



Equal Futures



• • • • • **Edition 13 ▪ July 2023** • • • • •

Introduction

Welcome to our summer newsletter. As the sun shines brighter and the days grow longer, we are excited to bring you our latest updates, events, and stories.

We would love to hear from you about your summer plans, holidays or hobbies - so please get in touch with any Project Coordinator and we can share your news in the next edition. Their details are at the end of the newsletter.

Exciting partnerships in the Lothians area

Edinburgh's Project Coordinator, Jane, has been busy linking us with some superb organisations that also aim to improve the lives of adults with complex needs and disabilities.

Our partnerships with teens+ (Transitional Education, Extra Needs Support) and get2gether offer more opportunities for the people we support to expand their Circles of Support with more socialising opportunities.

An example of one of these opportunities is the **Next Steps Disco** from teens+ - this event is for anyone in Edinburgh or the Lothians to attend, but they especially are welcoming people with a learning disability.

When: Friday 28 July, 7:30 to 10:30pm

Where: Glimerton Bowling Club

What will be there: A DJ who will be playing music, and a bar where you can purchase drinks

Cost: The event is free, but you will need to reserve tickets

Get2gether also have some events coming up that people may be interested in attending.

To find out more about these partnerships or if you are interested in attending the Next Steps Disco, please contact Jane:

Email: jane.mcallister@equalfutures.org.uk

Phone: 07713 342311



Edinburgh Kilt Walk 2023

We achieved amazing effort and incredible fundraising for the Glasgow 2023 Kiltwalk in the spring - now we look ahead to the Edinburgh Kiltwalk this September!

The Edinburgh Kiltwalk is on **Sunday 17 September**. We are inviting everyone - especially people we support, families, and volunteers - to slip on their comfiest shoes, adorn their favourite tartan, and take part in this unmissable fundraising phenomenon.

We are also happy to say we can fund the entry of some people – we will give these funded spaces to the first people who ask that can commit to coming, so please let us know as soon as possible if you are interested.

We usually do **The Wee Wander** - an almost 5-mile walk. We find this the most accessible walk for people.

If you wish for more of a challenge, we can help you sign up for **The Big Stroll** or **The Mighty Stride**.

You can find out more information at www.thekiltwalk.co.uk/events/edinburgh

Jane is our organiser for all Edinburgh walk signups. please direct any questions her way. An official invite to attend with more information will be sent out directly.

Mobile: 07713 342 311

Email: Jane. Mcallister@equalfutures.org.uk

Meet Opeoluwa, our new volunteer

Hi, my name is Ope, and I am an experienced early years practitioner currently studying Applied Educational and Social Research at the University of Strathclyde.



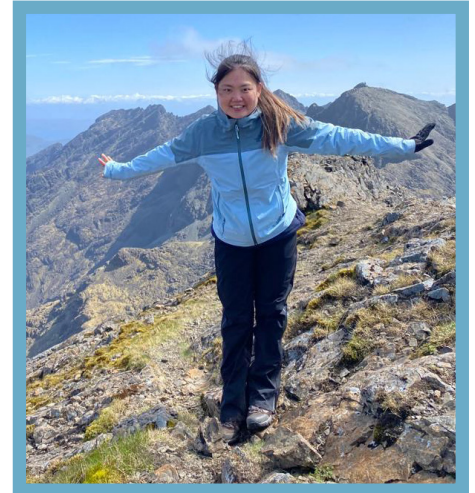
Having worked with diverse groups of people, including children with additional support needs and vulnerable elderly individuals in my community, I have witnessed the transformative effects of genuine companionship and friendship. This has motivated me to volunteer as a Befriender.

I had a wonderful experience with Equal Futures during the interview process and the information-packed training session. I gained valuable insights about Equal Futures' goals and the befriending role; I truly understood the power of human connection and compassion. Meeting the warm and welcoming team members and like-minded volunteers was inspiring as well.

