



# MacIntyre

Providing support...your way

## Great Communities

### *Finding Friendships: Kelly's Story*

Kelly is in her twenties and moved to Warrington five years ago after completing her education. During term time, Kelly spent her time working at an afterschool club. Kelly cares about her family, the people she works with, the children that she supports and her two dogs and a cat.

When MacIntyre first met Kelly, we discovered that *she didn't have any friends from school and would like friendships* like other people her age. She shared she would love to be able to meet up with friends at weekends and when she is not at work.

#### **Kelly connects with Great Communities**

Kelly heard about the *Great Communities Project* through a local advocacy group, so she picked up the phone. We met Kelly and spent time finding out as much about her as possible and *learned about her ambitions* and how she hoped to make them happen.

Kelly wanted to *help other people who might be like her*; shy, who lack confidence and have a tendency to get anxious around new people, in new environments.

#### **The Friendship Group**

Together we came up with an idea, to start a '*friendship group*'. Following this, we identified a café close to a well-known local landmark that local people would be able to find easily and decided the group would meet there every two weeks, on a *Wednesday morning*.

We worked with Kelly to help design a leaflet, to inform others in their twenties about the group and invite them to come along. We placed the leaflet in key places in Warrington and Kelly told the people who she had met at the local advocacy group.

We were delighted when three young ladies came along; one from the advocacy group, her sister and a friend. Soon they chatting and connecting and after some time, the four young women exchanged phone numbers.



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The Wednesday session provided a perfect opportunity for the women to meet up, but they also began to take the friendships away from the group, meeting socially for lunch.

## The group evolves

After a few weeks, a new person turned up at the Wednesday group session, a man in his mid-thirties. He was made to feel welcome, but his presence made the young women realise the group was potentially more than their new friendships. The man did not return, and this worried Kelly as she did not want to upset people. We discovered she was feeling the pressure of being the group lead.

This unexpected challenge made us all have a rethink about the group, its future and Kelly's role as a group leader, in particular. We had a discussion and the group decided they would change the way the group was run and what it was trying to achieve. The group were clear they wanted to continue to meet and to be a place where people can meet new people. They decided that instead of being Kelly's project this would be a shared venture, co-produced with Great Communities.

## Impact on Kelly and what she has learned

- Kelly set up the group with the support of Great Communities and the café
- She is proud of what she has achieved
- Kelly said what has changed is that she has met three people, she is happy because they want to do things with her and they have contacted each other and met outside of the group
- Kelly learned how to connect with people

## What next?

Kelly and the other group members are excited about the future. They are already planning to work with Great Communities to help other people who were in the same position as them.

**To find out more about MacIntyre's Great Communities project or to get involved with making a difference to the lives of young people, please get in touch.**

**Contact: [great.communities@macintyrecharity.org](mailto:great.communities@macintyrecharity.org)**

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