

Growing Interests

Life Skills Group

“The skills you practice today
become the foundation of the life
you build tomorrow”.



Parents Open Morning

2024 ended with a successful Open Morning for all our parents, family members, carers and paid staff.

The open morning is an opportunity to showcase skills that our members have learnt over the year. We are all very proud of everyone's progress so far.

Life skills are essential to life. Sessions are specifically planned to support our members to grow in confidence. Practical sessions are delivered by Tutor Liz with support from Katie our sessional worker and volunteer Ophrah and are designed to equip our members with skills for life.

Sessions enhance numeracy, literacy, written and spoken communication and active listening.

Sessions also help support our members to problem solve, think creatively, manage time, enhance resilience, and encourage effective teamwork. Our members have learnt to be patient with each other as each member learns at a different pace.

Any Open Morning involve cakes, and this was the perfect opportunity to decorate our visitors' cakes with sugar edible pound notes.

Life Skills Certificates were presented to our members to recognise their hard work. Sharing success is what the group enjoys most.

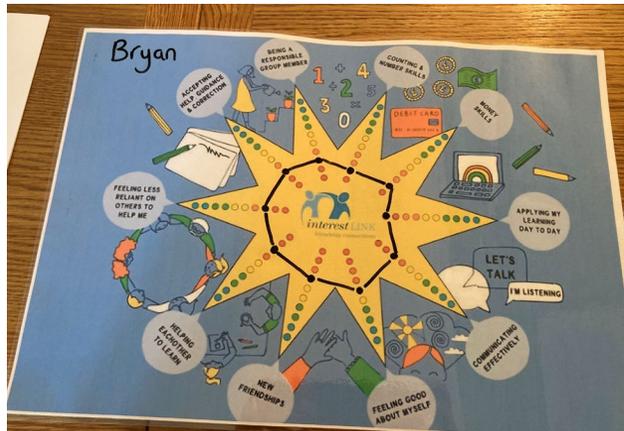




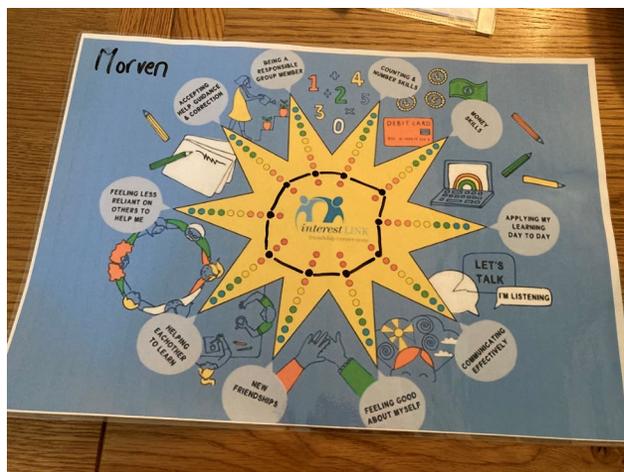
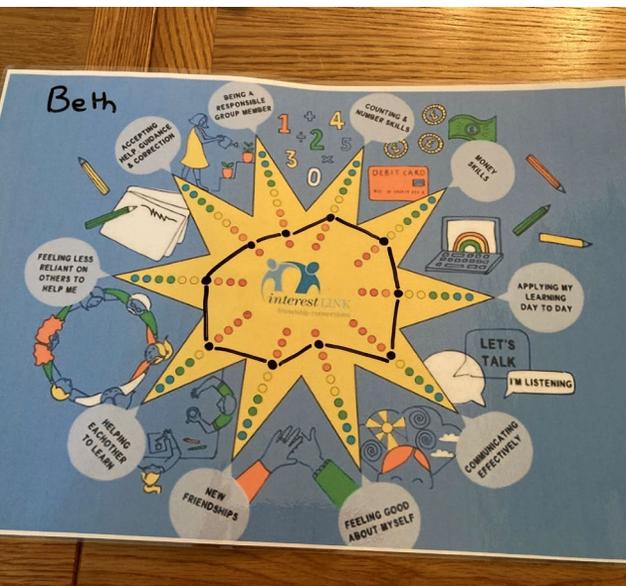
Life Skills Star

An assessment tool that Liz refers to is the “Life Star”. It has been created specifically with our members in mind and allows Liz to gauge success. Liz involves volunteers in this assessment process as it is crucial for long term planning when delivering practical sessions. It allows for sessions to be more intensive and repetitive if required.