I am excited to start my volunteering journey soon and eager to meet the expectations of the role. I look forward to the opportunity to support and connect with individuals in need of sincere friendship through Equal Futures.

Meet Fany, our new volunteer

Hi everyone, I'm Fany, a soon-to-be interpreter finishing her study at Heriot-Watt University this year.



I have Fallen in love Scotland right away. Many core memories are made during my stay. At the same time, I wondered what I could do for the people and the community around me - while I'm deriving and taking happiness from the world, what could I give back? I felt that I had more energy and skills to be utilised.

Early this year, I met Jane, my coordinator, at the volunteering fair at HWU. I signed up for the Befriender role. Interview, training, first meet-up with the Befriender - every stage went smoothly. I could only wish I had met Jane and started volunteering with Equal Futures sooner.

As a language student, I am amazed by the alchemy of communications and love the nuances of human language. I'm honoured if someone trusts me, that I can offer them genuine meaningful communication, and make social interaction easier than they thought. With this new commitment supported by Equal Futures, I learnt more about autism and neurodiversity. Apart from knowledge about autism, it is still important to remember that the best way to know anyone is to see them as an individual, a

person. Jumping to conclusion or generalisation might make socialising seemingly easier but there's no short cut to take in the long run.

I genuinely recommend anyone who has a listening heart and wants to make a wee difference in someone's social life to give Equal Futures a go!



Caldervale and Brannoch High School Event

Caldervale and Brannoch High Schools kindly invited us to attend their Parent Information Event.

There were lots of local charities there - giving parents information on the services that are available to them and their children, including services available after their kids leave school. We are looking forward to the next one in September - thank you for inviting us!

Rosemary's Date with Rod

We are thrilled to share the story of Rosemary's milestone birthday celebration date with rock and pop icon Sir Rod Stewart.

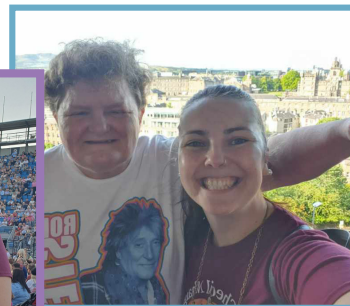
Rosemary has never had the chance to celebrate any of her significant birthdays in style - - unfortunate circumstances throughout her life took her down a difficult path. However, this summer Rosemary was determined to have her 60th birthday in style. Equal Futures were on hand to help with the planning.

When Rosemary heard that Sir Rod would be touring this year she knew that's what she wanted to do to celebrate!

After a few tricky hurdles in the organisation of the concert, Rosemary's small Circle of Support managed to secure the ever-important tickets to one of Rod's epic live shows at the Edinburgh Castle Esplanade. She even had a wonderful concert companion to enjoy the experience with.

Rosemary and her Equal Futures volunteer Befriender, Jacinta, got the chance to bop along in the stands to Rod's famous raspy voice. Rosemary was happy to have the opportunity to enjoy this experience with a friend and not rely on a paid staff member to take her.

With more special treats planned in August, this was a birthday celebration to never forget!



Circles of Support

An Equal Futures **Circle of Support** is a team of people for a person with a learning disability. They meet roughly every 2 months – our aim is to meet that person’s goals and listen to what they want and need. It usually also involves:

- People important in their life, such as family or friends
- Equal Futures volunteers
- Early attendance from an Equal Futures Project Coordinator

We believe that people with a learning disability should be supported to live their best lives. Our Circles of Support are not one-size-fits-all, we cater to the unique wants and needs of individuals, while maintaining their safety, health, and wellbeing.

“I would never have been able to [reach all my goals] if it wasn’t for the support of Equal Futures and my circle of support. I now live a meaningful independent life and I am excited about what the future holds.” – Fiona, one of our many Circles of Support success stories!

Circles of Support take time to set up - on average about 2 years to become a smooth functioning team.

Do you want to find out more about our Circles of Support? Your local Project Coordinator will be happy to help – their contact details are at the end of this newsletter. You can also ask them for the Equal Futures ‘Safe and Secure’ book – this will help you understand what a Circle of Support is, and how to get started creating one.

