

# WELCOMING COMMUNITIES

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>

Nearly all communities have a mix of people living in them, including people who have just moved there and people who have lived there for a long time. We all want to belong and feel welcomed in our community. And people living in communities can help to make them welcoming places to live.

At the moment because there are restrictions on where we can go and what we can do, it can be harder for people, especially those that are new in an area, to meet new people and take part in local activities. The term integration is often used when we talk about people who have moved to Scotland from a different country.

Welcoming communities and meaningful integration happens when people have the space to share their skills, make new connections and shape their communities. And it gives communities new perspectives and ways of doing things, new expertise, and energy.

We have gathered some suggestions from people, communities and organisations we work with about ways to make communities welcoming.

Some suggestions include:

- Think about how and where you advertise activities and events - use a mix of traditional ways and social media like facebook and also knock on doors to invite people personally.
- Have local champions in each block, street, or cluster of homes who lets everyone know what's happening.
- Local champions could also welcome new people into the area.
- Talk to people in the street and encourage everyone to say hello and smile.

Creating social lifelines by having activities that are easy to join in and also to talk about and show people such as:

- Litter picks and beach cleans.
- Small gardening projects like weeding and planting shared or communal spaces.
- Swaps and exchanges for things like plants, seeds, extra plants, flowers and produce.
- Daffodil and sunflower competitions - offering help to get people started.
- Recipe swaps and baking competitions.
- Drive way BBQ or bring your own picnics.
- Social distanced walking groups.
- Rock painting - decorate or paint a stone or rock and leave it for someone to find. See how many other people join in. We have heard of a 'snake' made of small rocks in a park that people keep adding too.

Existing groups and local organisations can welcome new people by:

- Offering short taster sessions and encouraging people to try new activities.
- Holding open days to highlight what they do and the ways people can join in.
- Having people who welcome new members and explain about how the group or activity works.
- Encouraging conversations and chats with different people as a key part of the group activity - that way everyone gets to know each other.

**For more information about Borders Buddies please contact [ruth.n@otbds.org](mailto:ruth.n@otbds.org), 07711 210431 or see our website: [otbds.org](https://otbds.org)**

