

# SKYE AND LOCHALSH YOUNG CARERS

## Social skills training pack

Improving communication skills and social awareness



[www.skyeyoungcarers.co.uk](http://www.skyeyoungcarers.co.uk)

Skye and Lochalsh Community Care Forum  
Developed by Skye and Lochalsh Young Carers 2011 ©  
Scottish charity no. Sc. 027909 Transition Mission Project

# INTRODUCTION

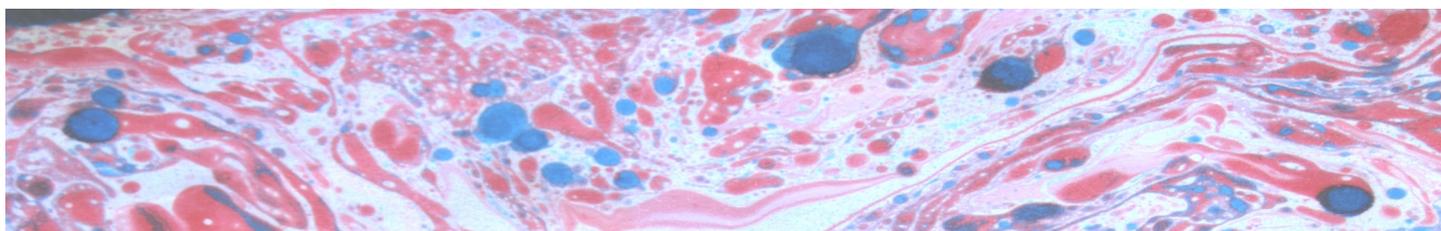


This Social Skills Training Programme has been put together by young carers and their workers to meet needs which were identified through one to one support sessions, group sessions and young carer assessment questionnaires. Young people who have caring responsibilities are recognised as having less opportunity to develop their social skills and can face communication barriers.

The activities described in this document have been positively evaluated by the young carers and their workers. Some of the activities may require adaptation to suit different age groups, skill and maturity levels.

The observational skills and experience of the people delivering this programme will affect the outcome, knowing the young people you are working with and being prepared to be flexible in your approach are the keys to its success. Be open to the use of pictorial working to support the young people, particularly those with literacy or attention difficulties.

This training programme has been put together to primarily assist others working to support school aged young people and is based on worker and young carer experience and developed knowledge. We wish to acknowledge with gratitude the vast amount of valuable internet, literary and verbal expertise and resources which helped to inform our ideas and activities to meet the identified needs of the young carers we were working with.



## EVALUATION

We used the Lickert scale method up to four weeks after the activities so the young people had time to try out and review what they had learned before evaluating it. They were asked to scale each module on how enjoyable and helpful they found it; where 1 is being not good at all/unhelpful and 10 is being very helpful/excellent.

Having an additional column for feedback and ideas for future working proved to be very interesting and useful.

Programme Co-ordinated, delivered and reviewed by Skye and Lochalsh Young carer staff. Programme artwork and evaluation completed by Skye and Lochalsh Young Carers.

### Disclaimer -

The content of this training programme is provided for general information and should not be relied upon. Whilst the Skye and Lochalsh Community Care Forum uses all reasonable efforts to ensure that the content is current, accurate and complete at the date of publication no representations or warranties are made as to the reliability, accuracy or completeness of such information. The Skye and Lochalsh Community Care Forum cannot therefore be held liable for any loss arising directly or indirectly from the use of, or any action taken in reliance on any information within this document / training programme.



# ABOUT SKYE AND LOCHALSH YOUNG CARERS



Skye and Lochalsh Community Care Forum is a charity set up to support young carers aged 5-18 throughout the area of Skye and Lochalsh on the west coast of Scotland. We meet Monday to Friday for a group session which usually lasts from 3.15/3.30pm until 5.00pm. We run weekly groups for younger primary school age, older primary age, younger high school age, older high school age and an outreach group on the mainland.

Our sessions start with a hot snack and fresh fruit along with an informal catch up with each other. This is followed by 'challenge' time which lasts approximately 30 minutes, dependant on age and topic. Remaining time is used for activities such as arts and crafts, indoor and outdoor games, Wii, Xbox 360, chill out time and one to one support when appropriate.

