



Circle of Friends

The Circle of Friends is popular approach to taking a wider look at the relationships in a person's life. Each successful circle generates its own stories and fresh insights into what inclusion in school means. It enhances the inclusion of a child or young person who is experiencing difficulties because of a disability, personal crisis or because of their behaviour towards others. It also helps all circle members to develop greater empathy, self-awareness and social interactional skills.

Inclusion Facilitators offer bespoke packages of support to settings for children and young people who would benefit from a circle of friends. We can work alongside families, education staff and other key adults to run a circle of friends to support the focus child. We provide training and support for staff in the approach and facilitate the intervention with careful consideration and understanding of the young person's needs.

What can you gain?

- Knowledge and understanding of the evidence-based approach
- Support for the focus person
- An increase in empathy across the peer group
- A more inclusive problem-solving approach
- Confidence for staff to use circle of friends with other pupils



What difference will it make?

- Disabled and challenging pupils will be successfully included in mainstream schools.
- Heads, teachers, SENDCos, parents and teaching assistants will feel they have an approach that really works: increasing friendship opportunities, helping individuals to belong and reducing behaviour difficulties.
- Pupils will feel valued and involved in the support of other pupils that they know are finding school life difficult.
- Deeper insight and understanding of disability issues, emotional and behavioural needs that we might all face at some time in our own lives and the possibilities of change.
- A child-friendly structure is put in place for problem solving and support.
- The openness of discussion that takes place through a circle of friends provides a model for other relationships more generally within the class and school.

How does it work?

1. Make an enquiry via the email below and agree the package of support, tailored to individual's needs
 - Primary/Secondary Circle of Friends
 - Transition (Y6/7) Circle of Friends
2. Each circle requires an enthusiastic, committed member of staff who will be fully supported
 - Week 1 – setting up, meeting with the focus person
 - Week 2 – whole class session
 - Week 3-5 – the circle of friends
 - Week 6 – review and plan next steps with the circle of friends
3. Review the outcomes and plan next steps

**For more information about how we could work with you please contact:
IF@suffolk.gov.uk**