



Happiness Habits Café at Cornmill Court

Where: Trust Housing Association, Cornmill Court, St. John St, Galashiels, Selkirkshire, TD1 3JY

When: 10th November 2016, 1.30-3.00pm

Background Happiness Habits Cafes have been developed by Outside the Box. The sessions in Borders are part of the Flourishing Borders project, which aims to increase awareness among older people about how they can look after their mental health and wellbeing.

Julie Pearson from Trust Housing Extra Care accommodation in Galashiels contacted us in late September to say:

“I was quite interested in your Happiness Habits Café as I manage a housing with extra care development and have a few people who would benefit from structure and changes to their day that is meaningful, we are in the Scottish borders and not sure how that fits in at all, happy to chat about it”

Julie had read about the cafes in the summer bulletin circulated by the Chamber Third Sector Interface in St Boswells.

The Café

Christine from Outside the Box made some posters for the accommodation block and sent them to Julie who put them up around the place to let residents know. On the day, Julie was not available as she was off ill, but her colleague welcomed us and had been round the complex that day to remind people of the cafe. 12 residents attended the session. As usual, we asked people to complete a “how you are feeling before the café sheet”, and this was then re-done at the end of the café: you’ll find out what they said later!

This café was attended by people in their 80’s and 90’s, several of whom live with dementia, and this impacted on the understanding of the questions on the table, and on the conversation. The café was managed by 2 Flourishing Borders staff, which made managing the conversations over 3 tables rather challenging - this was because the staff at Cornmill Court were not able to be free to sit and take part, due to work pressure and colleagues being off sick and staff numbers being lower.

One of the key areas we talk about is: **What helps when you feel down?** Here are the key themes from Cornmill Court:

Connection to others – meeting new people, family, relatives, visitors, being grateful to God, talking to people who understand, talking to my daughter who understands.

Sense of purpose – making marmalade to sell (lady aged 92), baking and cooking, keeping busy, housework.

Hobbies/activities - walking, dancing, crosswords, reading, art and craft, singing group.

There was a lot of discussion at one table about the younger generation and mental health, with the 2 gentlemen on that table suggesting that:

“The war and being in the army had made them stoic and resolved to just get on with life”

“They felt this was why there was more talk of mental health issues these days”

“Young people focus in on their mental health”

People said that they would enjoy more visits from younger people to discuss and talk about things. At that table, one of the relatives and her dad talked about mental health, and said that the table questions had **“allowed them to discuss things that they would not normally talk about.”**

How people felt before and after, here’s a selection of what they said!

Before: Scared, Tired, Not happy

After: Bit happy

Before: Happy, Supported, Friendly
Good about myself, OK

After: Happy, Supported, Listened to,
Good about myself, OK, Tired,
Confident, Cheerful

Before: Happy, Sad

After: Anxious, listened to, Liked
Friendly

Cornmill Court has many activities for the residents, and people had a sense of community and belonging which was evident from many of the conversations. People welcomed and supported the ladies with dementia, and there was no sense of segregation at all.

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The Flourishing Borders project is funded by:

