



InTouch

Autumn 2020

The magazine for families and supporters of United Response

Keeping people connected

How donating for devices helped people we support stay in touch this summer



ALSO INSIDE

Life in lockdown:
Positive stories

Stay Inside: Be Inspired:
Keeping people engaged

Think Covid-19 has got the best of 2020? Think again!

The ROC 5K is going virtual.

Get ready to
ROC This Year!

Sep 19th - Oct 18th



Swim it
Run it
Walk it
Skip it
Surf it

Get involved in
three, easy steps:

- 1 Choose an exercise
- 2 Set your goal
- 3 Get sponsored!

And if getting sweaty isn't your thing, help us
raise money from the comfort of your armchair by
donating online.


**United
Response**
support that changes with you

Contact suzanne.featherstone@unitedresponse.org.uk or 07552 246 418 for info.

4 NEWS

All the latest goings on from around United Response, including this wonderful stop-motion animation created by people in our Devon services.



8 FUNDRAISING

Covid-19 has made it harder than ever for the people we support to stay in touch with friends and loved ones. Could you join our Donate for Devices campaign and help keep people together virtually?

10 PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT

This issue, we share some of the tips and techniques we're encouraging staff to use to keep the people they support engaged, busy and safe during the pandemic. Check out our Stay Inside: Be Inspired booklet.

12 FEATURE

Our Life in Lockdown feature shares some of the fun and innovative ways our staff have worked with the people they support to maintain some normality during these very abnormal times.

14 FEATURE

We all wish we could escape to a tropical beach right now. In this special feature, we ask some people we support what they're missing during the pandemic, and reminisce about past holidays.



Editorial

We are living through truly extraordinary times. My thoughts are with everyone affected by the Coronavirus pandemic.

Many of us have lost so much, but there is also so much to celebrate. Our staff and the people they support have adapted to the changed times with determination, flexibility and a good dose of humour. I couldn't be prouder, I am also optimistic for the future.

Keeping people safe remains our number one priority, but much energy has also gone into making sure that life stays fulfilling and fun for the people we support, as this issue of *In Touch* shows. Our Life in Lockdown feature shares a collection of just some of the positive ways staff have helped people to stay happy at home. This includes the creation of a garden pub in Suffolk and the conversion of a junk room into a record shop in Nottingham.

Thank you so much if you contributed to our Keeping People Connected campaign, which has helped to keep life normal for people like Kevin. As you will see, the money raised has provided people we support with connective technologies that have helped to keep the very real risk of isolation at bay.

There are many more heartening stories of connectedness in this issue. Across the country, people we support continue to share the fruits of their creativity. In Blackpool, people we support have been donating fruit and veg from their allotment to the local community. In Devon, the story of how Zack overcame loneliness has been brought to life in a moving animation.

Our Practice Development Team has been hard at work on Stay Inside: Be Inspired: a set of free resources including live webinars for professionals and family members. The resources offer guidance on how to provide the best possible support in spite of the very challenging conditions we face.

“

Much energy has gone into making sure that life stays fulfilling and fun for the people we support.

”

Alongside the pandemic, the Black Lives Matter movement has been a landmark moment in history. We responded with a special edition of our easy read magazine Easy News. Making this story accessible to people with learning disabilities is vital, and I have committed to addressing equality and diversity within United Response with renewed vigour this year.

I hope that reading about the various ways United Response has adapted and evolved over the past few months makes you smile.

Tim Cooper
Chief Executive

Award-winning Blackpool allotment fruit and veg boxes to help during



Like most community spaces, our Potter's Den allotment in Blackpool has been unable to run as usual during the Covid-19 pandemic. But team leader Jenny Whitaker wasn't willing to sit back and watch the green-fingered efforts of the people she supports go to waste.

Instead, she decided to start boxing up variety packs of fruit and veg and distribute them to those most in need in the community.

This brilliant idea has helped the people with learning disabilities and autism who worked so hard on the allotment in the Spring to play a valuable role in the local community – boosting their self-esteem and giving them an opportunity to get out and about and meet new people.

Tracey Fletcher, United Response's Development Co-ordinator in the North West, supported the Potter's Den team and other volunteers from our nearby supported living service to get the plan up and running, with the help of £500 from the Tesco Bags of Help Covid-19 Communities Fund.

