



First Choice is delighted to be part of a very exciting project in Cardiff that Learning Disability Wales is taking forward. With funding from First Choice, Gig Buddies Cardiff will run for an initial twelve months and enable 20 adults with a learning disability to buddy up with volunteers so they can go to gigs and events together.



Gig Buddies is a befriending scheme that matches people with a learning disability with volunteers who share the same interests, so they can go to gigs together. It specifically focusses on events that happen in the evenings, such as concerts, in order to break the many barriers that stop people with a learning disability going out at night and staying up late.

These barriers include lack of support, or inflexible support that forces people to leave events early. Other obstacles include transport, confidence, safety, and accessibility of venues. Most importantly, Gig Buddies are free to choose what their 'gig' is and when and where they want to go. A 'gig' can be a concert, but it can also be a rugby match, a trip to a museum, or an evening down the pub.

Kai Jones, Communications Officer with Learning Disability Wales, will lead the project in its first year. Kai said: "Learning Disability Wales have been working with the 'Stay Up Late' campaign for several years to bring Gig Buddies to Wales. We are extremely thankful to First Choice Housing for the funding that has made this possible".

Gig Buddies Cardiff had its official launch at the Festival of Voice on 7th June at the Millennium Centre in Cardiff. Staff from First Choice attended and were joined by Vanessa, one of our tenants from Roath, her friend Jenna and support staff from Dimensions.

The first show of the festival was Voices of Protest with Nadine Shah and Billy Bragg. Vanessa said she loved going out for the evening, sitting outside for food, and finding out about Gig Buddies, which she thinks is a 'brilliant idea'. Vanessa's support staff Alison told us that Vanessa 'drank in all the fantastic music of the evening like a very thirsty person. As a real music lover, Vanessa is always up for going out and seeing live music, and would like to go out again soon! Nadine Shah's music was brilliant, and Vanessa was quite transfixed by the power of the band and her voice'.



Billy Bragg also had a big impact on Vanessa as he spoke about the issue of single use plastics and the impact plastic water bottles is having on the environment. Alison told us that 'this stayed with Vanessa after the concert. She spoke about it for days after, then made her own decision to stop buying water in disposable bottles. Vanessa bought herself a re-fillable one that she takes out everywhere with her now. A great legacy from a great night out!'

If you want to know more about Gig Buddies Cardiff please email gigbuddies@ldw.org.uk or call Kylie on 07707 605314 or have a look out for them on social media:

www.facebook.com/FfrindiauGigiau

<https://twitter.com/FfrindiauGigiau>