We plan each term of challenges and activities at the beginning of each school term to ensure we have all the resources necessary and have booked experts for relevant dates, arranged visits and planned outings etc. In addition to this we co-ordinate respite breaks - spring, summer, autumn and winter for each age group - including residential trips for our older members.

We have specific support available for our members and work closely with other experts to provide courses such as Seasons for Growth, music, arts and media events. With assistance we have produced a film about SLYC which includes our own animation, an advert using our own musical compositions and musicians for our local radio station and have been the subject of a documentary for TV in Japan.

## FOREWORD

### **Communication! Communication! Communication!**



Communication is the essential 'oil' that lubricates social interactions within all areas of society. The 'quality of oil' can make the difference between an ineffective or successful exchange. The way in which individuals communicate and how effective their interactions are depend on many factors, not least of which is life experience.

Skye and Lochalsh Young Carers are very aware of the integral role communication plays in enabling members to fully contribute to society. This social skills package demonstrates commitment to providing members with every opportunity to develop their communication skills and enrich their every day experiences.

Not only does this package look at specific and difficult aspects of communication, such as relationships and social etiquette, it presents activities in a fun and accessible format that the members are able to influence. By including the comments and quotes from members participating in a variety of activities it is evident that there is a successful chain of communication between all involved in Young Carers.

Such positive experience of communication working well, can only support and promote the development of social skills in all environments.

### **Well Done Skye and Lochalsh Young Carers!!**

Liz Coupe  
Speech and Language Therapist

Anna Love-Jones  
Speech and Language Therapist



# CONTENTS



This training pack is aimed at helping young people identify different aspects of social relationships and to increase understanding and awareness of oneself and others in public and private relationships. Through:

- increased awareness of ways we communicate
- increased understanding of others in relationships
- increased awareness of appropriate behaviours in society

These exercises can be done with young people aged from 5 to 18 years of age with suitable adaptations.

## **MODULE ONE - Communication**

### ***Exchanging and understanding information***

- 1.0 Identifying barriers to communication
- 1.1 Matching pictures
- 1.2 Mystery objects
- 1.3 Emotions through art
- 1.4 Non-verbal communication
- 1.5 Misleading assumptions

## **MODULE TWO – Relationships**

### ***Exploring positive and negative relationships***

- 2.0 Personal certificates
- 2.1 What is a true friend?
- 2.2 What is a bully?
- 2.3 Bullying situations

## **MODULE THREE— Social Etiquette**

### ***Understanding and practicing appropriate behaviours***

- 3.0 Tea party
- 3.1 Setting out behaviour boundaries
- 3.2 Body language
- 3.3 Team working—making a membership card

## **Appendices**

1. Bullying cartoon template No.1
2. Bullying cartoon template No.2
3. Bullying cartoon template No.3
4. Bullying cartoon template No.4
5. Sample of final personal certificate
6. SLYC behaviour points poster

*These modules are best worked on a weekly basis with a minimum allocation time of 20 minutes - always allow additional time for discussion to overrun. When the modules are used in group work sessions it is helpful to have a high ratio of adult support to nurture the aims of a positive approach.*  
*EVALUATION FIGURE— this is put for each module using the Lickert scale where 1 is not good or very unhelpful and 10 is extremely helpful and excellent.*

# MODULE 1 COMMUNICATION

## *Exchanging and understanding information*

### 1.0 Identifying barriers to communication

#### Aim

To promote self-awareness and understanding of what we and other people might experience as barriers to effective communication

#### Resources

Flip chart  
Pens

#### Challenge

In a group setting discuss what could be barriers to communication and list these on the flip chart. Allow time to explore each heading as it comes up.



Follow this with a game of Chinese whispers, allowing each person in turn to start with a clear sentence and then discuss the sentence result after it has travelled around the group.

