



OUTSIDE THE BOX ANNUAL REPORT 2020

OUTSIDE THE BOX IS A CHARITY AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE. WE BEGAN IN 2004 AND HAVE GROWN TO SUPPORT PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES ACROSS SCOTLAND - WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP IN WALES TOO.

WE HELP BUILD STRONG, INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES, BY CREATING THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT ENABLE THIS VISION TO BECOME REALITY.

YOU CAN FIND OUT
MORE ABOUT OUR
WORK BY VISITING
WWW.OTBDS.ORG
OR FOLLOWING US ON



WE WORK ALONGSIDE PEOPLE TO CREATE STRONG INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES.



People, groups, communities and wider society are all connected - so we work in an interconnected way. Outside the Box is about meaningful community development support, whether we're:

- Helping new community-led ventures get off the ground.
- Co-creating and publishing resources which share practical learning and ideas.
- Supporting people to use accessible media, take part in policy and shape the story.
- Or setting up relaxed, enjoyable opportunities for communities to connect!

THIS IS WHAT WE DID AND HOW WE WORKED IN 2020

We supported our team and networks. We built on our flexible, Mum-friendly practices to help each other through the pandemic.

We worked alongside and supporting hundreds of community groups, in local response networks and across Scotland.

We helped people in more than 25 local areas get more involved and shape their communities. We supported people to learn new skills, build social connections, find ways to address barriers and gaps, and develop community wellbeing and support.

We shared what we are doing and learning through over 65 resources and videos. Thousands of people used these to learn and help their communities support everyone - with the benefits reaching tens of thousands more.

We reached people over half a million times online, sharing useful information and connecting people working on similar ideas.

We contributed to national policy conversations and responded to national and local consultations, to feed in issues raised by the people we work alongside. We encouraged and practically supported community members to take part too.

We learned, we co-operated, we grieved, we struggled in moments, found ways forward, we made new connections, imagined different futures - and we worked together with caring, determined people every day.

This annual report will share:

- Some of our highlights from the year.
- How we work with communities, empowering people and contributing to policy.
- The difference our work has made over the past year.
- How Outside the Box is developing and adapting.

2020 is not a year anyone will forget quickly. Covid-19 changed and intensified the challenges people are experiencing, and communities responded with action and care. In the words of the women leading the Moments of Freedom project, "There are so many ways for us to challenge - we do it with co-operation and empathy every step of the way." This has been the story of the fantastic work of everyone in the Outside the Box team.

As a board member I am always awed by the diversity and depth of the organisation's work across Scotland and beyond. It has been amazing seeing good ways of working and ideas flow - helping community groups adapt in the pandemic, using digital media to enable political participation, building age- and dementia-friendly local connections, supporting New Scots community inclusion work in Clydebank, creating spaces for LGBTQ+ families to address barriers - and in many more instances than I can possibly list.

By being creative and staying connected, Outside the Box spent 2020 supporting people to take action, access their human rights, and be included in community.

The report you are about to read will outline how the team have empowered people, communities and organisations to make the world a better place.

Fraser Gilmore
Board Member

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY GROUPS

Covid-19 brought a storm of change and uncertainty. Many people had very difficult things to deal with in 2020 - it's important to acknowledge how different the experience was for every person and community.

Local communities have been compassionate in acknowledging this, and finding ways we can better support one another. Lots of groups and organisations found ways to make a difference, and we played our own small part. So as well as uncertainty and loss we saw connected, amazing community action.

Community groups reacted quickly, finding new ways to support people. At Outside the Box we continued our work enabling groups we were in touch with to adapt, access funding, try out different ways to connect, and find what works. We put communities in touch with each other so they could share, inspire, learn, and work together. We also took active parts in our own neighbourhood

and village Covid-19 responses in a variety of ways - including helping create a lockdown cookbook.

Funding from the Scottish Government Equalities Team enabled us to produce practical resources, making it easier for community groups to respond and older people to get the support they needed. The resources included a shopping checklist for volunteers with ideas for questions to ask the person about their preferences, and tips for supporting your neighbours with food when they can't get out. The response to the resources was great, with community groups telling us that they "made life so much easier for volunteers to do the shopping" and support people in the ways they needed. [The Committed to Good Support resources](#) helped organisations adapt to Covid-19's practical demands, while keeping human rights and equality at the centre.