By regularly monitoring individual stars this allows Liz to assess progress and work on weaker skills. The star covers all aspects of independent living and the outcomes we hope will help enable our members to be more self sufficient, less reliant on others and enhance confidence and purpose.



It is very important that we consider other aspects of our members lives when discussing outcomes. The balance for Liz is to ensure that the sessions continue to be enjoyable and engaging whilst allowing members to have optimum learning opportunities. We do not deliver on an accredited course but concentrate on supporting members to reach potential in a social setting where friendships can thrive and confidence soars.



Members are fully aware of what a life skill is and how these apply to their daily lives. Liz always reiterates how important these skills are and how they can be utilized at home, and whilst attending social establishments in their local community.

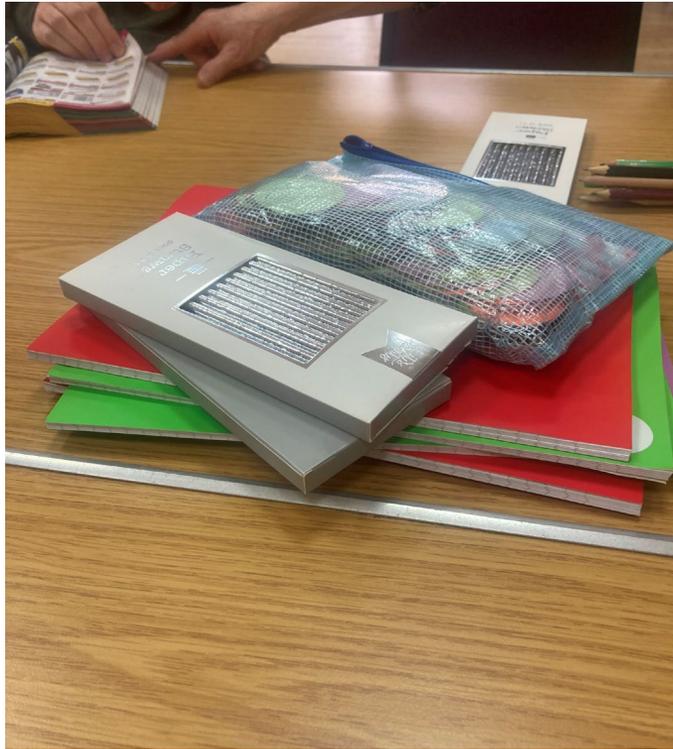
Having the Right Equipment

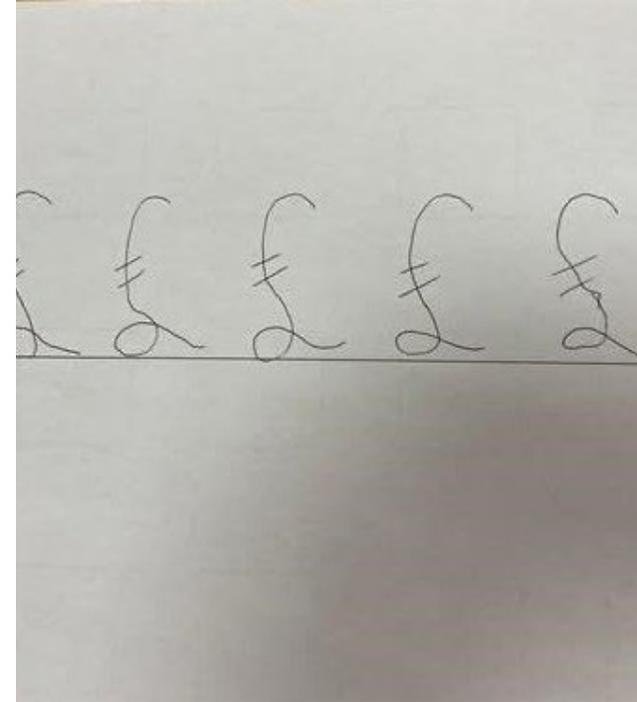
It is vital that the group have access to the right equipment and resources for learning. Interest Link Roxburgh provide resources from many different outlets, such as Charity Shops and Amazon.