Shaping our story

Like most charities, we look to our mission to help us shape how we work and what we do. Equal Futures is looking to make a positive impact to the lives of the people we support – part of that means changing in response to what those people say.

Just as we have an impact on the lives of those we support, your stories have an impact on how we operate. Here are some great stories that are helping shape our future:

Anonymous person we support – speaking about their Befriending volunteer

“She has been such a valuable asset in my life. She has taken time out her own life to spend time with me, giving me new experiences, doing activities I enjoy, and most importantly - helping me with independent travel. I am so thankful for her help in improving my confidence and independence”

Ann - family member of a person we support

“...When the name Equal Futures was chosen and as it continues now - it is the perfect name and description of an organisation helps disabled people and their families to keep in touch with a wide range of contacts ...these are contacts which could -all too easily - just drift apart because no one has bothered to take any initiative.

Our small family is so very grateful that Equal Futures continues to play an important contact role so that instead of that unintentional social drifting ...[we] maintain beautiful and important contacts.”

Jacinta – volunteer Befriender

“My match seems to be perfect. We spend time together laughing and having fun, but my match has also opened up to me and I am a trusted friend to her - an outlet for her to give out or get upset with. A trusted friend can be priceless at different stages of life.”

Anonymous parents of someone we support

“As parents, we are really happy with the Befriending our son is receiving via Equal Futures. It was not easy to find a befriending service, although we knew he would benefit from one. Finding Equal Futures, where there isn't a cost to us as a family, has made a difference to us as parents.

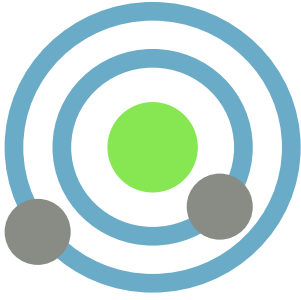
But the real impact is for our son, who can now pursue an important hobby through the support of a Befriender who is equally keen on the hobby. That mutual interest, as well as the time together, means our son is strengthened in a key area of his life.”

Natasha – Professional, Events, and Befriender volunteer

“The first project I took on was building a website. I had never developed a website before, and since then I have a new job in website development”

Donna – Project Coordinator for North Lanarkshire

It's great to hear the amazing impact our volunteers have on people's lives



Shaun – a person we support

“I have enjoyed spending time with Ashleigh because she makes me feel good about myself and it is easy to talk to her.”



Marion – parent of Shaun, a person we support

“Shaun and I have really appreciated the time that Ashleigh has been able spend with him despite the demands of her final year at uni. He will miss her but is glad that she will keep in touch.”



Ashleigh – volunteer Befriender

“He managed to get the bus [to Glasgow unaccompanied]. We got the subway together and then went to the Riverside Museum. He was very chatty, and he talked about how he has gotten much more confident since when we first met.”

What is on - July and August

Well! As residents of Edinburgh and the Lothians will know, Summertime in and around Edinburgh is packed with things to do!

One of the big events is **The Edinburgh Fringe Festival**.

I would not like to try and round up a list of things to see, do, and try in this festival. There is just so much! So here is a page to help you plan your time at the festival: www.edfringe.com/experience

Our Edinburgh based social media volunteer, Lachlan, will be sharing his picks of the festival options over the weeks running up to the Fringe Festival. You can follow us on Twitter (@EqualFutures) or Facebook (www.facebook.com/equalfutures.scotland) to see his recommendations.

Sam Maggs, the Project manager for our friends at Gig Buddies has these tips:

“My biggest tip for any kind of event is just call the venue and have a chat. For big venues, call the box office. Someone will be happy to answer any questions you have. Even if they have got a website it is always easier to just call them and ask.

Venues want to make it easy for you. Many places wish to be welcoming and they want you to have a good time.

