



Moments of Freedom

- December 2018 Review



Project Background

Moments of Freedom is a project led by Syrian and Kurdish women who have re-settled in Clydebank. The project is facilitated by Outside the Box, funded by The Resettlement Team at West Dunbartonshire Council.

The project began in April 2018 after an initial pilot project run by Outside the Box. Through the pilot project and an evaluation carried out in December 2017, the women identified key areas that they wished to explore further, these centred around building local community links and accessing social activities for themselves and their families.

Based on these areas of interest, we developed 4 broad project outcomes:

1. *Women have the skills, confidence and peer support to navigate the local community, seeking out opportunities for them and their families.*
2. *Increased social capital through improved connections between: New Scots families, community groups, third sector organisations and local authority.*
3. *Improved communication, opportunities and peer support and for New Scots across Greater Glasgow.*
4. *The experiences of New Scots will shape third sector, local government and national government policy and practice.*

2018 Review

Although the project year runs until March 2019, we felt it was appropriate to hold a review in Mid-December. This comes a year after we had used an intersectional approach to plot out a journey that became 'Moments of Freedom'.

Prior to the review we created a timeline that outlined the groups activity from the beginning of the pilot session up to December. We used this to facilitate discussions and inform the next stage of the review. See Appendix 1 for a copy of the timeline.



***“It’s great to see all our work like that,
it makes you realise what we have achieved”***

The Learning Zone Model

Having already introduced the women to intersectional evaluation approaches we decided to use a social pedagogical model called 'The Learning Zone Model'. This was developed by Tom Senninger, a German Educator and Adventurer, based on Lev Vygotsky Zone of Proximal Development. The model encourages us to see positive experiences as learning experiences and helps individuals to understand and expand their own boundaries and 'comfort zones'. We felt that this model may help us to explain to others the approach that 'Moments of Freedom' takes and how the women feel empowered to lead the way.

Through this review we wanted to find out:

- Could 'The Learning Zone Model' be useful when describing the project to others?
- What are the key factors of the project that were important to the women?
- What are we doing that works well for the women involved?

We introduced the model to the women in the following way:

The Zones

Comfort Zone

- Things are familiar to us (people, environment, activity etc).
- We're comfortable and we don't have to take risks.
- This is an important zone as it offers space to reflect, to makes sense of things – it provides us with a feeling of safety.

Learning Zone

- Our comfort zone is lovely – but doesn't offer many opportunities to learn and develop.
- We need to get into the unknown – the learning zone. It's outside our secure space, outside of our control – but it feels 'safe enough'.
- Only in our learning zone can we grow and learn. New discoveries, new skills, new knowledge. We take risks, but they are calculated, safe and manageable.
- By doing this we slowly expand our 'comfort zone' by becoming familiar with more things.

Panic Zone

- Learning in this zone is very difficult, it's blocked by a sense of fear.
- Our priority here is to find protection and stay safe.
- Negative, traumatic experiences are stored in the same part of the brain.
- One negative experience can trigger the emotions of another.
- We can get close to the panic zone, but we don't want to find ourselves in this zone.

** This is not to say that we do not learn from negative or traumatic experiences, but the learning tends to take place when we reflect in our safe place – our comfort zone. The memories are accompanied with painful emotion that we can chose not to revisit, so learning from these experiences can take a long time. **

Transitions

- When moving from comfort zone to learning zone we must be careful not to take too many risks at once or we might find ourselves in our panic zone. All our energy is used by nerves and anxiety.

