



ABOVE

BEYOND

Charlotte

Nominated by Grace Eyre

Committed to supporting people with learning disabilities, autism and/or mental health issues.

Above & Beyond is our community engagement campaign, where you the public, had the chance to nominate someone who goes out of their way to make a positive impact to the lives of local people. Take a read of one of our winners below...

Every single person deserves friendship, fun and connection, no matter what challenges they face. And during a pandemic, these things are even more important.

Grace Eyre — a Sussex charity that supports over 500 people with learning disabilities and autism — believes this passionately. That is why the Grace Eyre Friendship Project helps to create a social life and community for people at risk of being isolated. The project is all about joining in, trying new hobbies and making new friends in a supported environment.

When the Covid lockdown began in March, Project Leader Charlotte Keynes was determined that no one should feel left alone. As a result, she switched all social activities to Zoom, teaching herself how to be a tech whizz in a very short space of time. After talking with participants about what they wanted, Charlotte launched regular Zoom sessions in baking, gaming, music, art and general chat. In total, she and her amazing team ran 52 lockdown Zoom meetings, recruiting new members to the Friendship Project in the process. And post-lockdown, they have organised several social meetups too.

Charlotte's determination and innovation was crucial in helping people with special needs stay connected to others during a very challenging time. Every single day, she was willing to go the extra mile in making people feel seen, heard and included.

Many individuals with learning disabilities really struggled during lockdown, finding the isolation and the change to their routines difficult to manage. Yet thanks to big-hearted people like Charlotte the crucial work of the Friendship Project carried on, bringing joy to people's lives. Both Grace Eyre and the city of Brighton are very lucky to have her.