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### Abstract

This is a letter to the editor which discusses the difference between the naturalness of friendship and paid contact in human services. The writer argues that the qualities of friendship cannot be duplicated in a paid situation.

**Keyword: Friendship**

## Letters to the Editor

This is the first "Letter to the Editor" section in the TEC Newsletter. We anticipate that it will generate interest and discussion in a wide range of SRV related topics. Thankyou Lesley for the first letter and the issues raised by it.

### QUALITY OF LIFE INCLUDES FRIENDSHIP

We often hear the term 'Quality of life', but what does this really mean? For each person it means something different. It depends on what is important and valued by the individual.

It concerns me that in human services, in the quest for the so-called 'quality of life', quality is sometimes measured by the actual quantity of involvement. For example; the number of times a person goes for a drive, or how often a person has a meal away from the every day dining area. The quantity of the involvement becomes the subject of focus. Is going for a drive with a person who is paid to take you the same as going with friends? I don't think so.

What happens when the money is taken out of paid relationships that are on a social, personal care and one to one basis? In paid service delivery, when the wage is removed, frequently so is the contact.

What does this say about the person receiving care? Is this the sort of quality we are looking for?

I see quality in the naturalness of friendship. Friendship is one part of life that is vitally important. Humans are social beings. Friendship is made up of many things and, like quality of life, depends on the individual. What do we want out of contact with other people?

It comes as a surprise to some, that friendship cannot be defined in a simple way. Loneliness, isolation and friendship are all difficult concepts that are usually put in the too hard basket. Not because they are unimportant, but because they are so complex and difficult to deal with.

We all want different things from our friendships at different times. It depends on the time of day, what mood we are in and what has happened to us recently and in the past. Friendship is about commitment. It is a two way process. It is about giving and receiving, not equally, but in a very changing way. For example, sometimes we need contact or support more than other times, or we will help a friend out when times are hard. We give and receive in different amounts at different times. Some friends are short term, others long term and the depth of the relationship varies.

Friendship involves accepting another person for what they are worth. No one is perfect, we are all made up of strengths and weaknesses and we all have something to offer. Think about the situations you may be familiar with; when a person falls ill or something happens that makes life extremely difficult, some people will back away and some people will be there no matter what.

No two people will be exactly the same, therefore everyone's needs and relationships will be different. Friendship is about commitment; it is about caring, giving and receiving. Therefore when looking for quality in human services, we should look deeper into what is really happening in a person's life, not only for what the person does but also with whom the person relates.

Who cares for the person?  
Who is committed to the person?  
Who accepts the person?  
Who is willing to give and receive?

***What does friendship mean to you?***

Lesley Freak

*\* No doubt, Lesley, friendship is one of those things that we take for granted until it is missing from our lives. Little wonder then that we do not often examine friendships of the people we work with or for. In fact, paid "friendships" are becoming more and more popular as a service solution to people's loneliness. The following article sent by Claire Taylor, presents paid "families" as an innovative solution to loneliness of elderly people in Japan! What Next??*