Liz has been able to purchase relevant items such as calculators, tape measures, notebooks, and pencils. The right equipment and resources are essential for effective learning. An I pad is used as a visual aid and to gather evidence by collating relevant photos and video footage. Notebooks allow our members to take ownership over their learning.

Premade materials and secondhand games, reduce time spent on session preparation allowing more efficient learning.

Resources play a critical role in shaping any learning experience. This also allows our members to feel inclusive and comfortable in their learning environment.





Numeracy Skills

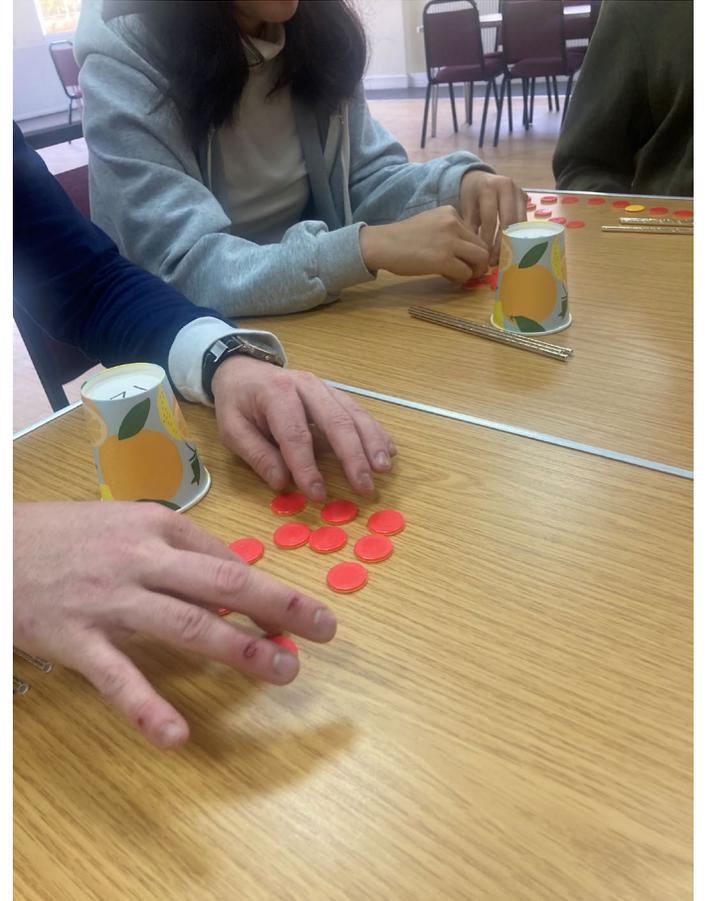
The members are now very familiar with real money and activities are planned to enhance counting and the handling of money.

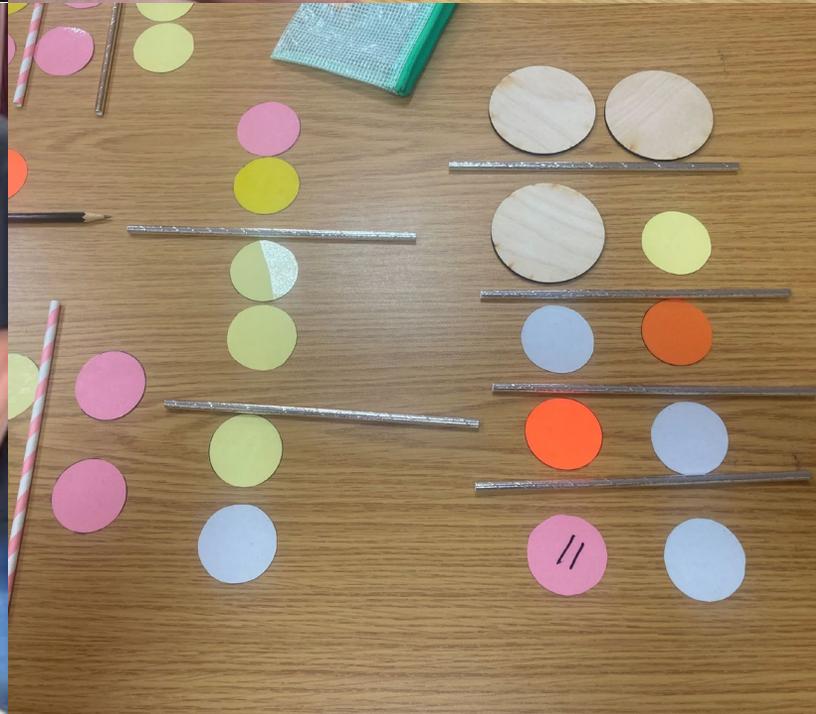
Our members have grasped the basic concept of the price of goods that they purchase on a daily basis.

