

Useful Information for Penfriends



Thank you for agreeing to be a penfriend to one of our men and women with learning disabilities. This is one of Sunnybank's vital services and can offer a real sense of friendship to people who may not receive letters and cards from anyone else.

For many of those who use this service, communication and mobility can be very limited. Before you start, we will let you know a bit about your pen friend including their likes and dislikes, as well as their birthday.

There are many ways and reasons for writing to your penfriend:

- Birthdays and other seasonal celebrations are good opportunities to send a card.
- If you are on holiday or having a trip away, then a postcard is another reason to link up with your friend.
- A special picture or collage that you or a member of your family has created can be a special way to communicate and you don't have to wait for a special event.
- Colourful images are always appreciated so please don't feel you need to write a long letter.
- Some penfriends may find it helpful to use symbols in their letters and cards – the Makaton language programme provides recognisable symbols that you can include in your letters and cards. For more information see <http://www.makaton.org>

Even though it may not be possible for your penfriend to reply to you, please do be assured that whatever communication you send, it will be greatly appreciated. Your communications will become something special that they can display in their room and show to their carers and visitors.

This is what people say about the penfriend scheme:

Janet has been a penfriend for 10 years to two clients in local homes, Janet says "It's very little effort for me to send a card every couple of months, but I know how important it can be for those without family and friends to receive a card they can put on their window sill for a few weeks, especially at Christmas and birthdays when everyone else is getting them"

Another pen friend says "It's good to know your pen friend's likes and dislikes – mine loves colouring and so I sent her a 'colour -in -yourself' Christmas card"

Nina, a carer, explains that having a card to display means a lot to the clients at the home she works at, she says "it's wonderful for our clients to know someone else is thinking about them"

As a Sunnybank volunteer penfriend, we will support you in the following ways:

- Access to talks and training about learning disabilities.
- Feedback from recipient penfriends if possible, but at least acknowledgment from either The Sunnybank Trust or the Care Home twice a year.
- Prompt response to any queries by email or phone to our Friendship Scheme Manager.
- A quarterly newsletter from The Sunnybank Trust to let you know what other activities our charity is involved in.
- Our volunteers can also sign up to our facebook page to keep up to date with us and to communicate with The Sunnybank community.

*** Your friendship makes a difference***

Your contact at The Sunnybank Trust is – Carol Robins Friendship Scheme Manager
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