

Happiness Habits Café at Stow Lunch Club

**Where:** Stow lunch club, Stow Health Centre, Station Road Stow, TD1 2SQ

**When:** Thursday 6th October 2016 12.30-2.30pm

**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.

Lindsey from Flourishing Borders had been meeting with Ian Stewart from the Community Capacity Building Team(CCBT) who’s patch includes the A7 corridor in the Borders. We had been working on offering Happiness Habits cafes to towns and villages where Ian has made links. This area has some isolated villages with predominately older populations, and Ian had made links with Jessica Troughton from the Stow lunch club.

Over a coffee and a chat about the lunch club, Jessica said that she felt many of those who attend are isolated, and may experience poor mental health at times, but that this was difficult to talk about. The Happiness Habits café concept was explained, and Jessica agreed to hold one as part of a lunch club. Jessica was enthusiastic about offering an opportunity to people to talk about mental health as she felt that many of her clients do experience loneliness or isolation, or have had difficult life experiences and that talking about “something that matters” might be helpful.

We agreed to come along to the lunch club on 6th October. Ian Stewart from the CCBT had previously attended the lunch club to have a chat with members about the services in their area and to start to map out what was missing and pull together a leaflet outlining the available services.

Jessica Troughton runs the lunch club with 2 helpers. It serves a regular clientele of people and has been running for a number of years. It meets twice weekly for 2 different groups of adults, although there is some overlap, and a few adults attend both days. It provides a 2 course hot lunch and tea/coffee plus time for social interaction.

**The Café**

On the day we attended there were 16 adults having lunch, many of whom are collected by the 3 volunteers and driven to the lunch club, 3 volunteers, and 2 of us.

The laminated Happiness Habits café conversation cards were placed on the table as we ate together, and people were invited to talk about the issues. A short introduction on mental health and wellbeing was given by Lindsey from Flourishing Borders.

We used a short before and after evaluation sheet, and people had to circle the words that described how they were feeling before the café session, and then complete it again afterwards.

The conversation was based on the following questions:

* **We all have times when we feel down – what helps at those times?**
* **What are your top tips for coping with life?**
* **Keeping active is a great way to boost your wellbeing – what do you like to do to keep active?**
* **Staying in touch with people is good for our wellbeing – what’s on and what’s missing in the local area?**

**We all have times when we feel down – what helps at those times?** I have learnt to recognise when I suffer low mood and how I can deal with it…the anniversary of the death of a loved one etc. I walk, I do something and plan to be with friends etc,I watch a lot of tv during the winter at night time - When it gets dark earlier and colder, I close my door and settle in form the night - It takes my mind off my worries for a bit.

I like to listen to the sound of happy children playing in the playground

**What are your tips for coping with life?** Being active and involved in local activities and clubs, I like the company and the chat of being in a group, chat to the neighbours – talk and smile to everyone in the village,Keep in touch with family – I look forward to family visiting me if they don’t visit, I phone or text them when I need to chat - I don’t like texting, but prefer chatting!

Take a hot bath and listen to the radio, I keep healthy and visit the doctor regularly if I have problems, try not to worry, take everything in your stride, help your fellow men, I stay connected with family and take holidays with them, mix with younger families

**What do you like to do to keep active?** I walk as much as I can, even if the weather is dull. I like to be outside**,** I read newspapers and books and I like learning new things**,** I keep as active as I can**,** I get out and about and use my bus pass to visit Edinburgh for the day**,** I do housework, I like ironing**,** Volunteering gets me out of the house to meet new people**,** Keep active but don’t do too much or you get too tired

**Staying in touch with people is good for our wellbeing – what’s on and what’s missing in the local area?** The lunch club is a good place you can eat well and healthily and chat to nice people,camera club, horticulture club, lunch club, choir

Conversation was open and offered willingly. People seemed to be happy to

talk about how they cope with life, and what helps them.

One gentleman talked animatedly about how much he enjoys the camera club. A lady from the other side of the table had not heard there was a camera club, and wanted to come. He agreed to go with her to the next meeting, and she was really excited about this, as she had enjoyed photography in her earlier life.

There was a discussion about the impact physical activity has on your mental health and how they changing demographic of the village has impacted relationships.

**Impact of change in village demographic.** There were conversations between people about how the changing demographic in Stow had altered what people do. It was felt that a lot of commuters now live in the village, and although their children go to the village school, the adults are not part of the community, as they are away most of the time. It was noted that there used to be regular coffee mornings in Stow, but that these don’t happen now as people have got older and the younger folk don’t organise things like that.

Wind Farm money is also give to Stow for community projects and a few people felt that this had meant that people don’t fundraise anymore, and this had also meant that coffee mornings were not required.

There was a sense of sadness at the lack of interaction between young and old.

Several people were glad to have the Post Office and shop, as this was seen as a hub for information and meeting.

The coffee shop is up for sale, and several people were fearful that if it closed, it would mean a loss of a good place to meet.

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

**Before:** OK, Tired **After:** Happy, Confident, Cheerful

**Before:** Lonely, Sad, Fed up, Dull **After:** Relaxed, Fun, Friendly, Cheerful

**Before:** Happy, Often lonely, OK, **After:** Cheerful, Listened to, OK, Happy,

 Tired Well fed

**Before:** Relaxed, Unfit, Frustrated, **After:** Fun

 Cheerful

We will be following up with the Stow lunch club in early 2017.

**Contacts for Happiness Habits Cafes:**

**Christine Ryder,** Communications & Resource Worker with Outside the Box**.** christine@otbds.org. Mobile: 07921 265515

**Lindsey Gray**, Associate Worker with Outside the Box

lindsey@spinningfish.net Mobile: 07865 081369

Outside the Box

Unit F10, 150 Brand Street, Glasgow, G51 1DH

Office: 0141 419 0451

Website: http://otbds.org/projects/flourishing-borders/

 

The Flourishing Borders project is funded by:

  