#### ***Our members came up with the following barriers:***

- Lack of confidence*
- Not listening/hearing*
- Environment – noisy, busy, underwater, darkness, distance*
- Disability – sight problems, hearing impairment, speech impairment*
- Accent*
- Attitude*
- Talk differently to different people – teachers, pals, parents, waiting staff, doctors, which is the 'right' way?*
- Speed of speech, tone, volume,*
- Stress, anxiety, fear*
- Distracted*
- Lack of eye contact*
- Body language*
- Assumptions – clothing, make up, hair*
- The topic – e.g. to stand in front of a class talking about something you're not confident about or if you're not interested in the topic*
- Not enough knowledge*
- Other people – e.g. they don't give you a chance, make you think you're thick or ignore you*
- Manners*

#### Notes

Encourage members to 'think outside of the box'  
Make sure everyone has a chance to participate  
Keep the Chinese whispers quite simple for the younger groups, we had a rule that the whisperer could not repeat what he/she had said. The group had some really good laughs with this. We wrote down the sentence at the beginning so we could compare this, as some members couldn't remember what they'd said!

#### Comments

*This exercise gave the young carers a chance to identify the large range of barriers which might cause problems with communication.*  
**EVALUATION FIGURE: 9.3**  
*(1 means not good / unhelpful and 10 means excellent / very helpful)*

# MODULE 1 COMMUNICATION

## *Exchanging and understanding information*

### 1.1 Matching pictures

#### Aim

To improve the communication skills of young people and help them to explore barriers to effective communication.

#### Resources

Paper  
Pencils / felt tip pens  
Clipboards or hard surface to lean on

#### Challenge

Original

Invite the young people to sit in pairs and back to back. They should not turn around during the challenge. One participant will talk and the other one can only listen.



Copy drawing

**Stage 1** - The first person in each pair is instructed to draw a picture and describe what he/she is doing to their partner. They should describe each step of the drawing without letting them know the final result (e.g. they should not say I'm going to draw a house, cat, or car etc.) When both have finished the drawing, repeat this exercise but with the roles reversed. When both sets of drawings are finished compare and discuss the results.



Original

**Stage 2** - As a development of this exercise you can repeat the process but allow the partner to ask questions such as - Where on the page is that? What colour are you using? How big is the circle? Again compare drawings when completed and discuss the results.



Copy



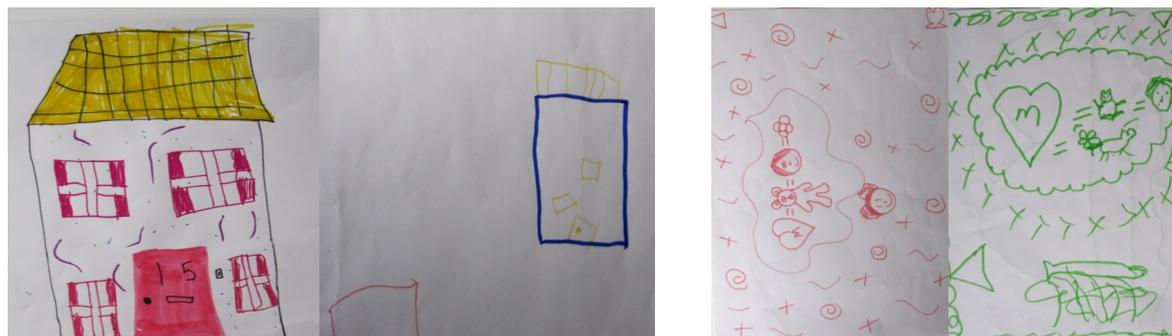
#### Notes

The trainer should encourage the young people -

- Not to say the title of the final drawing whilst doing the challenge
- To think carefully how to best describe what they are doing
- To listen carefully

And in stage two:

- to ask their partner if they are not sure about what they have been told
- to get confirmation that they have the correct information



Drawings showing originals and copies

#### Comments

*We found that our groups quickly grasped the importance of listening carefully. They considered words which would be most effective in giving information and asked for relevant guidance, as well as having fun in the process.*  
EVALUATION FIGURE: 9.1

# MODULE 1 COMMUNICATION

## *Exchanging and understanding information*

### 1.2 Mystery objects

#### Aim

To improve the communication skills of young people and to help them explore barriers to effective communication.