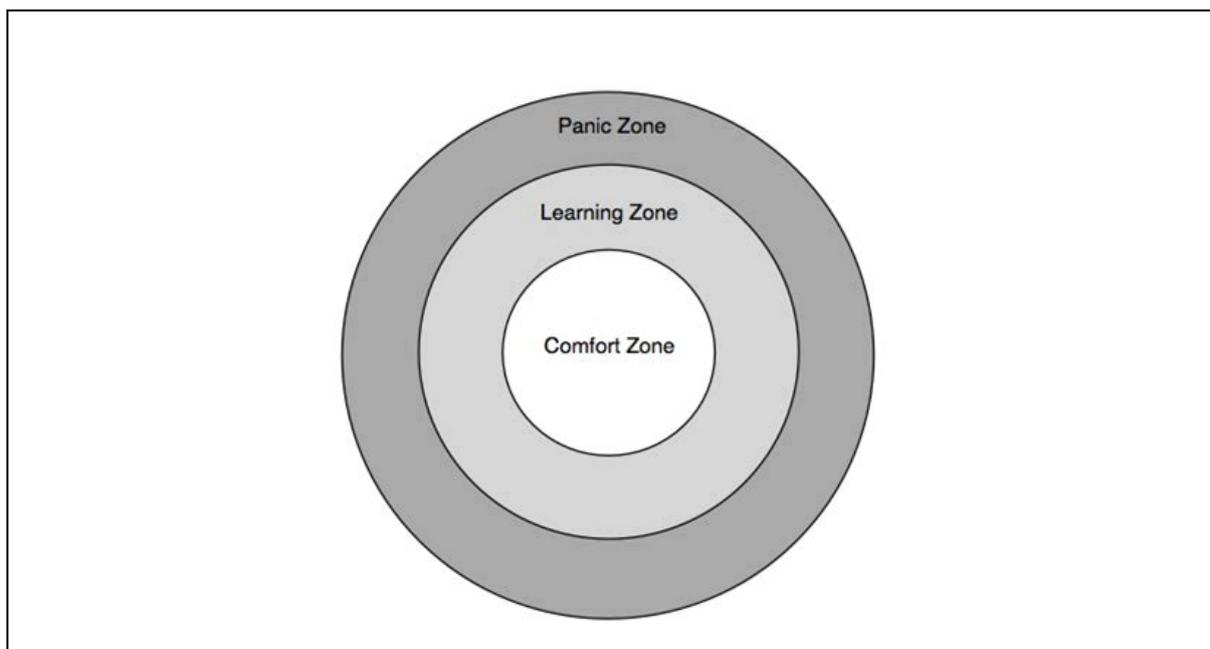
Unique and Individual

- The 3 zones are different for each situation and are different for each person.
- We all have our own unique comfort, learning and panic zones based on our own lives, experiences and current situation.
- In real life the zones aren't as clearly defined. They are fuzzy, wobbly and it's sometimes unclear where our own boundaries lie.
- We must be very cautious when 'pushing' other people – we might push them to their panic zone.
- It's safer to invite people to leave their comfort zone, to create opportunities where people can choose to participate in a learning zone activity.
- As the other people around them, all we can do is value their choices, take it/them seriously, and offer support so they don't enter their panic zone.

This approach to learning enables our learning zones to increase step by step, this in turn increases our comfort zones. We feel that things aren't as difficult, and that life slowly becomes easier as our familiarity grows.

Excerpts taken from Outside the Box staff facilitation notes.

The Learning Zones





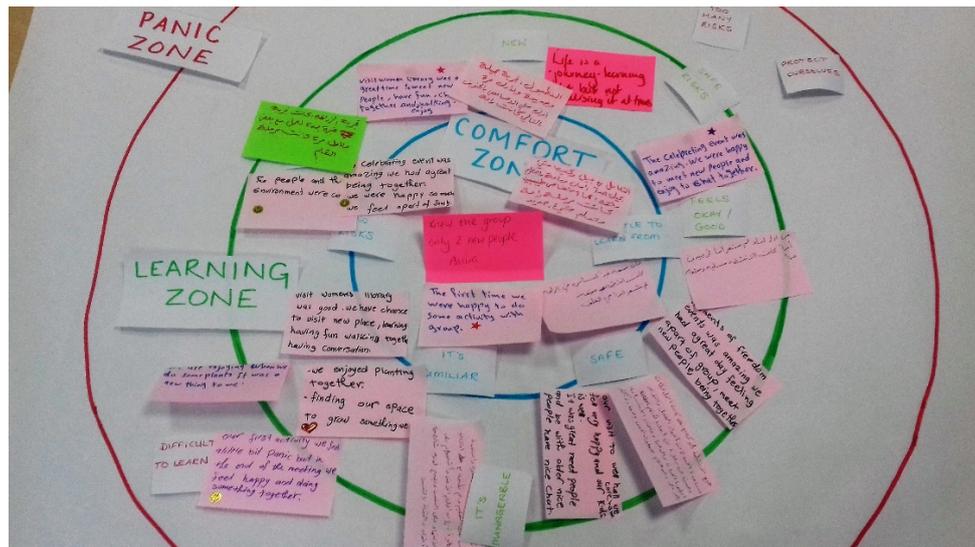
Moments of Freedom December 2018 Review

After introducing the model and using some simple examples to demonstrate how we would use it, we asked the women if they were happy to proceed with the session in this way. They had a positive response to the approach, stating that they had not come across it before but that they liked it, it made sense and they could see how it could help us explain the 'Moments of Freedom' journey to others.