Christine Ryder, [Community Worker](#)



COMMITTED
TO GOOD
SUPPORT

MOMENTS OF FREEDOM

MOMENTS OF FREEDOM IS A PROJECT LED BY NEW SCOTS WOMEN, BUILDING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS IN CLYDEBANK.

The year has taught us new skills - learning quickly how to stay connected. We secured funding from the Scottish Refugee Council for digital equipment to stay in touch and support our families - we were able to ensure all Syrian New Scot families resettled in West Dunbartonshire were supplied with new tablets and Wifi sims.

At first, during lockdown, we all felt doing wellbeing activities was a good way for us to come together. Taking care of our wellbeing has always been important to us and during a time of such uncertainty, maintaining this space for ourselves helped us through those first couple of months.

Things at a community level were changing so quickly, it was difficult to keep up. It was a worry this would impact on our integration, but we made new associations with local community initiatives by going along to the Clydesider Community Response Network - it's helped us feel we are still moving forward by making new links.

We started to embrace this new normal and wanted to make sure we were still going for new opportunities and challenges. Our links with a broader social connections project meant we could develop digital animation videos with [Mind Waves](#) - something we plan to use in community events we host in the future.

Safaa, Amera and Noura took part in a 'How to write funding applications' training hosted by the Scottish Refugee Council. We then secured a small grant from the Women's Fund to set up intergenerational conversation cafés with older people from Trust Housing in the Western Isles.

Niroz produced the most beautiful, touching artwork and poem to raise awareness on International Refugee Day of the incredible journey refugee families have to take to find safety. Her poem '[Sons of War](#)' and art work was published by the Scottish Refugee Council.

Our major strength as a group is that we take things step by step- growing in confidence all the time. Our drive now is to develop our cultural awareness sessions. These sessions are about sharing what it is to be a Muslim woman whilst learning from others about their experiences and perspectives. Communication is key to understanding each other and makes coming together so much easier- for us, overcoming these obstacles and building our resilience is part of everyday life- it is who we are!

Moments of Freedom



// IT'S BEEN A TOUGH YEAR BUT WE FEEL STILL MEETING THROUGH LOCKDOWN WITH HOME SCHOOLING AND CHILDREN AT HOME, HAS BEEN A HUGE ACHIEVEMENT FOR OUR GROUP. //

// THERE ARE SO MANY WAYS FOR US TO CHALLENGE - WE DO IT WITH CO-OPERATION AND EMPATHY EVERY STEP OF THE WAY. //



MOMENTS OF
FREEDOM
لحظات الحرية

New Scots connecting with communities
"Where we are now is what matters most"

FAMILIES WELLBEING

In the summer of 2020, even people who had felt very involved in their local communities were out on a limb. With the strange pandemic times, we found ourselves cut off from people we were used to seeing every day.

We heard from some families we were in touch with how this was affecting their wellbeing. They could no longer socialise with friends, neighbours or grandparents. With Scottish Government funding via CORRA we were able to support families by setting up virtual peer support groups. Through these groups we also shared a [pack of useful resources](#) for families on topics such as staying connected, cheap ideas for entertaining kids and practical tips on video calls. We asked the families what activities they were missing and based on this we provided a series of virtual activities covering everything from yoga to music to mindful pottery!

The virtual groups and activities helped people stay in touch, and share information and tips. It also helped some families keep in touch with older generations, especially where grandparents lived further away. The groups were supportive and nourishing and everyone treated others with kindness and respect. Groups around Glasgow worked together with local schools and partners so families could access safe spaces for outdoor play, and translate key info into community languages.

From a scant dozen to begin with, our Scottish Borders group grew to 286 members, with new people still joining more than a year later. Although the funding has ended, the members continue to share useful tips on what's on, how to get through the holidays, or even gardening and recipe ideas!

Check out our virtual Families Wellbeing activities on YouTube. <https://youtu.be/htTVZd2voEU>

Ruth Noble, Development Worker

// WE WERE VERY SCARED TO TAKE THE CHILDREN OUT. IT FEELS SAFE HERE WHEN WE COME. THIS IS OUR ONLY TIME OUT AND IT IS REALLY GOOD. //

// KEEPING IN TOUCH WAS SO HELPFUL. AT THIS TIME OF PANDEMIC WE FELT PANIC. I WAS ABLE TO ASK QUESTIONS AND WAS ABLE TO TEXT OR TALK AND IT HELPED TO CALM US AND FOR US TO FEEL SAFE. //

// I WASN'T GOING ANYWHERE BECAUSE I WAS SO SCARED. THE PLAY SESSIONS HELPED ME TO FEEL SAFE OUTSIDE AND TO FEEL BETTER. //



QUEER FAMILIES

The [Queer Families](#) project began 2020 with its usual warmth and fun, brightly coloured finger paints and stories for children – and experiences shared encouragingly among parents in the group. We initially set up the group because we heard from some LGBTQ+ parents they didn't have access to LGBTQ+ friendly and child-friendly spaces. While we couldn't meet in person, everyone stayed in touch and looked out for each other, sharing resources and information.