#### Resources

A blindfold or scarf  
A bag which is not transparent  
A mixed selection of objects with contrasting textures, forms and sizes  
It is useful to have some objects which may be more easily recognised than others.

#### Challenge



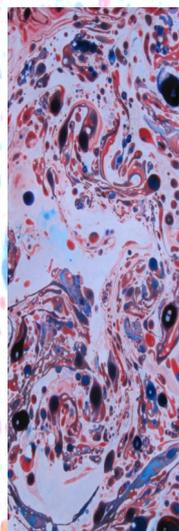
Each member of the group takes a turn in being blindfolded and feeling one mystery object in the bag being held by the trainer. They should keep the object in the bag and describe it without saying what they think it might be. The others all try to guess what it may be. Remove the object from the bag once it has been identified.

The person who first guesses the object correctly gets the next turn at being blindfolded and choosing an object. Make sure that everyone gets a turn at describing a mystery object.



#### Notes

Trainers can encourage by prompting relevant questions such as: 'What does it feel like?', 'What size is it?', 'How heavy is it?' etc.



Encourage the describer to give clues that will help the guessers without giving away the identity of the object e.g. "I would use this in the morning and at night", "I take one of these to school with me". Discuss the difficulties of having to rely only on sight and what they think it might be like to be visually impaired or blind.

Some ideas for objects could be: pen, hairbrush, key, toilet roll, calculator, slice of bread, mug, banana, soft toy, shell, camera, disposable nappy, bar of chocolate, small book, toothbrush, mobile phone, fork, string, an apple, paintbrush, teabag, small soft ball, lollipop, wool, plastercine etc.

It is fun to include unusual or unexpected objects and of course objects like toilet rolls bring hilarity to any age group! The more textures and shapes you can include the better.

#### Comments

##### **Quotes from some of our members:**

*"It's harder than you think to describe something just by feel and without being able to say it's name"*

*"I was a bit embarrassed to say toilet roll in case I was wrong but I knew that's what it was"*

*"I screamed when I felt the teabag—It's the not being able to see things that make it more frightening"*

**EVALUATION FIGURE: 9.1**

# MODULE 1 COMMUNICATION

## *Exchanging and understanding information*

### 1.3 Emotions through art

#### Aim

To explore different emotions, how we can deal with them and how to express them through art.

#### Resources

Flip chart and paper  
Pens  
Paint & paintbrushes and protective aprons if age appropriate

#### Challenge

Start with a group discussion about the different emotions that we all experience and write these down on the flip chart. Ask questions such as:  
How does/did that make you feel?  
What colours would you say describes them?  
What shapes do they bring to mind?  
Using these ideas ask each person to then paint a picture thinking about one specific feeling. Encourage as many pictures as possible for different feelings.



#### Notes

Further areas to explore in discussion include:  
Is there a place/person/song/music that triggers this feeling?  
How do you cope with negative feelings?  
How can you help yourself change from feeling negative to feeling positive?  
What helps you? What doesn't help you?



The group members came up with lots of interesting ideas of how to change their mood from negative to positive – “listen to favourite music”, “watch ‘Still Game’” or other comedy programmes, “take the dog for a walk”, “talk to somebody”, “paint a picture”, “play a game”, “txt sum1”, “walk away”, “scrub the kitchen floor—they can come to our house anytime!!”



To explore this further you can make three dimensional art works using art / craft materials e.g. shiny paper, velvet, cardboard, stones, wool, sandpaper, tin foil, twigs, tissue paper, cotton wool, cardboard tubes etc.

#### Comments

*This module took us two sessions to complete – we had the discussion in the first session and did the art work in the second one.  
We also found that it was better not to attach a specific emotion to an art work as different people saw different emotions in them and even said that their interpretation changed according to how they were feeling at the time.  
EVALUATION FIGURE: 9.3*

# MODULE 1 COMMUNICATION

## *Exchanging and understanding information*

### 1.4 Non-verbal communication

#### Aim

To learn more about the different ways that we communicate without using speech.

