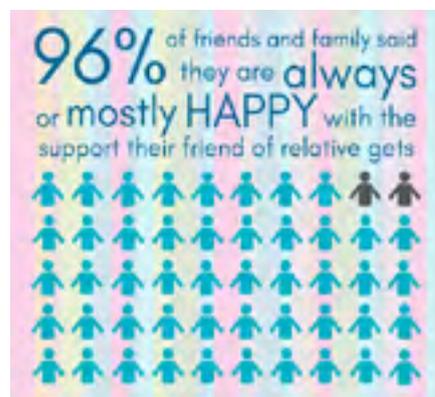


Brandon Annual Survey report

Brandon Trust carried out its annual survey asking people we support and their friends and family, questions covering quality of support, community connections and activities.

We had a fantastic response, with some very positive results to share.

We included an observational survey for the first time, which helped us gather views of people who don't use verbal communication. We believe we're the first organisation to use this type of survey. A total of 242 surveys were completed by friends and family (32% of the total sent out), while 542 surveys were completed by people we support (36% of the total sent out).



Three key findings from what friends and family told us were:

- 96% are always or mostly happy with the support their friend or relative gets from Brandon.
- 97% said they're always or mostly happy with the environment where their friend or relative gets support.
- 90% said staff always or mostly communicate effectively with them.

Three key findings from people who completed surveys themselves were:

- 90% said they are very or quite happy with the support they get from Brandon.
- 91% of people told us they are very or quite happy with the amount of control they have over daily life.
- 84% of people told us they see friends and family as much as they would like.

The results did show key areas we need to improve. You told us you want improved family involvement including more formal communication and more involvement in the life of your loved ones.

This is really important, so we are working with families to develop an involvement charter. More details on this are provided at the end of the newsletter.

When we asked people we support how healthy they feel, the score was much lower than other answers. Brandon is now going to check that everybody we support has a Health Action Plan and attends their annual health check.

Also, observational surveys scored lower than the direct surveys for almost every question. The Brandon Members' Boards have made it their top priority to improve outcomes for people with higher support needs, including finding different ways to communicate so people are better connected, and improving how people are involved with choosing their support staff.

For more information about the survey visit: www.brandontrust.org/annual-survey/

Swimming club friendship continues to blossom

Paul, a man with learning disabilities we support in Cheltenham, was delighted to be reunited with his former swimming lifeguard Ross, at a surprise lunch just before Christmas.

The pair's friendship began when a Brandon Trust swimming group that Paul attended needed a new lifeguard – and Ross, who is now studying at university, stepped up.

Ross developed a fantastic rapport with the group, some of whom either have no verbal communication, limited communication, are blind and/or deaf. Paul is a very good swimmer, but in social settings can be quite solitary. However, the pair instantly bonded, with complete mutual respect, and swam together each week.



Brandon Trust's Sam Mullaney said: "Ross would encourage Paul and his swimming got better. Paul always enjoyed coming swimming, but looked forward to it even more. This is totally down to Ross and the confidence, respect, and friendship he gave Paul."

Ross had to end his weekly volunteering last summer as he was moving away to university. However, after an emotional final session where he handed over lifeguard duties to fellow student Rory, he has kept in regular touch with Paul through email and postcards. So in December, Ross arranged to travel up from Monmouth during his break for this lunch get-together. He picked up current lifeguard Rory and they both enjoyed a good catch up with Paul.

Sam explained: "Paul was over the moon and had a fab couple of hours with them. It's really a lovely bond between them."

New lifeguard Rory said: "I look forward to swimming with Paul from week to week because the enthusiasm and enjoyment he brings each Wednesday totally rubs off on everyone."

Brandon helps launch LGBT group

Brandon Trust has helped set up a new monthly LGBT social group in Bristol for people with learning disabilities.

The charity is working with the Diversity Trust, Public Health Bristol, and Somerset and Avon Rape and Sexual Abuse Support (SARSAS) to run the group, which first met in December in the city centre.

