

# **Up the Hill Project**

## **Accessible Research**

### **Summaries**

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**Tim Adam**

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# UP THE HILL PROJECT

## WHAT IS THE UP THE HILL PROJECT?

The Up the Hill Project (UTHP) is an inclusive higher education program based at Flinders University in South Australia. Supported by the College of Nursing and Health Sciences, the project has been operating within the university since 1999.

The UTHP supports people with a disability to experience university. Examples of activities a participant might do include:

- going to lectures
- doing presentations
- meeting new people
- going to the library or cafe on campus.

In the Up the Hill Project, participants are supported by a peer mentor to audit one topic per semester. After three years, participants get to graduate at a ceremony.

The Up the Hill Project is a good program for many people. People with disability can meet new people, learn about a topic they are interested in and build skills. Peer mentors get to see what it is like to support someone with a disability, which is good for their future job. Also, the university can learn how to include everyone.

For more information about the Up the Hill Project, please visit:

<https://www.flinders.edu.au/engage/community/clinics/up-the-hill-project>

## ACCESSIBLE SUMMARIES

The research summaries were made with Tim Adam, a Research Advisor with intellectual disability. For six months, Tim worked at Flinders University and worked with researchers. Tim provided feedback, helped the researchers write things in different ways and helped find pictures.

The booklet below is what Tim helped the Up the Hill Project to make. It talks about six different research projects that have been done about the Up the Hill Project. It is written in Easy English style.



# UP THE HILL PROJECT

## Infographic - The Research So Far

### People with Intellectual Disability Going to University

*Flinders University: Up the Hill Project*  
*What does our research tell us so far?*

#### Why Go to University?

Going to university can help people with intellectual disability:

- make friends,
- build skills,
- learn new things,
- get a job,
- make more choices, and
- feel like other people their age



***“being educated really does help you in some ways, it really does help you understand how the world works, and also what you can contribute”***

#### What Support is Important?

- Good planning and preparation
- Peer mentors
- Positive attitudes of teaching staff
- Parents
- Help with changing to online learning and mentoring during COVID-19



#### What does this mean?

- With the right supports and expectations, people with intellectual disability can achieve their goals at university
- Other people at university (e.g. mentors, other students, teachers and other staff) also benefit
- Lots of people want to get a job/ get a better job after coming to university



#### What else needs to be done?

- Teaching staff need to know more about intellectual disability and more about inclusion
- People with intellectual disability should be able to enrol in a face to face or online university degree like other people
- There needs to be more ways to help with getting a job



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# UP THE HILL PROJECT

## 1. What do adults with intellectual disability and their mentors think about the Up the Hill Project university program? (2018)

By Fiona Rillotta, Claire Hutchinson, Jillian Arthur, and Pammi Raghavendra



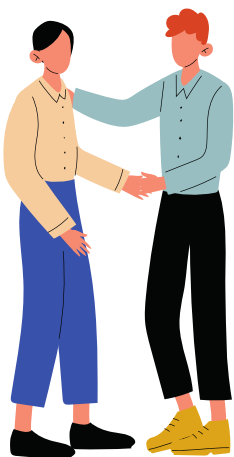
Going to university can help people with intellectual disability make friends, build skills and learn new things.



The Up the Hill Project at Flinders University is a program that helps people with intellectual disability go to university.

At university people with intellectual disability go to a class to learn about a topic they are interested in.

They are supported by a mentor.



A mentor is a peer who can:

- Show you around university
- Give advice
- Support you in your topic

At university you can meet new people, learn new skills and experience university life.



This study wanted to see if the program is a good or bad experience for people with intellectual disability.

### **How the information was collected:**



To collect information, we talked to people with intellectual disability who were in the Up the Hill Project.

We also talked to their mentors.

We talked to participants two times.



We wanted to find out what people with intellectual disability thought about the program before they started their classes.

We also wanted to find out what they thought of their experience after they finished a semester at university.



Participants were asked questions about their goals for the semester and talked about the topic they were going to do.

At the end of the semester, participants were asked more questions:



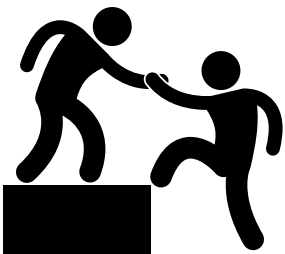
- what they thought was good or bad,
- if their life had changed since being in the Up the Hill Project, and
- what they want to do in the future.



