

each year and run them till June in the following year, but the groups will be flexible and make allowance for exams and other commitments. You would be able to stay on for a second year if you wanted, but there will be no expectation of this.

- ◆ All your travel and activity expenses would be paid, and you would be covered by personal accident insurance.

**For more information:** please contact your local Branch Co-ordinator (see below) or visit our website at [www.interestlink.org.uk](http://www.interestlink.org.uk)

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The Queen's Award  
for Voluntary  
Service 2006



## Young People's Service Information about Volunteer Mentoring.

Interest Link aims to improve the quality of life of people with learning disabilities living in the Scottish Borders. We have run a one-to-one befriending service for adults since 1990 and in July 2008 we launched a new service aimed at young people aged 16-25.

The new service is needed because although most young people with learning disabilities live in the community and attend school or college, they are still socially isolated as they have no social contacts at home, no experience of making friends and often no access to transport.

#### **How the service works:**

- ◆ We form small groups of 6 service users and 6 young volunteer mentors, all aged 16-25.
- ◆ The groups meet up once a fortnight, usually on a weekday evening and are supervised by an Interest Link staff member.
- ◆ The groups will usually get out and about locally and do fun social activities.
- ◆ Occasionally the groups from all over the Borders will get together for workshops and discussions in which the volunteer mentors will act as role models for the service users, discussing their experiences of life as they become adults, the skills they have needed to develop and the choices they have made. The aim of this is to broaden the horizons of the young people with learning disabilities and look at the choices open to them.

#### **Number and location of groups:**

- ◆ We operate groups in each of our four branch areas (Berwickshire, Central Borders, Roxburgh and Tweeddale)
- ◆ We base groups as near as possible to where group members live so that they can do local activities and hopefully build up longterm local relationships.

#### **Volunteers:**

- ◆ Being a volunteer mentor is fun and personally rewarding.
- ◆ It is a responsible role: You would be acting as mentor and role model to other young people, helping them to broaden their horizons and explore the choices open to them, boosting their confidence and self-esteem.
- ◆ It also has concrete benefits which would help you when applying for University, College or Employment:
  - \* You automatically earn an MV Award when you, complete 50 hours volunteering.
  - \* You could complete a Youth Achievement Award, which carries UCAS points.
  - \* If you are doing a Duke of Edinburgh Award, volunteering could go towards your service section.
- ◆ We would prepare you for the role and carry out police checks.
- ◆ We would look for a commitment of 1 academic year: we hope to start groups in mid September of