Your feedback matters

United Response encourages feedback on everything we do, and we are always trying to improve the way we do things. If you have a comment, concern or complaint, you can tell us in the following ways:

- a one-to-one meeting/phone call with a staff member of your choice
- to the Chief Executive of United Response
- to your local Social Services, Health Authority, Local Government Ombudsman
- to the Care Quality Commission
- to the Supporting People Administrative Authority

And remember, you can always call our Head Office on 020 8246 5200 or our Chief Executive Hotline on 020 8254 3135.

Easy News – Black Lives Matter special

A special issue of Easy News is available online now, giving people with learning disabilities some valuable insight into the Black Lives Matter movement.

If you know someone who is interested in what's going on in the world around them but struggles to make sense of jargon and tiny print, sign up to receive regular digital issues of our award-winning news magazine:

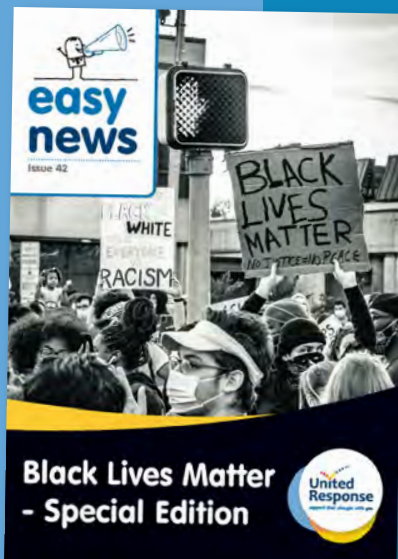
www.unitedresponse.org.uk/resource/easy-news

nt creates Covid-19

"We're really happy and feel really positive about this project," she smiles, "Not only does it prevent unnecessary waste of good, fresh produce but it strengthens our ties in the community – all whilst helping out those less fortunate and promoting healthy eating!"

So far, the 5-a-day boxes have helped The Bridge Project, which is a day service for homeless people run by the Salvation Army, the Amazing Grace Soup Kitchen, as well as other people supported by United Response and their neighbours.

Fantastic work, Potter's Den!



In this feature, we get to know a bit more about someone we support. This issue, we're finding out about 54-year-old David Boyes, who has been supported by United Response since 1997.

My favourite place to go: The countryside. I enjoy thinking and reflecting whilst enjoying the beautiful views and animals.

Things I most hate: I don't like people patting me on the head as I find it patronising.

Fave celebrity: Davina McCall because she is genuine, kind and supportive.



Most annoying celebrity: Donald Trump. I think he is very big headed and I get irritated whenever I see him on TV.

Person or thing that makes me happy: Going for long walks/drives in the countryside.

What makes me sad: Animal cruelty. Racism. Child poverty. Inequality.

People with learning disabilities are able to make our own life choices and do what we want. We have feelings and emotions like everyone else.

What I'd like to change about the world: I'd like everyone to have full, equal rights.

What matters to me the most: Having an active and full life.

Best TV show: Live football (my fave team is Liverpool) and *Long Lost Family*.

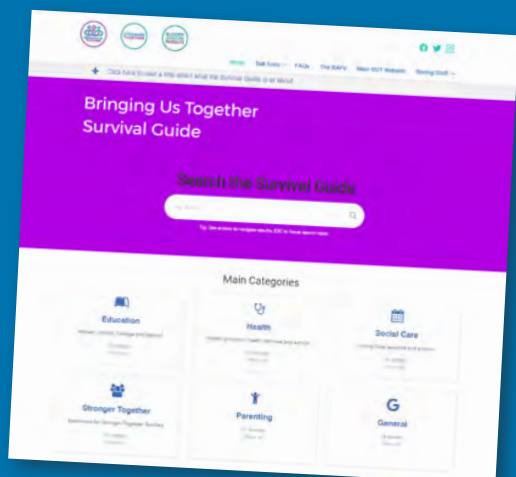
What makes good support: Staff who listen to me and understand me and my needs. To be heard, respected and acknowledged.

Things I am most proud about: Having my independence and my own home.

Things I want to get better at: Developing my creative output.

Things I'd like people to know about people with learning disabilities: We are able to make our own life choices and do what we want. We have feelings and emotions like everyone else.

