**Support – Our Approach**

Support is a positive word for most people. We value supportive friends for example, or we are glad to work as part of a team that supports us. In the disability sector, however, support can be a more complicated word as it is connected with paid roles and packages of care. get2gether is not funded to provide direct support to its members, but we understand the value of feeling supported.

get2gether’s outcomes are to:

* Increase emotional awareness of adults with disabilities
* Increase resilience of adults with disabilities
* Decrease social isolation of adults with disabilities
* Increase self-determination of adults with disabilities

While carrying out a project which explored the idea of Self-determination it became clear that the way in which individuals are supported can have an important impact on their development of self-determination. Because of this, we have explored get2gether’s approach to 'support' and how it can be distinct from other organisations.

*Support as a Spectrum*

We can think about a spectrum of support, with over-protection at one end and neglect at the other. Being over-protective might involve not allowing someone to take any risks, or saying that something is unrealistic so they don’t get disappointed if they try and fail. Being neglectful can involve not giving someone the right information, or not helping them when they ask you to.

Over-

Protection

Neglect



*So what does support mean to get2gether and where are people most likely to develop their self-determination?*

From exploring how we work, it is clear that we definitely do not fall into the over-protection category. We have a positive approach to risk because we believe there are dangers in living a life without challenges. We believe that we all learn through taking risks, big and small, and we all have the right to learn from our mistakes.

However, we don’t fall into the neglect category either. We give people information about the decisions they are making and answer any questions they might have. If someone is struggling with something specific we can offer encouragement or light-touch coaching. We recognise that embracing new experiences can cause anxiety but there’s no point exacerbating this.

We offer many opportunities for our members to do things that might be viewed as risky such as taking on the responsibility of running an event. Our staff are encouraging and helpful, buttry to step back as much as possible so that the individual is in control. We have seen people become more confident in their own capabilities through this and more self-determined as a result. Staff also follow this same approach when at events, giving space for our members to learn how to navigate situations and conversations by living them. For example it can be really easy to want to jump into an ‘awkward’ silence when you are with someone, but doing this stops the individuals from directing the conversation and could stop them from learning how to keep a conversation flowing themselves. At get2gether we have seen people grow in their social confidence as a result of these experiences at our events.

We believe that the get2gether approach falls somewhere in the middle of the spectrum and in fact we would say that we don’t offer ‘support’, but that we are ‘supportive’. We don’t offer the same kinds of one-to-one support that some services provide, but we don’t leave our members vulnerable either. Our involvement is supportive and encouraging, but not intrusive. We have seen how this approach creates an environment where our members can explore opportunities and their own identities, testing their strengths and preferences and learning from new experiences.

We have many stories which demonstrate members becoming more self-determined and starting to lead the life they want and we believe that get2gether’s supportive approach is essential to how this organisational objective is being met.