Families in the group share experiences and support around the barriers and gaps many families face accessing health and wellbeing services. As well as building a safe, welcoming community space for LGBTQ+ families in Glasgow (and Scotland-wide since the pandemic), the group worked together to share knowledge and address the barriers. Led by the community's experiences and priorities, we created a [Support and Advice for LGBTQ+ Families](#) guide and a resource with [Tips for Services working with LGBTQ+ Families](#). The positive feedback we heard from families and professionals was a highlight of the year – alongside the inclusive children's story sessions! We're excited to meet in person and online in the future, and find new ways to share the community learning and wisdom.

Ciara Maguire, [Community Worker](#)



PERMISSION TO DREAM

Whether we're getting together for crafting, kickboxing or to swim in a local loch, [Permission To Dream](#) groups offer a relaxed space for people to support each other to feel better. Laughter is a common theme at our groups; giggling when a craft goes wrong and ends up looking like something funny, laughing as we scream at the cold water.

Read more about how [embracing outdoor community spaces](#) and [unusual outdoor activities](#) helped Permission To Dream stay connected.

Sometimes we don't know what we need to feel better, but we find it through helping somebody else. Our groups offer people connections to others in similar situations, giving each other support and encouragement through the tough times. It has been a great experience supporting the groups, and I feel very privileged to be a part of their journey towards brighter days.

Dani Lisney, [Project Worker](#)

" I FEEL REALLY FLAT TODAY, BUT HAVING THIS GROUP TO COME TO GAVE ME A REASON TO GET OUT OF THE HOUSE. "

" THIS WAS EXACTLY WHAT I NEEDED TODAY. "



COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

// I'M NOW THINKING OF A SOCIALLY DISTANCED COMMUNITY EVENT WHERE WE USE ZINE-MAKING TO GET PEOPLE'S VIEWS AND IDEAS. //

// I HAVE LEARNED LOADS OF NEW WAYS OF SHARING INFORMATION AND STORIES. IT'S GOING TO MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE TO HOW WE DO THINGS AND ALSO HOW WE SHARE. //

// UNDERSTANDING WHAT COMMUNITY SERVICES ACHIEVE LEADS TO MORE PEOPLE GETTING SUPPORT FROM THEM. EVERYONE BENEFITS WHEN THERE IS MORE CHOICE. //

// BEFORE, I THOUGHT IT HAD TO BE A CRISIS BEFORE I COULD GET ANY SUPPORT. NOW I KNOW THERE IS A LOT OF HELP THAT I CAN GET NOW. //

Over the past few years we have been working with Healthcare Improvement Scotland to create ways for smaller care providers and community services to be a bigger part of social care developments, especially in rural areas and other places where there is less choice. This year, it became learning about what had helped community responses to Covid happen and how it can continue as part of the overall services in an area.

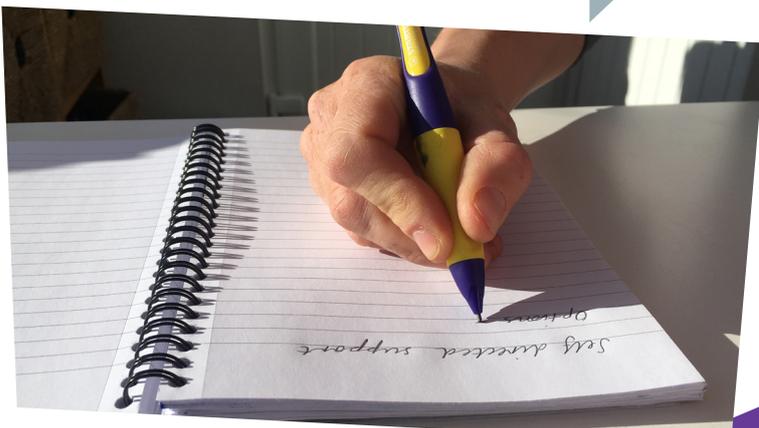
We worked on [Community Solutions](#) in partnership with lots of networks and organisations: innovation hub at HIS, Senscot who support social enterprises, People Powered Results at Nesta, Community Land Scotland, Life Changes Trust, Scottish Rural Action and more. Each of us brought different perspective and skills, and we are looking forward to working together as we take on the ideas and challenges people raised.