Mentors were asked different questions, like:

- how teachers at university and other students can include people with intellectual disability, and
- what they thought was good or bad about the Up the Hill Project.

### What we found:



The people we talked to said the Up the Hill Project could help people with intellectual disability.



Some of the skills people learnt were:

- Confidence
- Making choices
- Learning how to talk to others



Participants also learnt new things about the topic they were in. Student 2 said: ***“there was lots of [things I learnt]...in Australian studies there were heaps [of things I learnt]”***



Some people loved being at university. They got to participate in university like other students, such as: borrowing library books and talking in class.



One participant was very excited to be at university. They said: ***"[I'm feeling] oh terrific! Oh terrific! I love it [being at university]"***.



Some of the people we talked to are now friends with their mentors, like Student 1 who said ***"it's different [my life]...because when I first started coming here I had no friends and then when I have a mentor we were friends"***



Mentors said that sometimes teachers and students in the class were good at including people with intellectual disability.



Sometimes there were some bad experiences.



Mentor 4 said that: ***"[the other students] all went into the reading groups and we weren't allowed in one because they all presented...no one really wanted us there...we were kind of excluded"***.

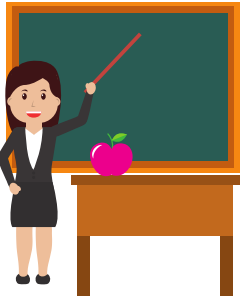


## What does this mean?



This research found that people learn new things, make friends and enjoyed going to university.

But it would be good if participants could make more friends in their classes.



Also, teachers need more information about supporting people with intellectual disability.



This research could help the Up the Hill Project and Flinders University to understand what is good and bad about the university experience for people with intellectual disability.

If you want to read more, here is a link:

Rillotta, F., Arthur, J., Hutchinson, C., & Raghavendra, P. (2020). Inclusive university experience in Australia: Perspectives of students with intellectual disability and their mentors. *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities*, 24(1), 102-117.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1744629518769421>



# UP THE HILL PROJECT

## 2. An Up the Hill Project student completing work experience (2016)

By Fiona Rillotta, Lorraine Lindsay, and Cassandra Gibson-Pope



The Up the Hill Project is a program that helps people with intellectual disability go to university.



People who go to university usually get to do work experience.

Work experience is when you get to see what it is like to work in a job you are interested in.



It is non-paid experience that you get to do in the work place.

It can help you to learn new things and develop more skills.



Work experience is not something students in the Up the Hill Project have done before.



So, we wanted to see what it was like for one Up the Hill Project student to do work experience at a primary school in South Australia.

### **How the information was collected:**



We talked to six people who helped the Up the Hill Project student complete work experience.

This research asked them to tell us what the experience was like.



We asked people what was good about the experience.

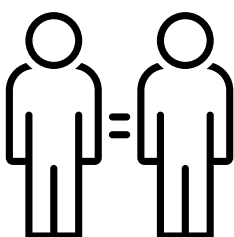


We also asked what may have been challenging.



### **What we found:**

This research found that there were lots of different things that were good about work experience.



#### Being the same as everyone else

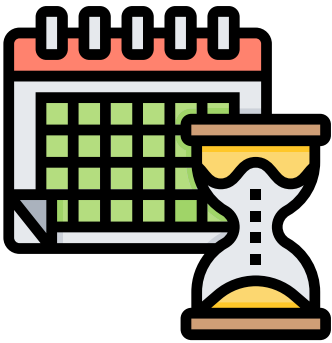
The Up the Hill Project student participated in work experience like students without intellectual disability do.



The student thought that work experience was  
***"...part challenging and part fun to do"***.



The student had to be organised and professional when doing their work experience.



This means being on time, respecting others and having good manners.

### **What was good?**



Work experience was good because everyone talked to each other.

If anything went wrong, there was a way to fix it.



The student got to see what it was like to participate in a job they were interested in.



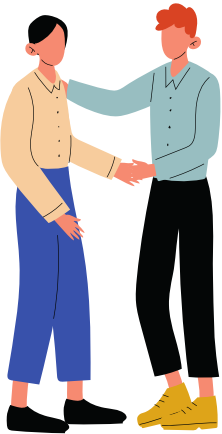
### The student

The Up the Hill Project student had lots of skills that were good, such as being organised, patient and confident.



Completing work experience also helped the student to learn new skills.

The student's parents thought that it helped her to grow up a bit more.



### Support

Mentors were a good support to the student.

The student said the mentor was: ***"... really helpful, I really liked her, we connected straight away"***.