My perfect support worker is: Someone who understands the social model of disability rather than the medical one. Someone who sees the person, not the disability!



New online space for families

The parent led group Bringing Us Together have launched a website for families called Our Survival Guide. It brings together lots of information for families in a way that is easy to search and understand.

Debs Aspland, Co-founder of Bringing Us Together, says: "We know there is a lot of information out there but very often, as parents, we come across it too late. The site covers education, health, social care, parenting (tips on getting organised, running groups), support networks and a general section. In addition, we have added a section dedicated to petitions, campaigns and consultations.

"People can send us links or documents or if they have knowledge, they can also submit an article to us."

Find out more at: <https://survival.bringingustogether.org.uk>

Devon services create animation to highlight loneliness concerns

Staff and people we support in Devon have shown what an amazingly creative bunch they are this summer, by making their very own stop-motion animation, called Zack's Story.



The animation was meticulously put together over several months and is based on the real-life accounts of loneliness shared by people supported by United Response.

It was released as part of the Marmalade's Trust's 2020 Loneliness Awareness Week to throw a light on how much harder it is for people with disabilities to create friendships and feel part of their community.

Recent data released by the National Office of Statistics shows that loneliness has become a growing problem for people with disabilities during lockdown, with almost half expressing feelings of loneliness compared to just 30% of the non-disabled population.

Therese Timberlake, Senior Area Manager for United Response

in Devon, had this to say about the project:

"We're very proud to have worked with people we support to create this animation on such an important issue - loneliness can affect everybody at any time, and the current pandemic is having a profound impact on the way we live and interact with each other.

"We hope that Zack's Story will encourage people, especially those with learning disabilities, to talk about their own experiences of loneliness - there is help out there and we're urging people to add their voice and join the conversation."

View Zack's Story here.

Find out how it was made in this insightful behind-the-scenes video here.



The Enterprise in Teddington has always been a bustling hive of activity for people with learning disabilities and autism, offering everything from crafts, gaming nights and yoga. But like so many community hubs, they've had to think on their feet to find new ways to exist in a new, socially-distanced world.

Virtual art show proves a hit in Teddington

This summer, in a bid to help their regular users feel positive and stay in touch, they moved one of their most popular activities – their art classes – online.

Using Zoom, the budding artists continued to create masterpieces from their kitchens and living rooms, resulting in an array of work vast enough to warrant the creation of a dedicated online exhibition. Jesse Crowther, Enterprise Co-ordinator, tells us more:

"I wanted to organise something to celebrate and share the amazing work the group has done during lockdown," she explains,

“People were nervous but so proud to have their work on show!”

"We started with a private online exhibition evening for friends and families, where each artist got to talk about their work. They were nervous

but so proud to have their work on show! We had great feedback from families, and one person even told us how the art sessions had helped their family member get over the loss of their grandfather in April."

After the private showing, the team were stunned to receive an anonymous donation of £200, which they have used to kick-start a funding scheme to give every budding artist in their group their own art supply pack.

If you'd like to donate towards the scheme, [click here](#).

To take a look at the complete art exhibition, [click here](#).

Keeping people c

Covid-19 and lockdown have made it harder than ever for people to keep in touch with their loved ones. Our supporters helped to change this by donating to our Keeping People Connected campaign. Find out how your donations have helped.

Two of our services in West Sussex used the money raised to purchase laptops and printers for use by the twelve people living across their sites.

Before the Covid-19 restrictions came in, the residents were all very active in their local communities, attending paid work placements, and regularly visiting dance classes, leisure centres, cafes and pubs.

The equipment supplied by Keeping People Connected has ensured that the people living at these services are able to speak with family and friends regularly, as well as joining in online activities organised by ourselves and other organisations.

For instance, they have joined in regular online dance and exercise classes, taken part in art classes with the Aldingbourne Trust and have even been on virtual tours of zoos and museums!

Here's what the people at the two services have to say about their new equipment:

"I enjoy being able to listen to all types of music on the laptop with my wife Sheila – we dance around our living room listening to it. I am also really proud that I am able to work the laptop without staff support. I also print my art supplies off of the computer through our printer – I enjoy this because I can draw/paint what I like."

Bill

Everyday giving

Your everyday activities can help raise funds to support our work!

