

GETTING OUTDOORS: TIPS FOR GROUPS

Borders Buddies is a project started in the Tweeddale area of the Scottish Borders, thanks to funding from Scottish Borders Council's Community Fund. The aim of this project is to reconnect people and groups post-pandemic, especially those who have become isolated and disconnected during recent months. Read more about it here: <https://otbds.org/introducing-borders-buddies>

Recently it has been really difficult for groups to meet up in normal ways. Many have resorted to digital means of staying connected, while others have just lost touch with some members. When Covid restrictions begin to ease, one of the safest ways to get back together will be to meet outside. Outside the Box have been speaking to different groups about getting outdoors: here are some of the tips shared by them.

WHERE TO GO

- It may be easier, especially if there are social distancing restrictions, to go somewhere within walking distance for everyone if possible. This can be a great opportunity to (re)discover the local area!
- Make sure everyone is clear about when and where you are meeting, and what they will need to bring.

FOOD AND DRINK

- For a group – if planning a café/ takeaway visit – phone ahead to make sure they know you are coming – think about ordering ahead to save time, and to be allocated a 'safe slot' if needed.
- Pay contactless - by card or with your phone.
- Is there an outdoor seating area? With social distancing?
- Everyone could take their own flasks + snacks.

WEATHER

Check the forecast and let everyone know:

- Tell people to dress for poor weather, advise waterproofs, layers and sturdy footwear.
- For sun – hats and cream, plan for finding shade.
- Take umbrella(s), small tarpaulins, mats.
- Group fleeces/waterproof fleecy blankets (fire-retardant if you are having an open fire).
- Consider having group set of basics (wellies, waterproofs, gloves, hats?*) – especially if people come from sheltered housing.

*Have 2 sets for hygiene, Dettol spray and leave for 3 days (or wash if possible).

WHAT MAKES A GOOD OUTING?

- Have different options – or shorter routes – for less able.
- Work to the ability of your least able person.
- Make sure everyone is happy with what they are doing.
- Check in regularly – is anyone cold/hungry/tired?

HEALTH AND SAFETY, RISK ASSESSMENTS

- Keep a supply of disposable group masks.
- Think about clear masks if some people are hard of hearing.
- Keep spares in the car or in your bag.
- Take antibacterial/antiviral wipes and hand gel.
- Toilets – consider options and proximity/accessibility, take loo roll and wipes?
- Check the latest Covid rules for groups/social gatherings on Scottish government website.
- Contact tracing: make sure you have everyone's contact details, in case anyone later tests positive and you need to notify others.
- Plan and share risk assessments
- Ensure risk assessments include a plan for emergencies/changes in weather – and know your postcode/obvious landmark.
- Be aware of any relevant medical issues within the group.
- Take First aid kit and have a First aider if possible.
- Ensure you have enough volunteers/responsible people to support the group if one has to be taken away early.
- Plan enough helpers to accommodate different routes if possible.
- Plan to the ability of your least able person.

SUITABILITY AND ACCESS

- Will the activity or venue appeal to everyone? If people are living with dementia, autism or other conditions they may be overloaded or confused by multisensory experiences, loud noises or muddy puddles may confuse or alarm.
- On the other hand a walk with different sights, sounds and smells to enjoy can be a positive experience.

TIPS FROM OTHER GROUPS

- Start small and build up – a short walk to start, keeping it simple.
- Have at least one break involving food/hot drinks/informal chat or sharing what people have seen/found.
- If someone does not want to walk – they could opt (with a buddy?) to get the snacks ready for everyone else.
- Have a rough plan but go with the flow, have a plan B and be prepared to adapt as weather or other factors change.
- Do an outdoor activity then come inside somewhere warm and dry afterwards - an open covered area could be ideal, with space for social distancing.
- Have a walk - collecting photos or natural resources - to talk about or share (digitally) when you get back home or indoors.
- Think about asking a family member, volunteer or others to support the group - they might even enjoy it!
- Allow people to assess and take reasonable risks.
- Record the highs and lows of the outing – what went well? What didn't go well? What would you do differently next time? This could be through informal feedback or photos.
- Carry on via a closed social media group - that way you can share photos, ideas or generally keep the chat going long after the meetup. Anyone who was unable to join you can catch up there and avoid feeling left out.

For more information about Borders Buddies please contact ruth.n@otbds.org, 07711 210431 or see our website: otbds.org