Mentors helped with assignments, writing notes, and time management.

## What was challenging?



Sometimes the student did not get to do as many activities as they would have liked.

Sometimes the student did not get to do everything they wanted.



This was a bit disappointing sometimes.



Sometimes people working with the student did not have good attitudes. This meant they were not being a positive person.



The student did not participate as much as they should.

## What does this mean?



This research found that work experience can be good for people in the Up the Hill Project. Work experience helps students build skills.



But it is important that people with disabilities are treated the same as people without disabilities.



It would be good if more students could do work experience.



We hope that this research will help others understand why work experience can be good for people with intellectual disabilities when they are at university.

# UP THE HILL PROJECT

## 3. What do university lecturers think about including students with intellectual disability? (2018)

**By: Dana Haig, Supervisors: Fiona Rillotta and Angela Lawless. 2018 Honours Research Project in Disability and Community Inclusion, College of Nursing and Health Sciences, Flinders University**

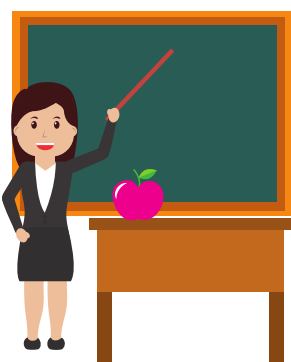


There are two university programs for people with intellectual disability in Australia.

The Up the Hill Project at Flinders University is one of these programs.



University programs can help people with intellectual disability to make more choices in their life. University programs can also help people from the community learn more about disability.



We do not know much about university teachers and what they think about university programs for people with intellectual disability.



This is what we wanted to find out in this study.



## How the information was collected:

This study talked to 5 lecturers at Flinders University.



We wanted to see what lecturers thought about including people with intellectual disability at university.



Three of the lecturers we talked to had been involved with the Up the Hill Project. Two of the lecturers had not been involved with the Up the Hill Project.

## What we found:

There were three things that the lecturers told us:

1. They did not know much about intellectual disability.
2. They thought that inclusion could mean lots of different things.
3. They thought that the university could do more to help them.



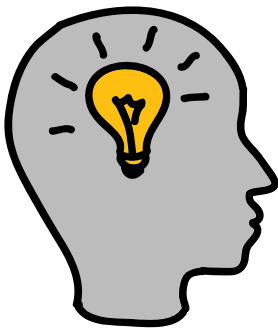
Most of the lecturers did not know much about intellectual disability.



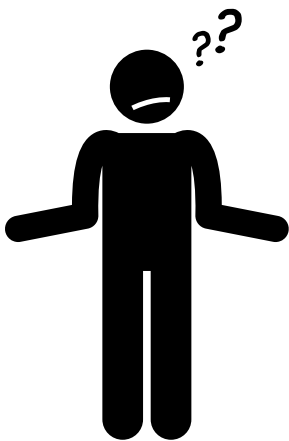
Some lecturers told us what they think would help someone with intellectual disability at university:

- More time to do activities
- Activities to be explained more

Lecturer 4 said that people with intellectual disability are “**...someone who can still function and make a difference**”.

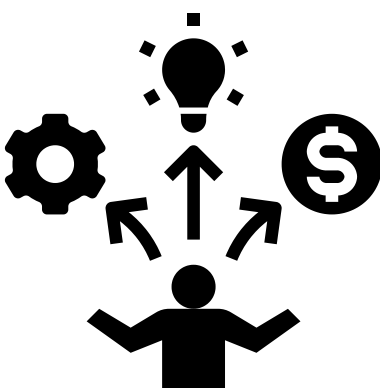


The lecturers had lots of different ideas about what inclusion means.



One of the lecturers did not know anything about including people with intellectual disability at university.

Including people means working together and making sure that everyone has a say.



One lecturer thought that including people with intellectual disability means giving them more choice.

Another lecturer thought that inclusion was about males and females having the same opportunities.



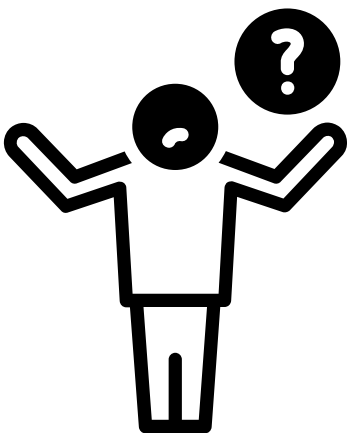
Every lecturer had a different idea.