Liz continues to introduce activities that encourage using decimal points, 10, 100's and units and where these should be accurately placed.

Our members feel more confident about making financial decisions and now can integrate real life applications into their learning.

By learning basic strategies, they will be able to overcome anxiety when handling money, independent or supported shopping and dealing with personal household bills.





Everyday Items for Counting

Homemade cardboard counters, plastic discs, recyclable straws, and even chocolate eggs have been used during numeracy sessions.

Many challenges have been made easier by using familiar, colourful objects. Liz continues to create many different activities and games to enhance counting skills and include problem solving elements to her challenges. These creative ideas have enabled learning to be more engaging and fun.

These challenges have not only provided opportunities to enhance skills but encourage collaborate work. The members are now able to recognize when other members require support, praise and encouragement.

We are all very proud of their success and determination to make a difference in their own personal lives. They all look forward to their sessions, and we have very regular attendance.



Counting Games are the Best

Local Charity Shops come in handy when sourcing interesting games that provide opportunities for counting skills and learning.

The members have had endless fun with games and enjoy being competitive.

Liz provides prizes for the winning teams on special occasions. Parents, carers and family members have also enjoyed competitive games whilst attending Open Mornings.

All games have been carefully selected to provide opportunities for enhancing counting skills, problem solving and teamwork.

The members now with support can count up in two's, fives tens and twenties. Counting is an integral part of numeracy comparisons, simple addition and subtraction, and enhancing awareness of number relationships. Interest Link provide a safe environment where our members can be offered support to explore, experiment and discover.

Liz repeats many tasks to develop numeracy skills. Using numbers in practice deepens that understanding. Once numeracy skills have been embedded our members have then been introduced to other ways in which they can use numbers.

A Game from the Past

Bagatelle is an old-fashioned indoor game. The object of the game is to get several balls past wooden pins and was first used in 1819.

Apart from it being a fascinating game it was a hit with the members when Liz brought it into the life skills room. It was a perfect example of how Liz continues to be versatile in providing opportunities to enhance numeracy skills.

Bagatelle provided a perfect opportunity for our members to enhance counting skills, work together in teams, and provided opportunities for decision making based on numbers and mathematical concepts. It was fun to play and was interactive and engaging.

“This little group started a few years ago and its aim was to encourage the young adults to find in themselves what they could really do with just a little bit of encouragement

My daughter Morven struggles with counting, especially money. I can see the difference in her confidence when counting her money. This means she can go out with friends and not rely on just tapping a card

Liz and Val have a wonderful way of encouraging each young adult and it is wonderful to watch

Long may it continue, which I know in these financially hard times could be a struggle but services like this one really do matter”.

Lynn Miller, Morven`s Mum.





The Power of a Magazine

Large Superstore weekly magazine supplements provide a wonderful opportunity to enhance learning. The magazines reveal real life photos of familiar products for our members. It offers endless possibilities for Liz and provides a challenge for our members to engage with visual products that they can relate to.

As the members flick through the shiny pages together, they are challenged to find certain products, reflect on prices and check on discounts and bargains. In teams they are asked to locate certain items and reiterate back the value of those products. Whilst doing this task the members can utilize skills learnt previously, for example understanding decimal points, and concept of money.

Liz uses these magazine regularly to provide different opportunities for learning. This in turn encourages conversations about the reality of prices of familiar products that they all recognize daily.

