



Service Summary

Introduction

People sometimes refer to *Local Friends* as a ‘befriending service’, but this can be misleading. If you want to talk about what we aim to achieve as a ‘service’, then a better description is ***community building through pastoral care***.

Befriending people is something that we do, but just part of what we do. What we aim to achieve is much bigger, and the method much broader. Creating new friendships is valuable and important in itself, but it can lead on to long term changes for the better, for both the individuals and the community they belong to.

Community Building

The strength of a community lies in the number and strength of the relationships between the people in that community. A community is weakened when people, and groups of people, are isolated from those around them.

There are many reasons for isolation, either of communities or groups, so there is no one simple answer. It takes many different strategies to build a strong community. We adopt a grassroots approach, working with the people who are already there and know both the people and the place. We seek to build connections one relationship at a time, helping isolated people in the community to build new relationships and strengthen existing ones.

Pastoral Care

There are two main aspects of pastoral care: the initial support, and the longer term nurturing – helping the individual grow stronger and more capable. People often seek out pastoral care because they have a specific problem or need, but sometimes the problem can be an opportunity for growth.

In many ways, pastoral care is simply genuine friendship: after all, you are not a good friend if you seek to keep the other person for yourself, or to prevent them from growing. We want to help people grow in the ways that matter: in relationships, in health, and in the ability to care for others.

Left to ourselves, it can be too easy to settle for something comfortable but static: if we want to help people grow, we generally need the help and support of others. We want to be a part of a community where people care for one another, and encourage one another to become healthier and better people, so that is what we are seeking to build.

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