All of the lecturers could tell us how the university supports people with disabilities.



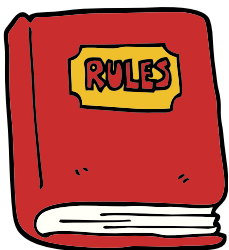
They told us that the students with disabilities have support plans.

Lecturers would like to know more about people with disabilities who are in their class.



The lecturers would like to know:

- More about the person
- More about the disability
- What the person likes
- What classes the person has done before



Lecturers want the university to have rules to help staff understand more.

Many of the lecturers like the Up the Hill Project.



Lecturer 2 said that the Up the Hill Project is a **"...bloody good idea"**.

Lecturers think that everyone should be allowed to come to university.



Some of the lecturers thought that it was easy to have a person with intellectual disability in their class.

### **What does this mean?**



This research found that university staff need to learn more about intellectual disability. They need to understand what people with intellectual disability can do.



We need to remind lecturers that everyone is different, and having intellectual disability does not mean that everyone is the same.



We hope that there can be more research done about what lecturers think of people with intellectual disability going to university.

# UP THE HILL PROJECT

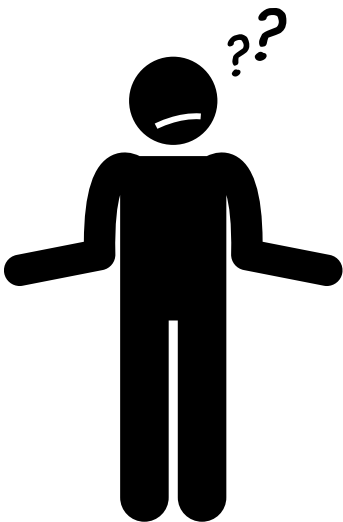
## 4. Why do people with an intellectual disability choose to go to university or not? (2018)

**By: Heather Davies, Supervisors: Fiona Rillotta and Angela Lawless**

**2018 Honours Research Project in Disability and Community Inclusion, College of Nursing and Health Sciences, Flinders University**



Sometimes people with disabilities can find it hard to make choices in their life once they finish school.



They might not know what they want to do in their life, or do not get help to make choices.

Sometimes people with disabilities go to university after they finish school.

University can help people with intellectual disability have good experiences, such as:

- Getting a job
- Make more choices
- Feeling like other people their age





We wanted to find out why some people with intellectual disability decide to go to university after they finish school.



We also wanted to see why other people choose to do something else, like get a job.

### **How the information was collected:**



We talked to five people with intellectual disability.

This study asked people to talk about why they came to university.

### **What we found:**



This study found out that lots of things helped people with intellectual disability go to university, the things are:



#### Themselves

The people we talked to said that they wanted to go to university because it was a dream of theirs.



One person said: ***"I had a dream of going to university"***.

Participants wanted to go to university. It was their choice.



### School

All of the participants went to different schools.



Some people went to schools with people without disability, some people went to school with only people with disability.

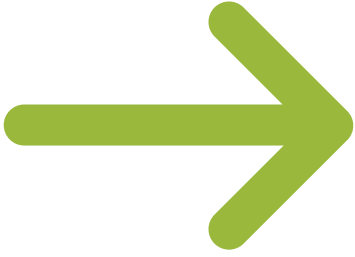
Participants who were in classes with people without disability wanted to go to university.

### Friends

Some participants talked to school friends without disability about university.



People who talked to school friends without disability went to university.



## Transition

Transition means completing one thing and moving on to the next thing.



Some people were worried about leaving school.

Having help when leaving school made the participants feel a bit better.



People who got some help to leave school wanted to go to university.



## Parents

Parents are important people who help their children make choices.

Parents in this study had lots of different ideas about what their child would do when they finished school.



This study also found that brothers and sisters did not make a big difference when people with intellectual disability decide to go to university.





Support staff also do not make a big difference when people with intellectual disability decide to go to university.

### What does this mean?



People with intellectual disability should have more choice about what they want to do after they finish school.



They should have more options of what they can do after they finish school. University can be a good choice for some people.



One participant said that university is good because ***“being educated really does help you in some ways, it really does help you understand how the world works, and also what you can contribute”.***



More research should be done to see what people with intellectual disability do after they finish school.

# UP THE HILL PROJECT

## 5. What do adults with intellectual disability do after they finish the Up the Hill Project university program? (2019)

By Charlotte Gobec, Supervisors: Fiona Rillotta and Pammi Raghavendra

2019 Honours Research Project in Disability and Community Inclusion, College of Nursing and Health Sciences, Flinders University



Other research has found that going to university can help people to get jobs and make friends.