This exercise is a popular activity as they are all able to grasp the concept of pricing for everyday items and why more expensive items must be saved for over a period.

"I learnt a lot at Life Skills and loved the creative challenges"

Beth, member

"During my time at life skills, I have met loads of people and learned loads I've made lots of friends and feel confident"

Abby, member

Life skills is a very good class enjoy doing the Lady Bug Game. I like the Hamish and Hannah story to".

Scott, member

"Abby comes home and speaks about Life Skills. She really enjoys it"

Gemma, Abby's Mum

"I like to collect the money form everyone"

Mary, member

Problem Solving

The group had fun creating their own Fortune Teller.

They labelled different sections with colours, numbers and messages and great fun was had by all as they tried out this puzzle on their friends.

The members had to choose a number and, on the inside flap a message was concealed.

The exercise supported development of fine motor skills, language and cognitive skills.

By breaking tasks down into manageable chunks, it allowed all our group members to participate in this activity together.





Measuring Success

One of the group's recent activity sessions was an activity that involved measuring everyday objects.

The measuring activity was a great success as it was a practical session that included several measuring tasks. The members were split into teams and were given everyday items to measure. Two team members had the task of measuring and the other member jotted down the results on a grid.

A strip of numbers on a tape served as an important tool to enhance numeracy skills. It supported our members to strengthen spatial awareness, enhance problem solving skills, learn to memorizing numbers, and increased confidence, logic and creativity.

Connecting numbers together by measuring objects around the room helped with mental math's and visual thinking.

This activity helped also to sharpen up number senses by giving our members a sense of the length, breadth and width of familiar objects around them.



Exercise is Key

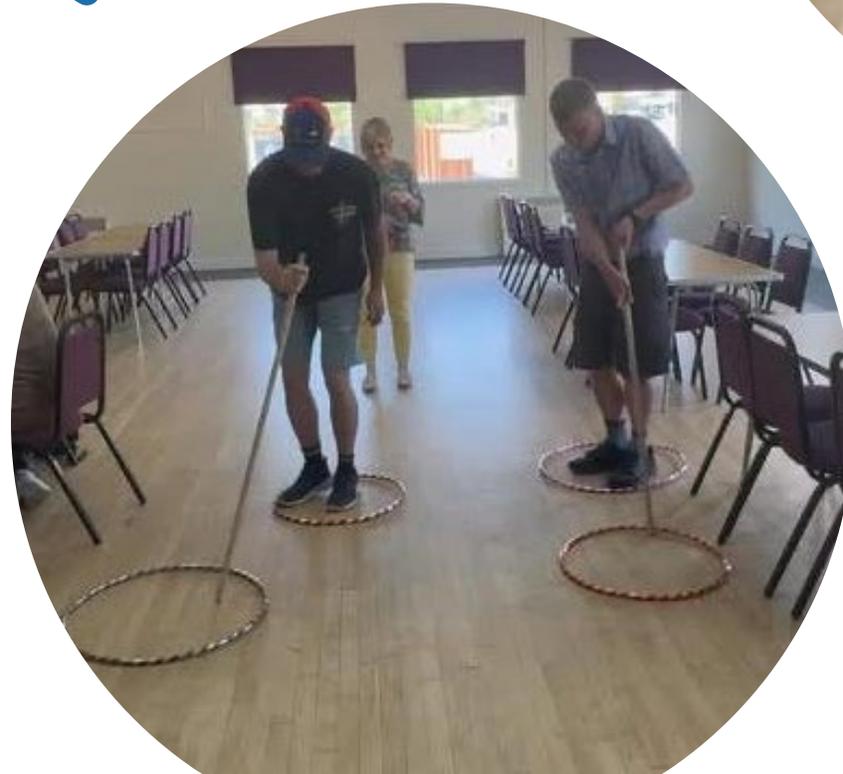
Exercise builds resilience, maintains physical and mental health and gives our members a feel-good factor.