#### Resources

Printed sheets of examples of sign language.  
 We also used resources such as videos and graphics.  
 Pens, paper etc. for writing and/or drawing.  
 Invite any available experts in signing to the group session

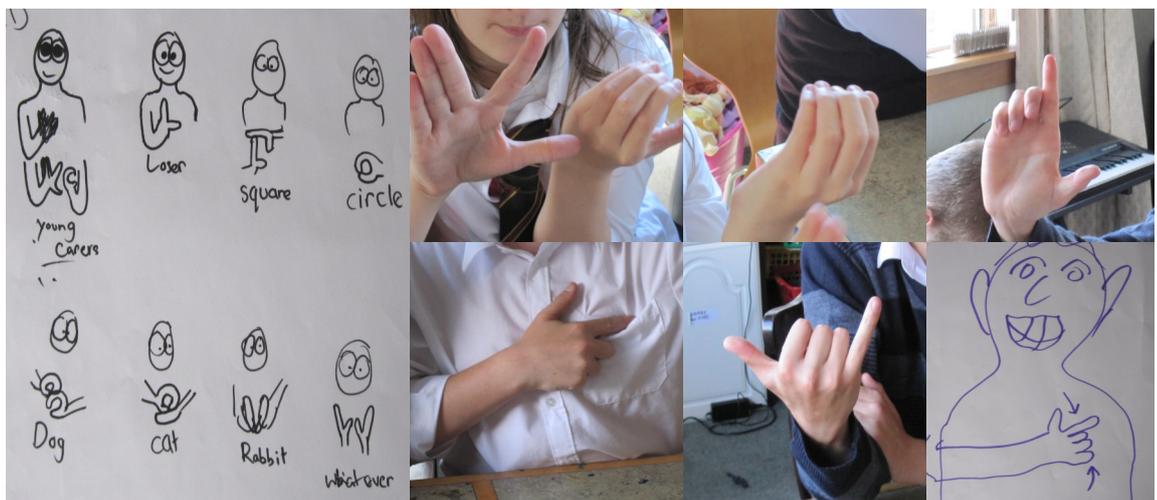
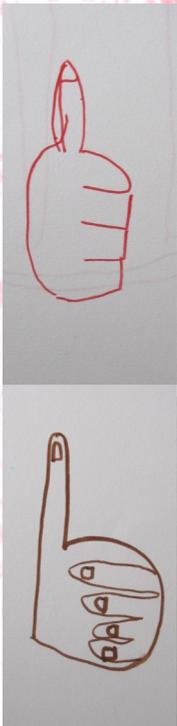
#### Challenge

To communicate with each other without speech, only using hand signs, signals, drawn signs and gestures like shaking and nodding your head.

Begin by asking what signs or signals we use daily – no rude gestures are allowed! Next explore different areas where non-verbal signs are important in everyday life e.g. roads, emergency exits, toilets etc.

Give everyone a sheet of sign language and invite them to learn a phrase or word and then to show this to the rest of the group. The group then guesses what they are being told.

As a follow on activity invite the young people to devise/design their own signs for things, either drawn versions or hand signals. Invite each person to take it in turn to show their sign for the others to guess.



#### Notes

One of our members uses sign language to communicate with a relative so we had access to an expert.

For one group we had a diving expert, who showed us the signs used when diving underwater. We also had a Scuba diving instructor giving us some interesting lessons.

It was interesting to realise there are a number of different sign languages and that the same signal can mean different things depending on context.

#### Comments

*The young carers really enjoyed this and everyone felt they learnt something useful. We had follow on discussions about how to overcome some communication difficulties in an effective way.*  
**EVALUATION FIGURE: 9.1**

# MODULE 1 COMMUNICATION

## *Exchanging and understanding information*

### 1.5 Misleading assumptions

#### Aim

To explore whether people judge others by their appearance and whether this is important.