For instance, Amazon Smile allows you to support people with disabilities every time you shop with Amazon, and Everyclick helps turn your internet searches into donations.

smile.amazon.co.uk

For more information either call our fundraising manager, Darren on 07585 882 300 or visit www.unitedresponse.org.uk/easy-ways-to-give

Remember a Charity Week

This September, United Response and other charities were joined by the Wombles to help celebrate Remember a Charity Week (7-13 September 2020). The week aimed to shine a light on supporting charity through gifts in wills.

onnected

"I enjoy watching films with my friends and keeping in contact with them over Zoom on a Wednesday – I helped people work out how to use the laptop once I could!"

Julian

Just before lockdown we helped Kevin move from a residential service in Yorkshire into his own home in Newcastle. We continue to support Kevin in his home, helping him live his life as he chooses.

Kevin (who is registered blind and has a mild learning disability and autism) joined a local drama group when he moved. However, lockdown came in before Kevin was able to start attending the group, which limited his opportunities to make new friends. The drama group started having online meetings – unfortunately, Kevin couldn't join the meetings as he didn't have any way of connecting to the internet.

Donations to Keeping People Connected from our supporters enabled Kevin to get a tablet. He's now able to meet local people through the online drama group meetings. Kevin is also able to keep in touch with his old friends from Yorkshire via Zoom meetings, keeping them up to date on how the move went and what his new home is like.



Julian, with housemate Emma, with his prized laptop.

Kevin also uses his tablet to watch YouTube, listen to music and shop online – all in the privacy of his own room.

"It has come in handy, I can watch the old shows that are not on TV anymore, like old episodes of Eastenders. I can also look at things on the internet and buy things."

Kevin

Thank you to everyone that donated to our Keeping People Connected campaign – your generosity is ensuring that people like Kevin are able to stay in touch with friends and family.

Great Uncle Bulgaria of the Wombles said: "The Wombles were delighted to be supporting Remember a Charity Week. Now, more than ever, we need to help each other and the hundreds of charities that do such wonderful work in our communities and burrows. If you can 'remember you're a Womble', we hope you can remember a charity in 2020."

Remembering United Response in your will can be life-changing for the people we support. A gift in your will could ensure that someone who wants to work can learn the skills to help them into employment, or help young adults make choices to go to university or college.

For people we support with more complex needs, a gift in your will could help fund a piece of

equipment which can greatly enhance their lives.

If you'd like more information on how you could leave a gift to United Response in your will, visit www.unitedresponse.org.uk/leave-a-gift-in-your-will or call Darren, our fundraising manager on 07585 882 300.

Stay Inside: Be Inspired

Like everyone else we've been coping with the Coronavirus pandemic over the last six months.

The Practice Development Team has been supporting colleagues to explain the situation to people we support and find creative solutions to the difficulties the restrictions have caused, as well as providing help with difficulties like communicating effectively when wearing PPE. But one issue United Response services have been well prepared for is replacing activities and routines that are no longer available because they involve leaving home. Our long-standing emphasis on Active Support means that staff have been able to make good use of the unexpected amount of time people they support have spent at home.

We've given examples of Active Support in the Best Practice columns of recent editions of In Touch – and we focus on how we support increased choice and control for people we support in this edition – and we were to host an international conference (cancelled of course) celebrating 20 years of implementing and publicising the approach in July of this year. But we're aware that Active Support is not understood, nor even known about, by everyone who could make use of it, so we decided to take the opportunity to talk more about it now, while people may be looking for ways to cope with unexpected anxiety, isolation and uncertainty.

Two of the strategies suggested for surviving lockdown are staying active and trying new things, and creating structure and routine. Active Support is a way of providing support which enables people with learning disabilities and/or autism to be engaged in a wide range of meaningful activities and interactions, and empowers people to grow in skills and independence. It is a way of working built

on the knowledge that with enough of the right type of help, everyone (no matter how disabled) can take part in all the activities and interactions going on around them and can have more control over their lives. And it helps build structure and routines through the use of visual timetables, organisation and management of the environment, and other non-verbal communication aids that make the world more understandable.

Being engaged is the key for people. Simply put, being engaged means actively taking part – taking part in constructive activity with materials, in social interactions, and in group activities. While you are reading this magazine you are engaged in a constructive activity with materials. If you turn to your partner and say, "Look - this is interesting", that would be engagement in a social interaction. If you then have a meeting to discuss how you can help a member of your family be more engaged that would be a group activity.