Not many people with intellectual disability go to university in Australia.

2

There are only two university programs in Australia for people with intellectual disability.



The Up the Hill Project at Flinders University is one of those programs. It was started up in 1999 to help people with intellectual disability get involved in university, such as going to classes, meeting new people, learning new things and learning new skills.

We did not know much about what people do after they finish their three years with the Up the Hill Project, so we wanted to find out in this study.

## How the information was collected:



This research wanted to see what is good or bad about the Up the Hill Project.



We also wanted to find out what people with intellectual disability do in their life after they finish the Up the Hill Project.



This study talked to people with intellectual disability who had finished the Up the Hill Project.

This research also talked to some family members of people who have finished the Up the Hill Project.



People who participated in the study were asked questions about their life, like: what activities they do in the week, or what activities they do on the weekend.

## What we found:



The people we talked to said:

- Up the Hill Project was good
- They enjoyed being at university
- They liked feeling like a student



Some of the people we talked to have come back to university since they finished the Up the Hill Project.

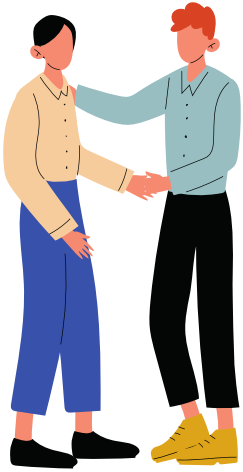
Some people are doing a degree at Flinders University and others are auditing topics, like they did in the Up the Hill Project.



One participant told us why she went back to university. She said: ***“Well the reason for that is that I want to get into the disability field...and that’s why I wanted to come back”*** (Participant 4).



Some of the people we talked to want to come back to Flinders University to learn about things they are interested in, and to help them get a job in the future.



A lot of the participants said that they still talk to their mentors and teachers they met in the Up the Hill Project.

Some are friends with their old mentors and go to places like concerts.

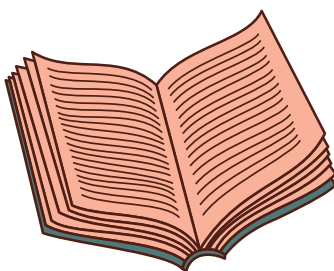


Other people still talk to their mentors and teachers on the computer, like participant 4 who said ***"...yeah occasionally I talk to my mentor on Facebook"***.



Many of the participants got to do new things after they finished the Up the Hill Project.

Here are some of the things they have done:



- Two people have written in books
- One person has made their own movie
- Someone else has talked about the Up the Hill Project on the radio

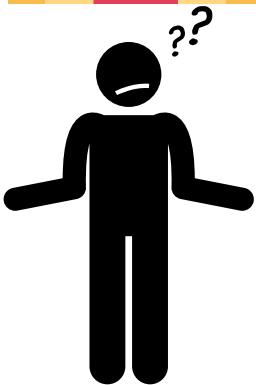
Participants told us that they learnt new skills from the Up the Hill Project.



Participant 6 said he now knows ***“how to be more organised and how to organise yourself and prioritise”***.



Other people told us how the Up the Hill Project helped them to make more choices in their life. Some participants said that after they finished the Up the Hill Project they thought it was hard sometimes.



Participants did not like it when they came back to university by themselves without a mentor to help them.

### **What does this mean?**



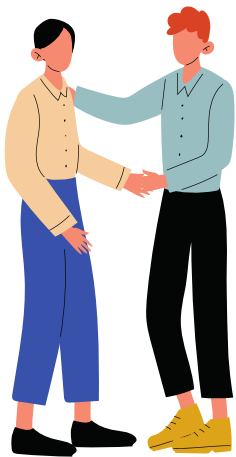
This research found that after people finish the Up the Hill Project they learn new things, meet new people, and get to try new things.



But it would be good if participants could be friends with more people, like people in their classes at uni.



More support is needed to help people when they finish the Up the Hill Project.



This help could be something like having a mentor there if they come back to university, or having more choices when they finish the program.



We hope that this research will help other universities in Australia to start similar programs that help people with intellectual disability get involved in university and help more people with intellectual disability to do good things when they finish university too.

