

Flourishing Borders is a year long project that aims to encourage good mental health and wellbeing among older people in Scottish Borders.

The project will be developed with sustainability in mind, so that the end of the funded period will not mean the end of activity. We will do this by making older adults active partners in the project, and by inviting people to become volunteers and take on a range of roles. We will also make sustainability more likely by working with existing organisations in the Scottish Borders.

Flourishing Borders aims to:

- Raise awareness about mental health and wellbeing and the benefits of self-management as part of living well with mental health problems and other long-term conditions.
- Show older people self-management skills and how these make a difference for people with mental health problems and other long-term conditions.

What will we do?

We will work in twelve Borders towns and villages at different times throughout the year. This won't happen all at once, and we intend to run a pilot during the summer of 2016 in three Borders towns of varying sizes and in different locations.

We will get to know older adults in the project areas, and will find out what activities are already being provided by different organisations. We will also find out what people might like to see going on that is not happening at the moment. We will work in partnership with existing service providers and organisations.

We will provide taster sessions of activities that are known to be helpful in self-managing wellbeing and mental health problems.

These activities will also be those that are good ways to tackle social isolation. They will also be fun, and will be requested by people we talk to.

Providing these activities and talking to people before, during and after will enable us to test out whether taking part in something new, with people who live near you, helps you to manage your mental health and wellbeing.

We think that the taster sessions might include:

- Music
- Cooking and eating
- Exercise including walking and indoor activities
- Complementary therapies
- Fun activities
- Making things

But we will look forward to hearing what people want to do, and to making it happen.

We have based our list on 10 suggestions for good mental health found in a helpful guide written by the Mental Health Foundation. It may be that the taster activity becomes something that is regularly available, and this might be organised by people themselves, or organised and funded by local funding and volunteers.

How will we know the impact of Flourishing Borders?

- We will have conversations with older adults at every opportunity, and will ask questions such as “what happens when you do more of this?” “how does doing this activity improve your mental health?” and “what is good about this activity?”

The information we find out will be written up in a project report that will help us learn more about self-management of mental health.

- We will be on the lookout for stories of increased wellbeing, and of how people manage their own mental health.

We will be looking to learn directly from older adults living in the Borders about their experiences during the project.

Sharing information about wellbeing and mental health

It may be that as part of the project we run short “wellbeing workshops” for staff, participants and volunteers. These workshops will be a way of sharing information that is already known about mental health and wellbeing and will be a way of passing on links to helpful resources such as organisations, websites and written materials.

Who funds this project, and who are the partners?

Flourishing Borders is led by Outside the Box in partnership with the Borders Community Capacity Building Team, and the Borders Healthy Living Network. It is funded by the Self-Management Fund through the Alliance.

Notes about mental health and wellbeing.

The WHO defines Mental health is defined as “a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.”

Research from The Mental Health Foundationsuggests that we all go through times when we feel down, but those in later life are more at risk of experiencing the effects of poor mental health.

This increased risk may be because “the transition into later life and the life events during this period can trigger anxiety or depression – the death of a loved one, starting retirement, loneliness, financial difficulties, or ongoing health issues are a few examples.”

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