Experience has taught us that without Active Support, most people with learning disabilities and/or autism will spend long periods of their time disengaged and disconnected from the world around them, but with Active Support people can take part in a wide range of activities. This enables and empowers them to grow in skills and independence, to become included as valued members of their community and to be able to exercise choice and control in all aspects of their lives.

Although important all of the time, engagement is particularly important in the current circumstances as it:

- gives a sense of achievement, control and purpose
- provides distraction and relief from anxious thoughts and feelings

- provides opportunities for positive interactions and communication
- enables people to make a contribution to the running of the home and help others
- focuses on the present and what we can do, which can help difficult emotions and worries about the future
- ensures people are not left alone or unoccupied (except perhaps by TV) for extended periods of time, as this can lead to increases in behaviour which challenges

Of course taking part looks different for different people - for some it's doing the whole thing, for others it's doing a bit then having a rest - for some people it's hours or minutes at a time, for others it might only be for a few seconds. Sometimes people will be the only one involved in an activity at that moment; at other times, several people will be engaged together in an activity, task or interaction.

We know that with the right kind of support, everyone can be actively involved in some way. No one is too 'disabled', too 'challenging', or too 'autistic', to be more engaged and to have more control over their lives, but to get this right for people with severe or complex needs we need to provide frequent and skilled support.

There are four key principles of Active Support that can be applied to any activity or interaction to help us work out what we should do in order to help people to be more engaged:

Every moment has potential – seeing everything that happens at home (and normally in the community), however mundane, as an opportunity

Little and Often – supporting participation in the small parts of each opportunity with slow, quiet, frequent and obvious support

Graded Assistance – providing just enough of the right type of help to enable the person to take part successfully in that activity at that time

Maximising Choice and Control – seeking opportunities for people to make more choices and take more control in when and how they will be engaged

These four principles are underpinned by Organising and Improving Support, which focuses on the use of tools and ways of working to develop consistency and predictability for the people being supported, and to encourage ongoing learning and continual improvement of the support provided.

Learn more:

We have produced a range of free "Stay Inside: Be Inspired" resources - a guide and poster, a webinar series, and a Facebook group - through which we aim to help more families, carers and support staff understand and use Active Support so that things become more manageable and enjoyable during these challenging times...and beyond.

You can find more details on our Stay Inside: Be Inspired webpage at www.unitedresponse.org.uk/resource/stay-inside-be-inspired



Practice Development

John Ockenden, from our Practice Development Team, explains another approach used by staff when supporting people.

Maximising Choice and Control

Choice is an important part of life – it's a human right. But it always has to be balanced with the responsibilities we have in domestic life and to others we live with or near. And it's often unwise to assume that a person with a learning disability understands what they are saying 'Yes' or 'No' to. So maximising choice actually involves providing people with experiences and options they can understand.

And there are things over which few of us have much choice – like cleaning. But we can help people maximise control over the cleaning: when, how quickly, in what order. That's what we all need to feel things are OK: a sense that we have some control over what's happening.

“Gerald is a trusting person so he will often say 'Yes' to things he doesn't really understand. His staff have done really well at helping him. They show him what he can choose between, and perhaps just make it two things so he's not overwhelmed. When he said 'No' to coffee one day – they rang me up to tell me!”

Marjorie Gold, sister to Gerald, who we support in the north of England.

Life in Lockdown

When the world as we all knew it came to a sudden halt six months ago, life changed overnight.

People of all ages and walks of life struggled as they saw their plans demolished, their careers clouded in uncertainty and their contact with friends and loved ones reduced or stopped altogether. There's no doubt that for many of the people we support – especially those who have been shielding, those who rely strongly on routines or those who lack social connections – such sweeping changes to daily life have been exceptionally tough.

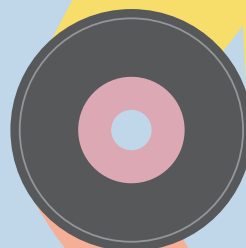
So we wanted to shine a light on some of the creative ways our staff have rallied together to replace fear with fun, stress with silliness and problems with inventive solutions. These snippets of lockdown life embody United Response's commitment to help people with disabilities stay in control of their lives – no matter how big or small the obstacles standing in their way.