# UP THE HILL PROJECT

## 6. What do mentors think about the Up the Hill Project? (2020)

By Fiona Rillotta, Charlotte Gobec, and Cassandra Gibson-Pope

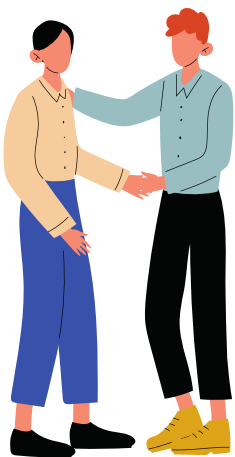


The Up the Hill Project at Flinders University is a program that supports people with intellectual disability to come to university.



People are supported to come to university with help from mentors.

Mentors are other students at the university who are getting a degree.

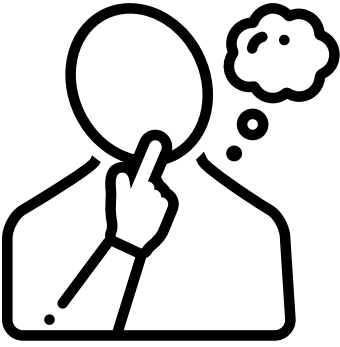


Mentors can help people learn new things, build skills and encourage people to do good things at university.

Not many studies talk to mentors about their experience of supporting someone at university, so this is what we wanted to find out.



## How we got the information



This research wanted to see what mentors thought about the Up the Hill Project.

We wanted to see what was good about being a mentor, and what was bad about being a mentor.



This study talked to 11 people who had mentored someone with an intellectual disability in the Up the Hill Project.

Mentors were asked questions about their experience, like:



- what did they learn,
- what was good about being a mentor, and
- what was hard about being a mentor.

## What we found

The people we talked to said:

- Being a mentor was good
- They liked helping someone to go to university
- They learnt lots of new things



Many of the people we talked to learnt lots of skills when they were a mentor.

Some of the skills are:



- Communication
- Confidence
- Patience
- Organisation
- Teamwork
- How to help someone with a disability

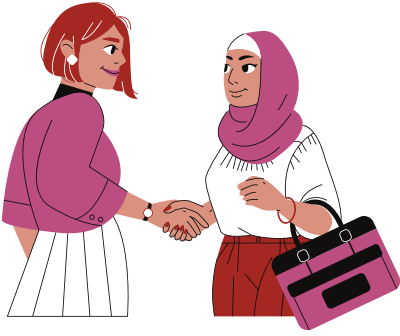


Mentors thought that the experience will help them in their future jobs. Mentor 2 said ***“it’s a good experience especially if you want to work in the disability field”***.



Mentor 9 said ***“it was good to get the experience”***.

Mentors told us that they learnt a lot from the person they mentored. Mentoring was good for everyone.



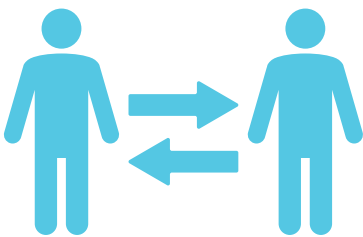
One mentor told us how she learnt from the person with a disability. She said: ***"...I taught her pretty much everything about the uni life, but then she also taught me about how to support someone with a disability"*** (Mentor 10).



The mentors talked about getting lots of support from the Up the Hill Project staff. Mentors went to meetings every week and got to talk to other people about good or bad things.



Sometimes the mentors found it hard to work with other people, like family members, support staff, and people from the community because of attitudes.



Some of the mentors would have liked more time to get to know the person with disability at the start of the program.



Other mentors would have liked to do more activities with the person with disability, like go to the shops or somewhere in the community.

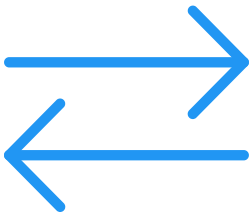


### What does this mean?

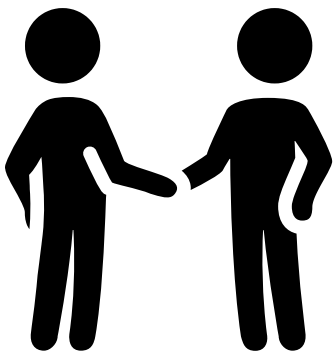
This research found that mentors liked helping people with an intellectual disability go to university.



Mentoring helps them to learn new skills, which will help them for their future jobs.



Mentors thought that some things need to be changed.



Mentors want to meet the person with disability earlier, and start building a relationship. This could make everyone feel a bit better.



We hope that this research will help others understand why mentoring programs can be a good experience for students at university.

**This work was supported by the Caring Futures Institute,  
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For further details about the research please contact:  
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