

# James

James is a 16 year old who attends mainstream school, likes playing football and playing computer games (especially Minecraft).

He has autism and finds it difficult to initiate conversations. He is very popular and has lots in common with some of the other boys who access the Learning Support Unit at his school. James is verbal and talks passionately about his interests. James never sees any friends outside of school and his family don't know who he gets on well with, because James himself finds judging this difficult.

Since James was nine he has been accessing short breaks care and he has a short break every other weekend with Sue (a 55 year old Community Short Breaks worker). Sue takes James out to museums, cafes, parks and sometimes to town.

James has been doing the same sort of things on his short break for seven years and he enjoys being with Sue, but he says he is lonely and feels he has no friends.

- What are the main challenges James faces with regard to friendship?
- What role could the short breaks service provider play in supporting the young person to meet existing friends or make new friends?
- What would your next steps be to put your plan into action?



Image posed by model

## Facilitator's notes:

James is 16 and he could be using his short breaks to see his own friends. His carer could act in the role of facilitator whilst supporting James to develop his independence and improve his social confidence.

James's social worker or short breaks worker could speak to James's teacher or learning support worker to find out who James gets on particularly well with and who might potentially be a good friend for him. They might observe how he interacts with friends at school.

It may be that some of James's friends from school also access the short breaks service and their carers could arrange sessions together. The short breaks worker could research groups with shared interest where friendships can emerge, for example a mainstream or specialist football club.