#### Resources

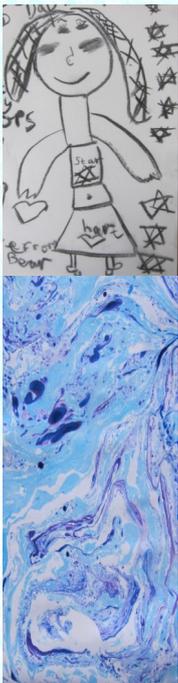
Variety of pictures of people in various jobs - up to 20 different jobs. The pictures should represent people in jobs who may not always look stereotypical (e.g. lecturer, minister, secretary) with some more obvious examples (e.g. doctor, nurse, police officer) as well as other people with more unusual and/or interesting occupations (e.g. Juggler, actor, dancer)

#### Challenge

Number each picture prior to giving numbered sheets to each participant. After looking at each picture they write down what they think the person is employed as. Discussion should not be encouraged as the idea is to write your initial thoughts/judgements.

Once the assessment process is completed for all the pictures ask the participants to swap sheets with their neighbour to score how many they guessed correctly.

A fun variation is to use a dressing up box with each person taking turns to dress as a specific job holder while other group members guess the occupation.



#### Notes

It is important to stress at the start that the purpose of the exercise is not to judge who is right or wrong in their answers but to look at how we all make assumptions about people.

Discuss the answers given and explore how they came to their conclusions. What were the clues? If no obvious clues how did we come to our decisions? Does a person's gender/ethnicity/age make any difference (one picture was of a very glamorous female Asian astronaut, not wearing a spacesuit)? Is what we wear important? Do we judge people from the different clothes worn in different situations e.g. in school, for a job interview, at a wedding, protective work wear, going out with friends, on a date, to play sports etc.?

#### Comments

*This was seen as an important exercise to realise how biased we are even when we think we aren't. The workers also took part in the exercise so we could show that we all make assumptions and should be as aware of it. The groups had great hilarity when boys dressed up as women – especially when they improvised to give themselves a more feminine shape!*  
**EVALUATION FIGURE: 8.4**

# MODULE 2 RELATIONSHIPS

## *Exploring positive and negative relationships*

### 2.0 Personal certificates

#### Aim

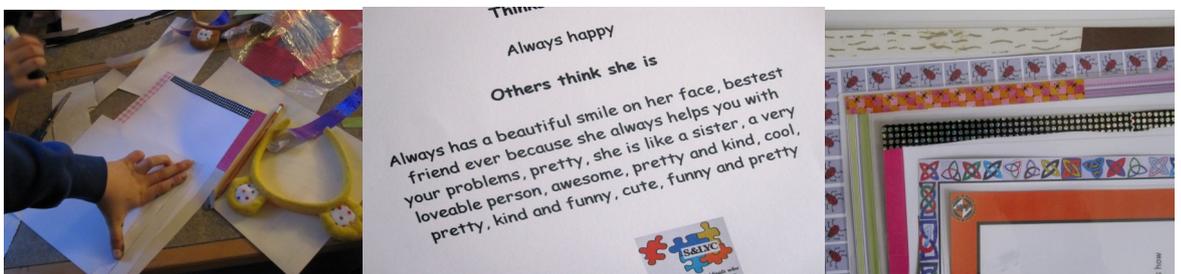
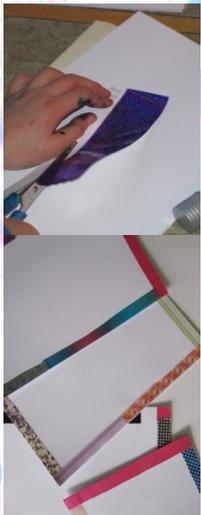
To raise awareness of personal character strengths as well as identifying those in other people and exploring the impact of positive feedback.

#### Resources

Paper and pens  
Decorative papers and materials for collage/drawing  
Printed sheet with the list of names of everyone in the group  
Computer, scanner, camera and laminator

#### Challenge

Give each person a copy of a sheet with everyone's name on it. Challenge the participants to write something positive about themselves and all the other group members. Collect and collate the information for each individual on a computer. Invite the young people to design a personalised narrow border for their completed certificate on A4 paper. Encourage the participants to take a simple photograph of each other with a plain background. Complete the certificates by using the photographs and borders and inserting the written information. The certificate can now be laminated.



#### Notes

Allow up to 3 sessions to complete this module. It is useful to have a few standard border examples available which people can choose as an option or get inspiration from.