We shared the learning from our part of the work in these reports: [Finding the right support](#) and [Showing the impact](#).

Many community groups find it hard to show the NHS and Councils what a good job they do and the impact of their activities for people in their communities. We piloted workshops on methods that can work well, especially for smaller groups. It included making short films, podcasts and booklets, Storytelling, and using an easy participative qualitative research method. The people taking part came from groups doing lots of different things and working alongside people in different situations, and learning about each other was another good part of it.

Groups are now using their new skills to help them get funding, raise awareness of issues that affect their members, be part of policy developments and show how they are part of strong resilient local communities.

Anne Connor, [Chief Executive](#)



DIGITAL BUDDIES

The [Digital Buddies](#) project felt unbelievably wholesome and energising from the start. With initial funding from the Independent Age Grants fund we buddied up older people with friends, family, neighbours or a volunteer to support them to use their device to do what they wanted to be able to do, at a time that suited them. The buddies have been amazing, they have helped people to connect with their families, and participate in local politics and community. They have also helped older people to have more choice in their lives and extra independence through supporting them to shop and bank online. [You can read some of the participants' stories here.](#)

With additional funding from the Scottish Government Community Recovery Fund we were able to create digital ["How to" guides and videos](#), so what we learned can support more people getting digitally connected.

Christine Ryder, [Community Worker](#)

// MY SISTER LIVES IN AMERICA, WITH HELP FROM MY DIGITAL BUDDY WE HAD A VIDEO CALL.... IT WAS THE FIRST TIME I HAD SEEN HER IN 10 YEARS. IT WAS BRILLIANT AND VERY EMOTIONAL, LOTS OF TEARS WERE SHED!! //

// I HADN'T BEEN ABLE TO GO TO THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETINGS SINCE LOCKDOWN STARTED, IT WAS GREAT TO BE ABLE TO TAKE PART AGAIN. //



LOCAL PEOPLE LINKING

During lockdown we moved our 'Learning about Rights' sessions online. We used the same approach as we would in any session, creating digital space for people to explore and understand how equality and human rights are part of their everyday lives - not just concepts.

So far we've worked with over 150 older people and their connections across different communities in Scotland, to hear their experiences and develop our community rights sessions based on this learning. The sessions have taken many forms, from trainings to supportive, open spaces for conversation - all focusing on rights in their broadest sense - cultural, political, social, economic.

We use kindness to bring people together and help them feel welcome, and feel they have space to learn and contribute. It's important to value and nourish everyone's contribution, and build the safety to share experiences. As well as using accessible language and different formats, we work to make it inclusive by supporting the wellbeing of individuals and the group as a whole. Whether in a community space, or digitally from home, listening to one another is one of the most powerful parts of human rights learning.

Jill Keegan, [Community Development Advisor](#)

// MY RIGHTS ARE ABOUT BEING TAKEN SERIOUSLY IN ALL ASPECTS OF LIFE, DESPITE MY DISABILITY. //

// HAVING THE FREEDOM TO MAKE NEW FRIENDS AND RELATIONSHIPS. //

// HAVING ACCESS TO GOOD MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT THAT IS INDIVIDUAL TO YOU AND HAVING PEOPLE AROUND YOU WHO WILL LISTEN. //

RURAL WISDOM

It has been a year like no other. I have experienced some perfect moments, great times of community compassion and problem-solving, as well as deep frustration and cabin fever.

One action which filled me with hope was Burghead's response. Like many communities it was speedy - with local organisations and the church forming a group to provide food for people who had suddenly lost work. What Burghead did differently was deciding very quickly they wouldn't means-test the need for support. They created a 'Blessing Box' of supplies in a public, but discrete, space for anyone to use and decide what they need. I found this response very kind, inclusive and without judgment. Though many said it might be abused, it wasn't - proving that people in general are just great!