From junk room to imitation record shop

Will, who has autism, lives in Nottingham and has a passion for collecting records. Before lockdown, he was a regular at his local record shop. His support worker, Martin Barker, arranged for his records to be delivered to his home instead, but could see that Will still missed the routine of going to the store. Keen to find a solution, he decided to turn an old junk room at the house into a dedicated record 'store', just for Will!

"Having this new space has given Will a place to go when his anxiety about not being able to go to the places he enjoys starts to rise," says service manager, Elizabeth Farrell, "He can carry on with his routines and do what he loves – listening to his favourite music."

Will is now regularly to be found chilling out in 'Will's Records', keeping his collection in order while listening to The Drifters.





“It’s offered a real sense of freedom at a time when so many restrictions were being put in place.”

A new twist on ‘popping to the local’

When four people we support in Suffolk started complaining about missing their local pub, their support team had a brainwave – if they couldn’t go to their local, why not bring their local home to them?

Inspired by the thought of a refreshing pint in the comfort of their own back garden, staff and the people they support rolled up their sleeves, dug out some paint brushes and got to work transforming the dilapidated summer house that had been languishing unused on the lawn into their very own drinking den! Stocked with a bar, mini fridge and snacks, the newly created pub has been christened ‘The Meadows’.

And to make it a place of revelry but also reminiscing, the guys placed a Norwich City scarf in the front, in memory of their former housemate who sadly passed away four years ago.

“Transforming the pub has been brilliant for the lads and the staff,” says service manager Philip Firman, “It has been a great distraction and offered a real sense of freedom at a time when so many restrictions were being put in place.”

Virtual discos to help people dance away the Covid-19 blues

Music has always been a brilliant way of bringing people together. When this year’s gig and festival line-up got cancelled by coronavirus, DJ Philip Coen came up with a new way to keep the tunes playing and the party mood switched on - by hosting weekly Zoom DJ sets!

Whitton-based Phil’s wild Wednesday sessions have proved a hit, bringing everything from rock and country to trance, house and reggae into the living rooms of music lovers across United Response. As well as giving people a welcome release from the boredom of being stuck indoors during lockdown, playing his music has also had a hugely therapeutic affect on Phil’s own mental health.

“When I’m listening to music or deejaying: pressing all the buttons, mixing and spinning tracks, knowing what I’m doing...it makes me feel so good, happy and calm.” he says. “I can get really stressed out over the tiniest things and my anxiety can rise. But with music, it doesn’t.”

Keep the happy vibes going, DJ Phil!





We're **not** going on a summer holiday.

Day-dreaming of an upcoming holiday can motivate us when we're tired, fed up or stressed out. This year, millions of us saw any hopes of a break dashed as Covid-19 battered the travel and hospitality industries. And although a holiday is a small thing to sacrifice to keep people safe, the disappointment of having one cancelled can give our mental wellbeing a bit of a kick.



This summer, we decided to do something light and fun for all the people we support to get involved in whilst stuck at home, without their usual routines, people and places to keep them busy. We launched a photo competition called Wish You Were Here?, inviting our services to mock up holiday scenes with people they support. They could use arts and crafts, dress up, cook international cuisine or simply get inventive with household props – the most important thing was they worked together to come up with the idea and had some fun on the way.

Here, we talk to a few of the people who took part and found a bit more about how the pandemic affected their plans for the summer, where they wish they could be right now and what plans they're making for when Covid-19 is far behind us...

"The hardest thing about the pandemic has been not seeing my brother and getting hugs from him."

Tracey, Edward and Stephen live together at a supported living service in Harrogate. They've been housemates for 24 years so when planning their



entry for the Wish You Were Here? competition, they had plenty of memories to inspire them. In the end, they opted to recreate their 2019 holiday to Las Vegas, complete with cold coffee masquerading as cocktails and a duvet cover backdrop.

Tell us about your holiday to Las Vegas

Edward: It was my best holiday ever, we did a lot of walking and saw the dancing fountains. It was amazing. We stayed at a hotel that looked like a pyramid.

Stephen: We flew down the strip in a helicopter. It was scary.

Edward: I loved the helicopter ride. We went to the Tournament of Kings and watched a show with sword fighting and horses while eating big chicken legs with our hands. We went to a night club and danced till 3.30am.

