new experiences and give you an opportunity to make friends. Gives you confidence to make decisions” Member

“If the Friendship Club finished I’d be gutted. It’s become part of my life” Member

“If the Friendship Club ended I’d be upset because I won’t see my friends any more. I used to have just one friend and now I have loads because of the Friendship Club” Member

“If the Friendship Club ended I’d just stay at home and watch tv” Member

“If the Club ended I’d be devastated. I wouldn’t have my social base or the confidence I need in my social environment or to build friendships. I’d hate to rely on my colleagues, like I did before” Member

“The club has helped me so much” Member

“It gets me out and helps me learn” Member

“It’s helped me change, helped me meet people. One day maybe I’ll find a girlfriend through the Friendship Club” Member

“I like being able to socialise with people I haven’t met before” Member

“It has helped me be more confident. I talk to people now and look forward to coming” Member

“I am much more confident now. I talk to more people and have been able to use the confidence to join a camera club” Member

“We can have a giggle because we are comfortable with each other” Member

“If the Club ended I’d stay at home with nothing to do” Member

If the Friendship Club finished
“I’d be sad”
“I’d be bored”
“I’d miss it”
“I’d be upset”
Members
“I feel better than I used to. Used to feel low and depressed. I couldn’t do anything at all. Now I feel more confident and independent as part of the Friendship Club. I feel good being here”  
Member

“I look forward to it. I used to be frightened to go out. Now I’m not so frightened. We never saw each other except when we were in Day Centre. Now we can go out and meet each other and it feels really good. And normal.

I’m also more confident since I’ve been coming to the Friendship Club. I’m also walking more and am fitter and healthier.”  
Member

“We like the talks by people at the coffee nights as we learn about safety, First Aid and the Police.

The big night out to Grease was very very good. We all love to dance. We would like to go out for a posh meal one day or a big picnic in the summer.

The Friendship Club has helped us all enjoy our community”  
Three members living together in supported living

“It has enabled me to transform my life a bit more so that I am not alone too much like I have been over the years”  
Member

“The Friendship Club gives me something to look forward to and stops me getting bored. I also get to see friends more often and have a laugh”  
Member

“I meet people like me who understand me”  
Member

“I’m on my own most of the time and it helps keep my mind at rest and any worries aside”  
Member

“I don’t feel depressed any more”  
Member

“I decided to speak to the Friendship Club Coordinator because they’ve been bullying me at work. Someone had defaced a picture of me, written some nasty things on it and put it up in our work shed.

I didn’t know who else to talk to and I trust her. She has helped me get an advocate from Dorset Advocacy and the three of us went to see the Deputy Town Clerk about it. He says it’s very serious and we talked about what should happen.

At least this time people could see it was real. In the past, when I was younger, they have been really awful to me and no one believed me or wanted to know. Even when they threw hosepipes at me and got me to do their work for them. I feel so much happier now because I have people who can help me. It makes such a difference I can’t tell you”  
Member

“The Friendship Club is fun”  
Member

“It’s good to mix with others”  
Member
I don't feel happy about my sexuality or things in life these days. Could really do with some sort of help to find the right path for me.

Teach me more about relationships with boys.

Would like a day time activity.

Help me lose weight.

I need help with social interaction as to keep a conversation going with any one person.

Maybe help me speak up when I’m not feeling confident.

To help people accept me for who I am.

I need more confidence in social settings, such as asking for a drink at the bar. The Friendship Club could help me to learn new hobbies and skills.

Meeting people and going out more.

To get out even more.

Build my social skills up and my confidence.