



Friends 2 Friends at Lichfield Trent Valley station

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Friends 2 Friends mark Cross City Heroes win at Lichfield Trent Valley

Members of a Lichfield community group for adults with learning disabilities joined the celebrations as a permanent plaque marking their achievements was unveiled at Lichfield Trent Valley railway station.

The Friends 2 Friends group were recognised through the West Midlands Railway 'Cross City Heroes' initiative, which celebrates contributions to communities along the popular rail line.

The group was chosen as one of 24 community organisations to receive a plaque of recognition at railway stations on the line, which runs between Redditch / Bromsgrove, Birmingham and Lichfield.

Friends 2 Friends is a member led group, that promotes independence, increases confidence and supports members to learn the skills needed to be part of the community in which they live. The group provides a relaxed and informal setting where friendships can be made. Members choose what activities and courses they do, what outings they would like to go on and are supported by a group of staff and volunteers.

Alison Wellon, Friends 2 Friends co-ordinator, said: "It is an honour that Friends 2 Friends has been recognised for the member's achievements and so important that the members themselves realise how important they are to their community. To be chosen by West Midlands Railway is even more special as public transport is so important for our members to get from place to place. Our group use trains for outings, to get to appointments and more and this is a big factor in increasing independence. On behalf of all our wonderful members, carers and volunteers I would like to say a big thank you for choosing us a Cross City Hero."

Fay Easton, head of stakeholder and community for West Midlands Railway, said: "Through our Cross City Heroes initiative we have been lucky to see first-hand some of the incredible community groups we have across the West Midlands. We have heard inspiring stories the whole length of the Cross City line, from South Staffordshire through Birmingham and down to North Worcestershire. You can see from the smiling faces how much Friends 2 Friends Lichfield means to its members and we are delighted to celebrate their achievements with this plaque at Trent Valley railway station."

The plaque will be on permanent display at Lichfield Trent Valley railway station from this week.

Nominations for Cross City Heroes winners were put forward by passengers, residents and railway staff as part of a competition to celebrate 40 years of services on the Cross City Line.

Examples of various influential local clubs, charities and other community groups were received as part of this process. These nominations were then judged by representatives from West Midlands Railway and West Midlands

Rail Executive to form the final list of 24 winners.

For the list of winning Cross City Heroes groups visit <https://bit.ly/2WuPPcb>

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For further information on this release, call our press office on 03300 955150 or email press.office@wmtrains.co.uk

About Friends 2 Friends

Friends 2 Friends is open five days a week, including Saturdays, and the group operates as a drop in so no referral is needed. If anyone is interested in attending the group they can call **07800 576 645**.

About West Midlands Trains

West Midlands Trains operates both West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway services.

- **London Northwestern Railway** services operate between Liverpool and Birmingham, and on the West Coast mainline to and from London Euston.
- **West Midlands Railway** services operate to destinations across the West Midlands via Birmingham New Street.

For more information on these services visit westmidlandsrailway.co.uk or londonnorthwesternrailway.co.uk

The West Midlands Trains franchise started on 10 December 2017 and will run until 2025/26.

West Midlands Trains operates 1,300 services a day, manages 150 stations and provides over 70 million passenger journeys a year. Over the course of the franchise, West Midlands Trains will be investing £1 billion into the rail network to deliver new trains, improved routes and station upgrades. This will include 400 new train carriages across the network and space for an extra 85,000 passengers into Birmingham and London at peak times.

The franchise is a joint venture between Abellio (70.1% share) and East Japan Railway Company / Mitsui & Co., Ltd (29.9% share in a 50:50 split). Abellio is the international passenger transport subsidiary of the Dutch national railway company, Nederlandse Spoorwegen. In the UK, Abellio operates ScotRail and Greater Anglia train services, Merseyrail services in a joint venture with Serco and buses through Abellio London. For more information visit www.abellio.com

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