Older members of the community mostly led this action - showing how they are caring for and not simply cared for. We wanted to highlight the diverse reality of how older people experienced the start of the pandemic. Whether shielding, key workers, or community volunteers and activists, everyone's caring actions made a difference! This group collaborated with a local hotel to provide Sunday Dinners; offering social connection as well as food. This was a vital point of connection for people feeling lonely and isolated. It's the little things, isn't it?

As a rural Community Worker I hear about public transport all the time - and I'm often unable to help. But last summer, for the first time, I was able to be part of something really addressing it. Hopeman Community Bus had been underused - and tricky to book. And the Lossiemouth GP surgery was hard to reach from smaller communities, especially for people who didn't drive or felt unsafe taking public transport during Covid. As transport gaps play a role keeping economic inequalities in place, transport needs to be part of connected wellbeing solutions. A diverse group of people got together, and really quickly turned the idea of reforming the Bus Committee and sorting out transport for patients to the surgery into reality - in 6 weeks it was working! This was a huge highlight, being part of such quick problem-solving, and with collaboration and funding on the horizon it looks like it'll continue as a truly community-led project.

New collaborations, and funding which trusted communities to deliver support, made possible what would have been difficult before. And new voices are raising issues of hidden need and inequalities. In-work poverty and fuel poverty are being discussed and addressed in new ways. The Moral Climate Assembly is one new project shaping the path - getting going with ambition and energy to include everyone in addressing community needs. We are speaking more - working together -and I can feel the energy to harness community resilience, to solve the issues of now and the future.

Fi Thomson, Community Worker



KINDNESS IN CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

Community Connections developed because people identified that better communication and information would make life better for everyone in their community. COVID-19 hit in the middle of the project, so we worked to find different ways to keep connected while living with lockdowns and restrictions. Our 'Kindness Connects' blog series grew from this and highlighted the everyday acts of kindness that people wanted to share. This soon developed into a Community Newsletter and Community Information Facebook page which have continued to adapt and grow. They provide platforms for local voices and create routes for quick, easy communication. These ideas grew from a crisis but have flourished through the kindness, skills, and commitment shared between friends, neighbours, groups, and local businesses. Read about the local activity in our [practical Community Connections resource](#) and [learning highlights](#), covering everything from digital connections to printed newsletters.

Kate Robertson, [Community Development Advisor](#)

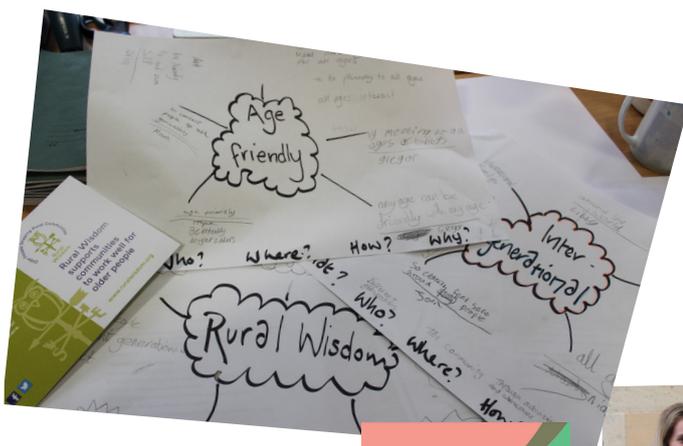
MUMS RETURNING TO WORK

We've had the privilege of listening to the experiences of women and their families about how their workplace rights have been impacted through the pandemic. They highlighted complexities and challenges from access to affordable childcare and information relevant to different family contexts, support for mental wellbeing, dealing with isolation - and in many cases, redundancy after maternity leave.

What women told us and their ideas for positive change shaped our work with employers. So we released a training support pack for workplaces wanting to become more Mum-friendly. Towards the end of the year we held a digital event, to celebrate this and open wider conversations on workplace support and inclusion. In partnership with mums and employers we've been able to create a peer support network, using our [Mums Returning to Work website](#) as a space for sharing learning about the challenges and what works across different workplaces.

The conversations and network of support led to sustainable, innovative ways of supporting teams' wellbeing - with inclusive policies, Living Wage, flexible working, and different kinds of leadership playing connected roles too. As well as taking action in organisations, the women involved in Mums Returning to Work helped shine a light on the importance of nurturing cultures that support equality at work. You can follow [Mums Returning to Work on LinkedIn](#).