Stephen: We went to M&M World and bought lots of chocolate. We watched a dolphin show and then went in the casino and played on the machines. We won a bit of money. We went to the car museum and sat in some big, posh cars and went for a drive in a limousine. We got dressed up in suits.

Edward: I won five times on a machine in the casino. We walked along the strip at night and took lots of photos. We had breakfast at the Hard Rock café on the last day.

What were you most looking forward to doing this summer before Covid-19 hit?

Tracey: I'd have gone to a spa and sat in a Jacuzzi for a long soak. I miss having fish and chips at the sea in Scarborough. I like making sandcastles on the beach and

going in the arcades. I also wanted to see The Lion King in Manchester.

Edward: Stephen is my best friend and we sometimes go on holiday together. I like to go places I have never been before and do new things. Last year I swam with sea lions and got to hold an owl. This year I was hoping to go to Montenegro with Stephen - it looked lovely in the brochures, and had outdoor sports stuff to do.

Stephen: We were going to London to see Joseph and the Amazing Technicoloured Dreamcoat on stage but this was cancelled. I was also going to go away for a couple of walking weekends but they have both been cancelled as well. I love walking. I was going to go away with Edward for a beach holiday. I like a nightclub so I can dance. I like to go in the sea and swim, but my favourite thing is going on boat trips.

What have you found hardest about not going out during the pandemic?

Tracey: Not seeing my big brother and getting hugs from him. I miss going to the pub for cocktails,

especially Bucks fizz. I love shopping and miss going out to buy clothes. I also love swimming and it's hard not to go.

Edward: Not being able to go out for a big breakfast or go to the pub to watch the best team in the world - Liverpool - play. I miss being busy. I miss going to work because I miss my friends there.

Stephen: I miss going to work too, going to Hands and Voices and doing concerts and shows. I miss my friends.

What have you learned from being home during the pandemic?

Tracey: I have learnt that I can make really nice meatballs and I have learnt how to video call people.

Edward: I like to be busy. And I like to go out. And I miss it when I can't go. I have been playing table tennis and I'm getting a lot better.

Stephen: I got a bit bored, I like going out to work and seeing my friends. I've started colouring and I find it nice. I've learnt to play basketball and I'm getting good.



"Zoom calls are fun –
I get to see my friends."

Maddie, Chris and Jess live together in a supported living service in Teddington. For their entry for the Wish You Were Here? competition, they created a tropical holiday scene, to remind them of a Hawaii-themed party they had last year. Together with service manager, Heather Redhead, they tell us how Covid-19 restrictions have affected their summer.

What things were you looking forward to that you didn't get to do this year?

Heather: We were just starting to plan holidays and Jess was gutted to miss a trip to see family in Scotland.

Jess: I really miss my extended family and friends.

Why did you choose a Hawaii-themed scene for your postcard entry?

Heather: We wanted a reason to dance and enjoy the summer - we even did the limbo! Everyone dressed in leis and hula skirts. We invited friends to join us over Zoom and dropped them off little party packs so they could all join in. We had inflatables, food, drinks and balloons - everything you could want from a party!

Chris: I enjoyed the music.

Maddie: And I liked the food and drink.

Have you learnt anything from being home more than usual during the pandemic?

Heather: Cooking has been massive and we have learnt to cook scotch eggs and quiche. Everyone's really enjoyed learning to make new things. It's also helped everyone understand how to share with others and give each other time and space.

Jess: Zoom calls have been fun – I get to see my friends: Michael, Jack, Sam and Kayleigh.

What would you like to do when Covid-19 is far behind us?

Jess: I want to go to Butlin's next, as I really enjoyed it last time. And take a trip to Scotland to see family.

Heather: We haven't made any plans yet for next year as we're waiting to see how the pandemic goes. But I know Chris and Maddie would like to go somewhere near the sea or somewhere they can look at animals.





See all our resources aiming to help more families, carers and support staff understand and use Active Support so that things become more manageable and enjoyable during these challenging times...and beyond.

Includes booklets, videos, webinars, Facebook group and free direct help.

Here's a quick link to the page - bit.ly/SIBI2020

Share these free resources with families you know who are supporting their son or daughter at home during the Covid-19 pandemic.