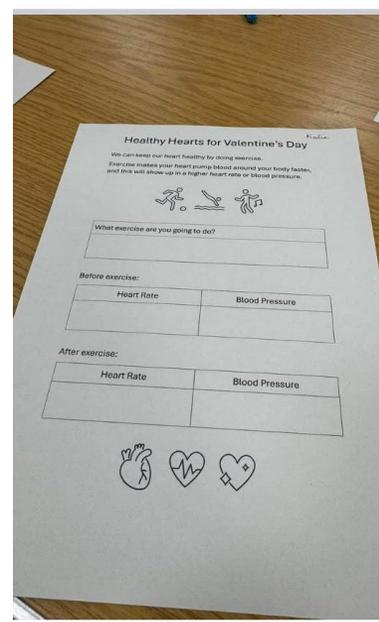
Exercise enhances mood and alleviates anxiety. Liz incorporates exercise into the sessions and creates activities that are fun and inclusive for all group members.

Liz knows how important it is for our members to relieve stress and anxiety as this in turn will improve cognitive thinking.

In fact, doing regular exercise has so many health benefits. The members have fun and enjoy competitive activities. It also offers many opportunities for our members to engage in exercises that incorporate counting and teamwork.

Stretching and floor exercises are organized regularly, and the group always join in and have fun. Liz delivers on a variety of physical games that involve hand and eye coordination and fine and gross motor skills. Games also provide an opportunity for team building.





Using a Sphygmomanometer

Liz thought it would be a great idea to introduce a Sphygmomanometer to the group. The group members were asked to take each others blood pressure with support. The skill they learnt was to accurately record the readings and understand the meaning of the readings. This skill requires a good basic understanding of numbers, and with practice this practical session was ideal for enhancing these skills. The group enjoyed this activity and by the end of the session they were able to understand how the heart works, its structure and function and how it relates to blood pressure.

The group understood what a normal reading is and what is deemed to be high or low reading. They also learnt what impact high or low blood pressure has on overall health and how it is important it is to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

This session was important to highlight everyday uses of math and numerical concepts. The members really enjoyed this session and found it interesting.

Scrabble

Playing scrabble during a session is engaging, fun and enhances word association.

This game challenged the groups thinking skills creativity. The group were able to support each other to think of words that had more letters.

The skill they learnt during this practical session was to feel comfortable in an environment where they were all able to have a go and guess the spelling of words that they wouldnt normally use.

The game challenged our members, expanded their vocabulary and enhanced cognitive and language development.



Coffee and Cakes

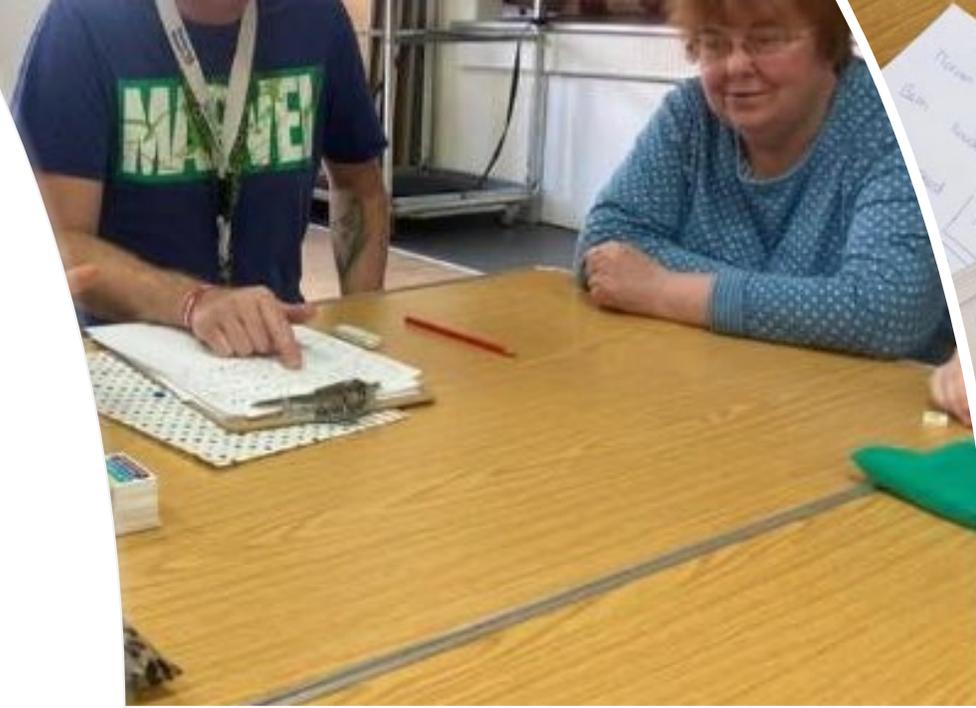
Home made baking is a very important aspect of the group. At the end of each group session a member is encouraged to either bake or buy a sweet treat to bring along to the next group and share with everyone.