Jill Corbyn, Head of Involvement at Brandon Trust, said: "We decided to work together to provide a supported opportunity for people to connect and socialise."

The venue for meetings is St Stephens Café, a Brandon Trust social enterprise where people with learning disabilities gain experience in employment. For information contact Tracy on 07876 814 592.

'I want someone to love me for who I am'

Research has shown that only 3% of people with a learning disability live as a couple, compared to 70% of the general adult population*.

In this honest and open blog, our Involvement Assistant, Beth, tells of her search for love and the challenges she faces.

"The trouble is, I don't have a boyfriend and I've never had one. The men I do like are either gay, married or live far away.

I think having a learning disability makes it harder to meet people because people are scared of whether they will understand the disability. It can be difficult to know where to go to meet people. Some people with a learning disability are very isolated and find it hard to meet friends and to be part of their community.

Many of the people Brandon supports feed back that the charity needs to do more to support people to have relationships and help them find opportunities to meet people.

It's hard to find someone who will understand my learning disability. Other people have encouraged me to go on a blind date or use online dating, but I want to meet them myself, not get set up.

My friends have had boyfriends. I sometimes get jealous when they talk about men. I think 'shut up, let's talk about something else.'

When I see people holding hands in the street, or at weddings, I feel sad and think 'I wish I had a fella'.

I live on my own and it would be nice to have someone there for me when I come home from work, to cuddle or talk about my day with.

Lots of people meet their partners at work, but only 6% of people with a learning disability have a job.

It can be difficult to know what people want, and if their intentions are good and they don't want to take advantage of me.

My thoughts about going on a date is half and half. On the one hand it sounds scary, but it does also sound exciting.

I don't want someone who is after sex. School was the first time I heard about sex, it sounded horrible. It could be, maybe, exciting and fun if you're with the right person.



'I want someone to love me for who I am'

My ideal boyfriend would be caring, sensitive and understanding – and I would like them to be a romantic. Someone who enjoys my company, has some of the same interests as me and the same sense of humour - and is a good cook.

I don't want someone who smokes or drinks or doesn't understand me and my disability. I want someone to love me for who I am."

Beth's blog highlights some of the challenges people we support have told us they face when developing relationships. They've also told us that we need to get better at supporting them to overcome these challenges.

People we support have worked with us and played a vital role in shaping new guidance and training that will help our staff give great support in this area. It's an essential step forward in enabling those we support to live free and reach for their dreams.

We'll be talking more about this and sharing the thoughts of the people we support very soon.

*Emerson, E., Malam, S., Davies, I. and Spencer, K. (2005) Adults with Learning Disabilities in England 2003/4



Family Charter and Agreement consultation

At Brandon Trust, we are passionate about also working well with the families of the people we support.

To ensure everyone knows what best practice looks like, the charity has been working on a new Brandon Trust Family Charter with the help of people we support, families and staff.

We have interviewed, attended team meetings and consulted our recent organisational survey to create a charter that reflects as many people's thoughts and perspectives as possible. The Charter sets out what best practice looks like to Brandon when we are working with families and outlines some guiding principles for staff and families around communication and how we make decisions.

To accompany the charter we have created a Family Agreement. This document is an opportunity for you, your relative, and key workers to agree on lots of things specific to you and your relative's needs. It also gives you the chance to create a family one page profile so that support staff know what matters to you as a family.

The Family Charter and Family Agreement are now in draft form and we would love to hear your feedback and thoughts at this stage. If you would like to be involved, please contact Ruthie Whincop at ruthie.whincop@brandontrust.org or 0117 907 7200 and she will send you the documents.

The final Family Charter and Agreement will be launched later in the year. We look forward to hearing your ideas and suggestions.

To feedback on this issue of Family and Friends, contact communications@brandontrust.org or 0117 952 8210

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