We asked them to reflect on their journey with the project from the pilot sessions to current day and to plot out any activity/ moments/ approaches that contributed to their individual and collective; Comfort Zone, Learning Zone and Panic Zone.

We encouraged the group to share this in whatever way they felt comfortable, and in whatever language they chose. Some wrote in English, some wrote in Arabic and others worked with the interpreter who transcribed the comments.

See Appendix 2 for comments from the session at the end of this document along with evaluative comments collected from the regular group sessions.



Moments of Freedom Group Learning Zone Model

Emerging themes:

- Making meaningful connections.
- Feeling welcomed and being part of something.
- Looking forward, not back.
- Wellbeing
- Confidence to be yourself.
- How we share our learning.
- Freedom.

Moving forward- achievements through Jan-March 2019

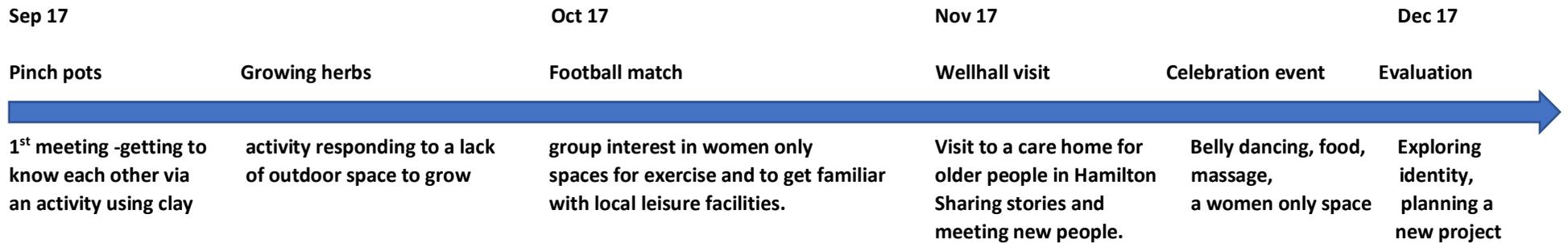
Over the past three months the group have focused on:

- Planning for more Community Gatherings across Clydebank with a 'wellbeing' focus.
- Writing a piece for the 'Clydesider' to raise awareness of who they are and what they'd like to achieve from their work together.
- They have made links with and visited the West Dunbartonshire Women's History group and plan to host them at their next 'Gathering'.
- Have started to plan a summer event as part of the Refugee Festival and a Wellbeing Community celebration event held in Clydebank.