This part of the session is where the members can relax and socialise with each other.

A little down time after a challenging hour.

This task encourages our members to be independent and take on responsibility.

Bryan a member takes on the responsibility for filling in the drinks form. This is a task he takes very seriously and ensures everyone is happy with their chosen drinks.





“ He absolutely
loves his time at
Life Skills “.
Pauline, Bryan`s
Mum

In Life skills I
learned a lot, and
it has really
boosted my
confidence”.

Olivia, member

“
“It has been a joy
to be part of the
life skills group
and watch them
grow in
confidence”.
Val, Branch Co-
ordinator



Different Venues

On a few occasions the group have had their sessions in a different venue. They usually meet at The Evergreen Hall in Hawick which is an accessible and comfortable venue supported by John the Caretaker.

If they don't meet at the Evergreen Hall, the group can be found over the road in a lovely room next to the Candle Café. At this venue they can order different drinks and pay with their own money. They are supported and encouraged to pay for their own drinks, receive change and ask for their receipt. This is a great example as they take full responsibility for their own money.



Tutor Liz, Sessional Worker Katie and new volunteer Ophrah

Liz our Tutor works extremely hard to deliver on practical sessions for our members. Liz draws on her experience as a Physiotherapist and a Mother of an autistic son. Liz who is now retired prepares work for our fortnightly sessions and without her commitment and attention to detail we would not have had the success we have had with this group.

What started off as a dream has now become a reality. Liz and I have been quite overwhelmed by how far all our members have come in past two years. I am so glad Interest Link has been able to support Liz to run this group and offer a unique opportunity for our members to learn and grow in confidence in a safe learning environment.

Katie is a consistent member of our team and has always understood how important her role as a sessional worker is in this group. Katie supports our members to achieve their potential and is a valued member of the group.

Ophrah replaced Alison our longstanding volunteer and is doing a great job. This is an important volunteering opportunity for her as she is currently looking to gain experience and command of the English language. Ophrah is a popular volunteer and a consistent and kind person offering support for our members as they learn to be more independent.



Feedback

“Volunteering at the Life Skills Group was a very nice experience for me. We play many games together and learn about money and easy math. The people in the group are young and very friendly. I really like to see everyone getting better every week. They also help me with my English, and they never feel tired of my questions. Sometimes I say something wrong, but they still smile and teach me again. I feel happy because we learn from each other. I am very thankful I can join this group, and I will remember this time for a long time”.

Ophrah Volunteer

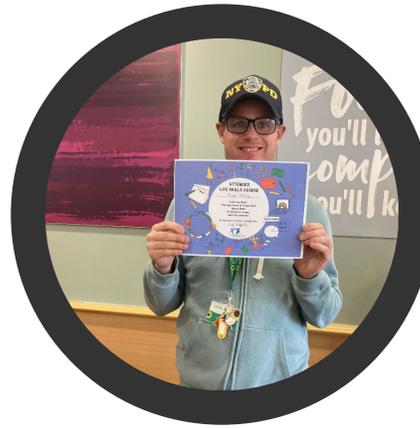


Our Talented Members

Bryan has grown in confidence and is so proud of his achievements. Bryan tries very hard with all the tasks that he is given and is committed group member. Bryan takes his responsibilities very seriously and is very kind to others. Bryans mum Pauline says that Bryan always looks forward the group.

Mary is an older member of the group and is consistent. Mary always used to say she couldn't do anything and now with encouragement has a go and is pleasantly surprised at the results. Mary oversees the money box and gathers everyone's contributions at the start of the sessions. Mary has grown on confidence with counting and is now participating in exercise sessions with support.

