

How are the Pioneers Activities funded?

Our policy is that on all activities the Pioneers pay for their own entrance fees and refreshments and in addition make a contribution towards the cost of transport. Each year the Association raises about £2000 through fund raising and receives about £1600 in donations from local charities and individuals. Since taking on a paid Organiser we are having to raise a further £4500 p.a. from Trusts and Foundations to cover the additional costs.

What are the long-term benefits to the individual Pioneer?

The Pioneers find a peer group where they can make friends who accept them as equals and where we have seen difficult behaviour modified by acceptance and group pressure.

Eighteen Pioneers live independently of a main carer and our activities provide a basis for a social life. Many meet up outside the organised activities and are able to arrange to meet locally at each others homes or in local pubs. From personal experience I know that my own 42 year old son has a much fuller life because of the Maldon Pioneers.

Do the parents of the Pioneers benefit?

Where a Pioneer is living at home the regular outings provide a welcome break for some parents. The week's holiday has enabled several parents to go away by themselves. For one Pioneer it was the only time that he would go away from home without his parents. Another parent said that they were at their wits end what to do with their daughter before she started with the Pioneers, but that now life at home is much easier.

The Maldon Pioneers Association.

Registered Charity No. 295993



A voluntary organisation in aid of the marginally handicapped.

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Who are the Maldon Pioneers?

The Pioneers are people with a mild to moderate learning disability who are either living at home with parents or independently in their own accommodation.

Why is a separate organisation necessary?

In 1982 a social worker in the local Social Services Department realised that there were a number of people who did not go to the Training Centre for people with a learning disability as their disability was assessed as not being severe enough to need the Centre's resources. They were, however, unable to participate in the normal community activities enjoyed by most of us. As a result they tended to be isolated and over-dependent on immediate family. Their disabilities are such that they are not an easily recognisable group.

Why are they called Pioneers?

When the name was first used it was to signify that they were doing activities that were new to them - in fact, pioneering into new territory. The name is as applicable today as it was in the 1980s.

How do people join the Pioneers?

Most have come through the Social Services. A typical Pioneer is someone who has gone through a special school or perhaps a special needs group in a comprehensive school and who, on leaving full-time education, finds that he/she is unable to get a normal job and finds making friends and having a social life difficult. Some have lived with an elderly parent who has died, leaving them alone at an age when it is difficult to adapt to a major change in life.

What is the Maldon Pioneers Association?

The Association was formed in the early days to assist the Social Services and the Education Departments by raising money and accepting grants to fund the activities which the professionals ran with the help of volunteers. The provision of a mini-bus and other transport has always been a major cost for the association. The Social Services stopped supporting

the Pioneers activities by withdrawing staff in 1993, and stopping a substantial annual grant two years later. The activities at the Friary, the local Adult Education College, which had been on two days each week over longer terms than at present, have been reduced .

Because of the reduction of support from the statutory agencies the Association committee has had to take over all the organisation of the social activities and find all the voluntary helpers to run them.

Since November 2007 we have employed an Activities Organiser as the voluntary organisers were getting older and we were unable to find another volunteer to take on this task.

What do the Pioneers do?

Many activities have been used over the years, but the aim is to enable the Pioneers to gain social skills by participating in normal situations where they can learn skills through being with their friends and coping with new and sometimes bewildering experiences. Throughout the year they go on outings to places of interest, to the cinema, to a pub, to play bowls, to local shows, etc. During term time some attend Basic Education classes at the Friary Adult Education College and the Association runs a weekly social/education group on Thursday.

During the summer there is a one week holiday at an Holiday Camp and during the college's summer vacation seven weekly outings are arranged at a time when most other activities have closed down.

The Pioneers do not normally have a segregated meeting place or fixed base, but use community facilities at times when other members of the public are using them.

How many Pioneers are there?

We have about 45 Pioneers who participate in the activities. Outings are usually attended by 20-40 Pioneers and 24 Pioneers went on the annual holiday in 2010. On many outings we have to hire an additional mini-bus to cater for the numbers.