Appendices

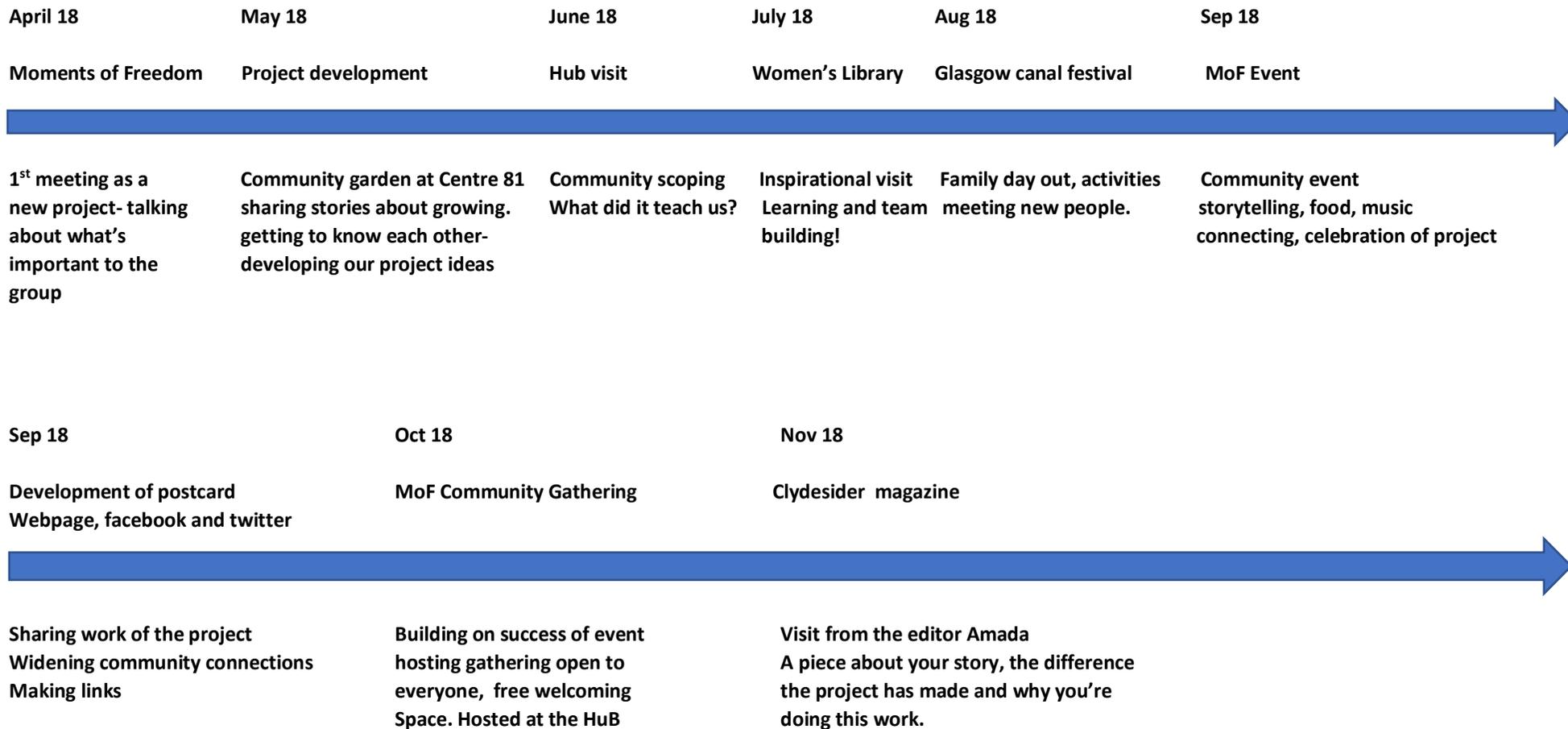
Appendix 1 – 2017- 2018 Timeline

Timeline: pilot project
Sep - Dec 2017



Timeline: Moments of Freedom

April – Dec 2018



Appendix 2 – Evaluative Comments

Comments written in English

“We knew the other women in the group and you were the only new people – that made us feel comfortable.”	“The first time we were happy to do some activities with you.”
“The celebrating event was amazing. We had a great being together. We were happy so much. We feel a part of family.”	“Visit women’s library was good. We have chance to visit new place, learning, having fun walking together, having conversations.”
“The people and the environment were comfort”	“We enjoyed planting together. Finding our space. To grow something we like.”
“Our first visit to well hall care home we feel very happy and our kids is well. It was great meet people and be with older nice people have nice chat.”	“Moments of Freedom events was amazing. We had a great day feeling a part of group, meet new people, being together.”
“The celebrating event was amazing. We were happy to meet new people and enjoy to chat together.”	“Life is a journey – learning a lot but not realising it at times”
“We are enjoying when we do some plants. It was a new thing to me.”	“Visit women library was a great time to meet new people, have fun, chat together and enjoy walking.”
“Our first activity we feel a little bit panic but in the end of the meeting we feel happy and doing something together.”	

Comments translated from Arabic

“It was really enjoyable, I felt relaxed.”	“The activities were fun and interesting.”
“It was a period of relaxation and learning new skills.”	“The relation with Jill and Kate was wonderful, peaceful, relaxed, trustful and respect.”
“They are kind ladies.”	“We never felt under stress.”

“Since the first meeting I did not feel as a stranger.”	“The activities were fun and enjoyable.”
“All the activities we did together were beautiful and interesting. It helped me to be more confident and less stressed to face the others.”	“We felt that we were in our country between our family because Kate and Jill have us a good environment and welcome.”
“They have a smile on their face that let us feel happier.”	“We learnt new skills and really interesting.”
“It helped me to help my children with their homework and transfer this confidence to them and encourage to be more independent so they can have a strong personality and believe in themselves.”	“Dancing: it was a good idea for me”
“It was the first time that I dance in front of new people but after a while I have felt relaxed and peaceful.”	“Football: Good and new experience for the first time. At first I felt scared then more confident.”
“Experience of gardening: it was the first time and new skill for me.”	“Good idea to work as a group.”

To find out more about the project, contact [Jill](#), [Kate](#), [Alice](#) or [Ciara](#) or give us a call on 0141 419 0451.

You can also see what we are up to by following us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) & [Instagram](#)