Morven initially was quiet and was a little unsure when attempting to answer questions. Now Morven is a confident member who speaks out and is not afraid to have a go. Morven has become confident with numeracy skills and enjoys all sessions. Morven has found friendship connections and is a consistent and popular member.



Two New Members

Abby is a most recent member and has grown in confidence. Abby was very shy and hesitant but comes along to the group independently and is always on time and consistent. Abby has made friends and enjoys all the practical sessions. Abby is quietly confident with her numeracy skills and is growing in confidence with being able to speak out. Liz and I look forward to seeing how much more Abby has to offer in the next few months ahead.

Scott joined the group a few terms ago and is such an asset to the group. He is kind, helpful and is a very willing student. Scott can practice numeracy skills in his home environment whilst he has respite shared care. Scott has a go at everything and tries so hard with his counting, numeracy and cognitive skills. Scott looks forward to seeing his friends and enjoys spending time with them all.



Connecting Friendships

The most important part of the group is friendship connections. At interest link Roxburgh we feel friendships are vital for emotional well being and groups provide opportunities for personal growth.

Friendships, make life more meaningful and fulfilling. To belong is to matter. Many of our members feel isolated and attending groups is a way to bond with other people and share common interests.

The group members have respect for each other, and it is encouraged in the group to support each other and be kind.

“ It`s not what you have or achieve that matters most; it is who you share it with”.

“Whilst supporting in the life skills group it is great to see how much they all have learnt and much more confident they are to be part of a group to. As well as that it is testing my brain to”.

Katie, Sessional Worker



Go Girls

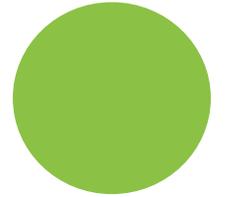
Olivia and Beth have achieved so much that Liz at the end of last term proposed that a new group called GO (Growing On) could be created and that would be a way of offering a unique opportunity for the two girls to be able to build on the skills they have already learnt.

In this new group Olivia and Beth could both concentrate on skills such as budgeting and digital literacy, this would prepare them both to apply for jobs, manage money and be able to face everyday challenges.

Liz has already initiated this group, and they are on their 4th session. Liz feels that if Olivia and Beth can carry out practical skills in their own community this will unlock pathways to supported employment, stability and confidence. This group hopes to serve as a steppingstone that will create stronger individuals who will be more connected to their community. It is Liz`s intention that others will follow on from the Life Skills Group when they are ready and feel confident to move on to the GO Group.

“Moving on to the new group has opened my eyes to new experiences and new math's lessons that I never knew before. I now am grown and learning so much quicker”.

Olivia member of the new GO Group.





Growing On

“The new group will have a primary focus on numbers in everyday life. Utilizing meaningful and mathematical work to design and carry out various tasks.

These will invariably be craft-related of some kind but will include sewing, washing, ironing etc. It will not just be a craft group with prepared craft activities, each project will take 3-4 sessions to complete and will have an underpinning intention on upcycling, recycling and reusing of all materials needed, e.g. to make a Tote Bag etc. Stenciling a table or small cabinet.

Group members will be supported to purchase, order, paint and stencil designs using mathematical measurements to align symmetry.

Every session will always include a “Prime Time” slot where there will be emphasis on continuing to broaden numerical learning, monetary value and literacy skills.

There will be a weekly attendance fee which will be banked for everyone to spend on materials required with the intention being that that they will be free or low cost wherever possible. One group member will run the bank on behalf of the group and keep a basic accounting log of income and expenditure.

The Life Star Assessment tool will form the basis for monitoring progression of each member, but there will always be physical evidence in the form of completed items”.

Liz Duffell, Life Skills and GO Group Tutor.

GO Group

The new GO Group have been meeting at the Love Scottish Café in Hawick and after Christmas will be using the warm space at the local library.

“The Go Group is a great group because it means it is more hands on for me with Liz and Christine. We keep track of petty cash, and I get to learn to sew and crochet. I am learning to use the skills I have learnt with measuring and using money”.

Beth, member of GO Group.

“ It is wonderful for Liz to be offered the opportunity to support group members to grow. The Go Group will enable members to take skills to a whole new level”.

Val Reilly, Branch Coordinator.



Thank you to our Funders



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