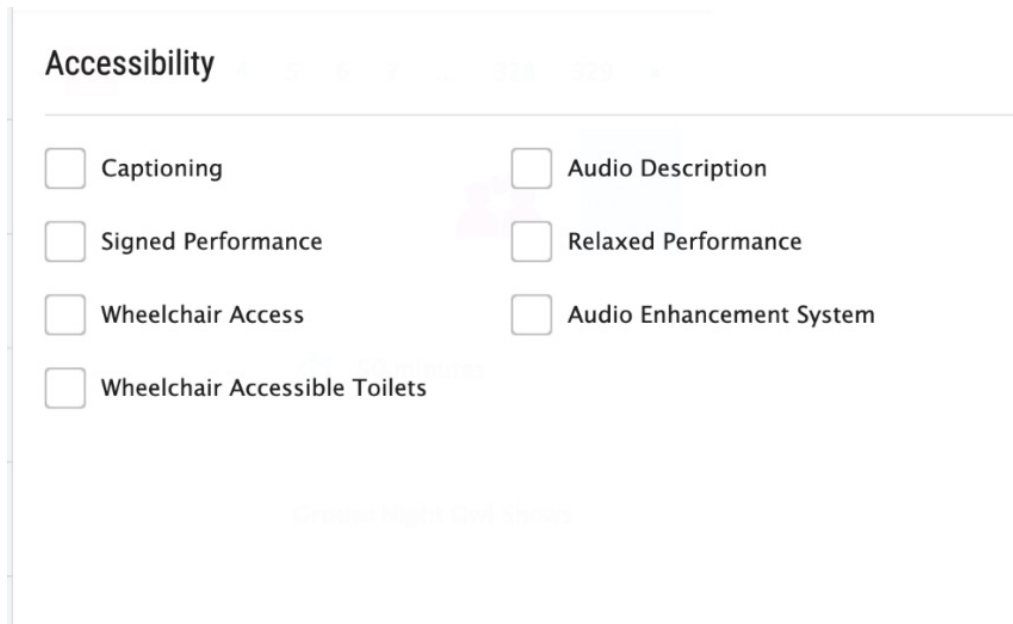
Even if a phone call in advance is too difficult, you can email them instead 😊

As an example, you can ask if a member of your support team can meet you at the door. You can ask when the quietest show will be. There is no harm in asking for things that you will find helpful if they will make your experience better.

Just do not be afraid to ask for support. Everyone around you wants to enable you.

Some extra hints and tips:

- There is a dedicated email address if you have any questions about accessibility or need help to make bookings: accessbookings@edfringe.com
- You can filter events when you search the programme to see what shows and venues meet your accessibility needs



The image shows a screenshot of a website's 'Accessibility' filter menu. The menu is titled 'Accessibility' and contains several options, each with an unchecked checkbox:

- Captioning
- Signed Performance
- Wheelchair Access
- Wheelchair Accessible Toilets
- Audio Description
- Relaxed Performance
- Audio Enhancement System

Below the list of options, there is a button labeled 'Clear All Filters'.

- You can call the main office with questions at +44 (0)131 226 0026
- You can make ticket bookings over the phone at +44 (0)131 226 0000
- The festival has a Textphone service – the number to text is +44(0)7860 018 299

Have a Happy Fringe!

How to contact us

You can reach your Project Co-ordinator for your area by email or telephone:

Jane Mcallister (Edinburgh and Lothians):

Jane.Mcallister@equalfutures.org.uk

0771 334 2311

Donna McCallum (Lanarkshire):

Donna.McCallum@equalfutures.org.uk

0792 139 7615

Stacey Burgess (Glasgow):

Stacey.Burgess@equalfutures.org.uk

0759 096 5527

Shona Fleming (Ayrshire):

Shona.Fleming@equalfutures.org.uk

0778 751 6597

All of us are home-based and do not have an office.

If you do not want to get In the Loop anymore, please contact Shona Fleming.

Our members are at the heart of everything we do. If you have a good news story or something to celebrate, please let us know - we would love to hear it! Contact your project coordinator today!