Jill Keegan, [Community Development Advisor](#)



MAGIC MOMENTS IN EVALUATION

It was a glorious sunny July day at Wishaw Bowling club when we first began to collect 'magic moments'. We were working with Life Changes Trust, carrying out an evaluation of their Get Outdoors projects that encourage people living with dementia to spend more time outside.

We knew that getting the voices and experiences of people living with dementia and their unpaid carers might be difficult. If we did a focus group we'd hear useful information, but might not understand what's really important to everyone in the outdoors. So we decided to take a different approach by spending time observing and participating in activities, and listening to people so we could gather key moments, pictures, memories and stories. Gathered together, these showed the impact and changes people experienced, and what made them possible. We call these small moments of change Magic Moments, based on this work from the JRF A Better Life programme. <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/developing-evidence-enriched-practice-health-and-social-care-older-people>

So we rolled up our sleeves and joined the group to chat and play bowls. And what we discovered was far more richness and joy than we had ever imagined. We found out about the benefits to people with dementia

spending time outside - the things you would expect like more confidence and better physical health and strength. We also heard stories and memories of lives well lived. We shared the joy being outside on a lovely afternoon with the sun on our faces. The delight and camaraderie at learning a new skill - and for some remembering an old one.

We saw one man arrive in a wheelchair, walk about the bowling green not bothering with his walking stick because he was caught up in the game. And we were all instructed by an expert, who had very few words, but still showed us how to hold and throw the bowl.

None of these examples give us numbers of people involved but they do tell us how the activities and the groups made people feel. They let us focus on the impact; the things we expected or wanted and the unexpected things too. And a key part of success is learning from unexpected barriers and positives - embracing his can make evaluation more meaningful.

We have since used approaches involving magic moments with different groups, supporting them to evaluate their work and experiences. Trying the technique with a community group of young people with learning disabilities, we found it works great online too!

Louise Willson, Deputy Chief Executive



SUPPORT CHOICES

One big part of our work at Outside the Box is helping communities get lasting solutions off the ground. In 2019 we started Support Choices to help older and disabled people and their families get the support they need to have a good life. As we know, people in some - especially rural - areas were not getting advice or access to the different options for care and self-directed support. People in rural Perth and Kinross communities wanted advice in their local area, so the plan from the beginning was for Support Choices to become independent.

This year the Support Choices team continued empowering local people with advice and information, and we worked together to help them get ready to launch as an incorporated charity in 2021. As soon as they stopped coming to our team meetings we started missing having Support Choices as part of our team across Scotland, but it's exciting seeing them flourish on their own. It takes careful planning to get a project to this point and we're all very pleased.

"AFTER WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE TEAM AS WE DEVELOPED THE PROJECT, IT IS GOOD TO SEE THEM FLY. IN OTHER TIMES WE WOULD HAVE HAD A PARTY WITH PEOPLE WHO SUPPORT CHOICES HAS SUPPORTED, OUR PARTNERS AND FRIENDS IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY, BUT AN ONLINE CELEBRATION WITH CAKE HAS HELPED US MARK THE OCCASION! EVERYONE AT OUTSIDE THE BOX WISHES SUPPORT CHOICES WELL FOR THE FUTURE." Anne Connor, Chief Executive, Outside the Box

The communities will always need a source of advice and support, there for them and accountable to them. One of the strengths of small rural organisations is their rootedness in local knowledge, experience, and a shared commitment to address barriers to living well. Now Support Choices is spreading its wings as part of the sustainable local wellbeing economy. By becoming its own sustainable organisation, Support Choices looks to a future where its local roots grow even stronger!

You can check out and follow [Support Choices' website](#), [Facebook page](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

// IT IS VERY EXCITING TO BE PART OF A COLLECTIVE OF CARING AND PASSIONATE PEOPLE.//

// IT'S A PRIVILEGE TO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED WITH OUTSIDE THE BOX AND TO BE PART OF SUPPORT CHOICES' FUTURE.//





THANK YOU

THE WORK THAT OUTSIDE THE BOX DOES TO BUILD STRONG INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES RIGHT ACROSS SCOTLAND WOULDN'T BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF SO MANY OTHERS.

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR FUNDERS AND PARTNERS, TO ALL THE THIRD SECTOR AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS THAT WE WORK WITH, AND TO ALL THE COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHO SHARED THEIR VIEWS AND TIME.

YOU CAN FIND OUT MORE ABOUT OUR WORK BY VISITING OUR WEBSITE

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