

WHILE friendsreunited.co.uk helps you keep in touch with friends you haven't seen for years, a new website allows you to make friends with people you've yet to meet.

The new site is designed to help prospective university students get to know others who are about to enrol at the same institution.

So instead of making a long, boring train journey alone with all your worldly possessions, the site may help students meet up with others from the same area to share journeys, find flats or even compare reading lists and swap books.

It's an innovative site that has been running for just one week, but its designers hope it will cement the idea of a university community, put parents' minds at ease and reassure mature students that they are not alone.

Many students in Wales will still have another three weeks before they head off for uni – and often their first experience of living away from home – and may be anxious about making friends and coping with the workload.

But by searching the site for students in the same area, or even for those on the same course, they have the opportunity to share their concerns with peers.

The website – [www.student-ties.com](http://www.student-ties.com) – is also aimed at giving mature students some peace of mind so that they too can see that they are not alone and have the same worries as many others. The majority of mature students will also be local as they may have family, jobs or mortgages which tie them to an area, and so the website offers a chance to meet up before the first day and have someone with whom to brave out those first few days.

But the search options include much more, so that students taking a gap year from



**CONFIDENT:** Starting college may still be a year off for Russell Childs, 17, but he's already making friends online

the same university can link up, those going through clearing can offer mutual support, students who are awaiting A-level results and are hoping for certain grades can speak with other students, as can international students.

The site could soon become an online community of potential students, regardless of the area they are from, will study in, or the subject they choose to study.

Russell Childs, 17, has just enrolled in the upper sixth at Lewis Boys' School in Pengam, Caerphilly, but he has already made a number of friends who he may again see at university next year at summer school in Aberystwyth.

The six-week course at the university sees students working together on a number of skills and those who pass the course are given an uncon-

ditional offer for a course starting in 2004.

"I already know lots of other students from all over Wales and some from England and we keep in touch via an internet messaging service. But it would be good to have a meeting place and get a bit of a friendship going before you go to university, or find out more about what it will be like before you go," said Russell.

"It would be good to have discussions over the internet and see what other subjects people are taking, or if we share any hobbies.

"After the summer course at Aberystwyth I'm a lot happier about going away to university. And I know that my dad would like to know that I'm happy there and get on well with other people."

Russell's two passions are music and languages, and he

would ideally like to find a course that combines the two subjects. So a site like [studentties.com](http://studentties.com) would allow him the chance to find other like-minded friends.

"It would be good to meet up with other people and maybe join a band or find out if we have any other things in common. It would ease my mind a bit because it's good to know there is someone else at uni who has the same interests as you."

Russell's father, Dr David Childs, believes his musical and sporty son – a member of several groups and teams – will have no problems making friends. "He's a handsome boy," he says proudly.

"If he knew anyone who is going to the same university it would be nice for him to link up with them," added the private music teacher.

## Boost to potential s

ASHISH PODDAR, originally from Abergavenny, has set up the website with three friends and they are currently working on it in their spare time, but say they are amazed at the interest it has already generated.

"The website will really kick in in four weeks when students start making their UCAS applications and they can follow people who are in exactly the same position as them and create a network of support," he said.

"At a later date we could even add in an option for parents to talk to parents, but at the moment they have the