Participants were delighted with their certificates and comments included; "I didn't think I was seen like that". "What a nice thing to say about me". "Wow, that makes me feel really good". Encourage everyone to be specific and not to just write "cool" or "funny" about everyone. Date the certificate and consider repeating the exercise annually as it can be used as a tool to help measure personal development.

It can be challenging for some people to write positively about members they don't get on with or don't know but with support this can usually be overcome. Being able to recognise positives in people they don't relate well to can help them see they can still respect their strengths and work with them.

#### Comments

*The majority commented that the hardest part was writing something positive about themselves – they were more used to hearing negative comments or criticisms from adults and other young people. Laminating the certificates gave an added feeling of value and respect. EVALUATION FIGURE: 8.8*

# MODULE 2 RELATIONSHIPS

## *Exploring positive and negative relationships*

### 2.1 What is a true friend?

#### Aim

To help young people understand and explore the true value of friendship.

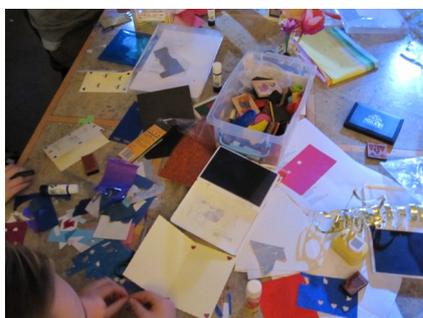
#### Resources

Flip Chart,  
Paper and pens  
Blank cards and envelopes  
Glue and various decoration/trimmings for designing cards

#### Challenge

**Stage 1-** In a group setting, discuss what a friend is. Write the words and phrases used on flip chart. Encourage participants to tell their stories of particular events to illustrate true/false, helpful/harmful friendships.

**Stage 2 -** Now encourage the young people to write a poem about what a friend is. This could be as short or long as they wish it to be and can be rhyming, prose or acrostic. Type up and print the poems, using different fonts. The next stage is to make a friendship card using these poems. The participants can share each others poems at this stage if they want to.



*A friend is caring  
A friend is truthful  
A friend is kind  
A friend is wonderful  
A friend is he or she  
A friend is amazing  
A friend is me*

*A friend is like a star  
You can't always see them  
But you always know they are there*



#### Notes

This module is best done over two sessions. Important friendship attributes identified by the young people were: trust, supportive, caring, reliable, able to keep a secret and being there for you. Asking if they feel they themselves are good friends should trigger more interesting and productive discussions.

#### Comments

*One of our older male members thought this was a brilliant activity and sat quietly for at least half an hour writing his poem. We had really interesting and productive sessions on this topic which the young carers really valued.*  
**EVALUATION FIGURE: 9.0**

# MODULE 2 RELATIONSHIPS

## Exploring positive and negative relationships

### 2.2 What is a bully?

#### Aim

To better understand the nature of bullying and define what a bully is.

#### Resources

Flip chart  
Pens, pencils and paper

#### Challenge

In a group setting discuss the different aspects of bullying.  
Discuss questions such as:  
What is a bully?  
Where does bullying take place?  
Why do bullies bully?  
How does that make you feel?  
What can you do about bullies?  
Record the responses on the flip chart.  
Now invite the young people to create cartoon drawings and/or poems.



**Bullies**  
Names hurt  
They text me bad things  
They laugh  
I cry  
They comment about me  
They chase me  
Others think it's funny  
But not me



Words they say  
Things they do  
Hurt me  
In every way

#### Notes

Encourage the young people to think about both, what it would feel like to be bullied and to be a bully and to help see the situation from both sides.  
When writing the poems we kept the flip chart with all the written examples and feelings so that participants could refer to this.

We also found it useful to discuss how to avoid bullying situations, the importance of friends and of telling someone that you are being bullied etc.  
Useful time was also spent on identifying who is a safe person to tell etc.

#### Comments

*Even where schools have robust Bullying Policies bullying can still take place in educational and social environments. This exercise helped to build the confidence of young people to enable them to come forward more quickly for the support they have a right to receive.*  
**EVALUATION FIGURE: 8.1**