

Outside the Box Annual Report 2015-16

outsidethebox



About Outside the Box

Outside the Box works with groups and people across Scotland to help them make a difference in their communities.

We are a small, independent charity. We give practical support that enables people to have the confidence and skills to establish new ventures and sustain what is already there.

We encourage people to think of themselves and other people as citizens who should have a voice and who can make a contribution.

Over the years have learned about the issues that affect the thousands of people and hundreds of groups with whom we've worked. From this, we understand what sorts of community development support work best in different situations.

There is more about the organisation and the people who work with us at www.otbds.org

What we did in 2015-2016

During the year we worked with 21 projects.

- 720 people were directly involved in the projects.
- Around 900 people benefitted directly from the activities or peer-based information and tips that we delivered.
- Around 7,000 people then benefitted from the activities delivered by groups we worked with and helped make happen.

Themes that continued to run through our work over this year were:

- Having different conversations
- Creating more inclusive communities
- People having more choices in their lives
- Building strong, sustainable organisations and groups.



This year was a period of change for much of the work we do.

- Some projects ended when the wider policies and programmes they linked to ended or moved into a new stage in their implementation.
- Other areas expanded and we got new projects underway.
- Groups and teams we work with were making changes in what they do, to reflect changes in their environment, and we helped them review what they had achieved and plan for new developments.
- We knew that new programmes were planned for the next year or so. We wanted to be ready to take part when the opportunities arose.
- Some people who worked with us moved on to do other things, so we restructured some aspects of how we organise the work to adapt to new opportunities.

We also wanted to reflect on what we had achieved and learned.

- We saw gaps emerging where we could make a contribution.
- We found there were different ways of looking at issues and situations.
- We looked for ways to work that would be more effective in supporting people to make changes that matter to them and make a greater impact from the work we do.

Examples of how our work developed

Practical support for older people

This year, just over half our work was with older people. Over the past few years we have been hearing from older people about situations that they find difficult and their ideas on what could help them create better solutions. This year we worked on several projects that give practical solutions to these problems.

Having the right house is as important for many people as having the right support. For some people there are decisions to make around their home as they get older. Do you make your current house work better for you, and continue to live in the place you know? Or do you move to somewhere that is more convenient and safer, but risk losing contact with friends, the services you like and other contacts in your community?

In the Moving Assistance project, we brought suggestions from older people and their families and good practice. It was developed in Falkirk to meet a gap that the Housing Department and older people had noticed. We worked in partnership with the Make it Happen Forum, which is the independent collective voice for older people in that district. Now, the set of 5 booklets are benefitting people across the Falkirk Council area and can also be used by people living in other areas.

Older people in Falkirk were also part of a project to develop tips for older people around ways to enjoy alcohol and be safe. Changing health and other factors that affect us as we get older can make modest levels of alcohol more risky than for younger people. We worked with several groups that bring together older people and carried out research to find out how people use alcohol and what sources of support and advice they find helpful.

These tips are now being used by older people and their families and by community groups that support older people. NHS teams and other services can also use the tips as part of the work they are doing to reduce risks around alcohol use for older people.

We had been hearing for some time about the difficulties many people with dementia and their families and friends have around food. This year we started to develop Borders Food Buddies, which is funded for 5 years by the Life Changes Trust as part of their peer support programme. Food Buddies is finding practical solutions for people affected by dementia around food – planning what to eat, shopping, cooking, eating at home, eating out and anything else that worries people. This is a new approach for us, but the longer timescale will let us try out new ideas and develop activities that we know will take time to have an impact.

People in Falkirk heard of the Food Buddies project and said they would like to do something similar. Here, people identified a bigger gap – challenges for people affected by dementia and other long-term health problems, plus people affected by social isolation, which had been a difficulty for some people who were worried about their own or a friend’s use of alcohol. Together, we came up with suggestions for additional solutions and a 3-year Falkirk Food Buddies project is now getting underway.



Conversations about how communities can work better for older people

Wisdom in Practice has brought together development support to groups and activities led by older people, tips to share experience and ideas with more people and discussions of the issues that affect older people. This project was funded through the Scottish Government Equalities Fund from 2012 to March 2016.

We helped people get new services started. We also heard about the wider context – of the ways society can set out to support older people but end up creating dependency and marginalising people, of the ways older people contribute to their communities, and what a good life means for people as they get older.

In summer 2015 the Scottish Government invited people to be part of U Lab. This is a course developed by a team based at Massachusetts Institute for Technology that encourages people to reflect and learn around their role in making change happen. Hundreds of people across Scotland took part, along with thousands of other people all over the world. We decided to use this opportunity to develop our skills and to look at how we could support a different conversation around the ways older people are part other communities.

A small group of us got together – people from Outside the Box and from other organisations. We asked many other people we knew for their ideas and

encouraged them to have local conversations. We then shared that through the wider networks that supported the work everyone was doing as a part of U Lab.

“It’s how we see the world. That’s the starting point. It is people claiming the right to be positive and make a contribution, however old or frail we are.”

“See this as time to enjoy your interests and hobbies. And if you don’t have any, it is time to get some. Try lots of things and you’ll find what is right for you, and meet interesting people along the way.”

“Be braver.”

The conversations highlighted the gaps for older people who live in rural communities. We already knew this from the work we did with local groups and from conversations with people working in public services and organisations that provide care and support. Many people find it hard to deliver models of support that were designed for towns to people living in rural areas, for example. New ideas and approaches are emerging, but it can be hard to find out what is happening in other places.

During this year we talked to people from other parts of the UK and heard about their challenges and the practical solutions that people are creating. We then talked to the Big Lottery Fund, who were beginning work on An Ageing Society, which is a major programme that will run over the next 5 years and supports projects working across the UK. We put in an application for a partnership project with Volunteering Matters Cymru and the National Development Team for Inclusion.

In late 2015 we received a grant for a short project, to let us have discussions with more people in more places and look at how our ideas for a bigger development project could work. This has put us in touch with people who focus on sustainable rural communities as well as people who are interested in finding new ways to deliver services that work well for older people.

The Voting Champions workshops were another way to encourage and hear the voices of older people. This was a series of events in March to help people be ready for the 2016 Scottish Parliament elections and EU Referendum. These sessions were run by Outside the Box and the National Development Team for inclusion, as a way to build the confidence of staff working with older people to understand how people who had limited capacity or living with poor health can still vote and take part in the other aspects of the electoral process. We worked as one of the Electoral Commission’s partners and linked with other organisations promoting electoral participation. The workshops planned with Scottish Care, the Care Inspectorate and other partners as a way of giving people a voice and building the skills and confidence of care providers.

Peer support among parents



MUMS SUPPORTING MUMS

In summer 2012 we began working with partners in rural South Lanarkshire, Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway to develop peer support-based community activities for mums who were at risk of poor mental health and wellbeing. The Mums Supporting Mums project began in 2013 and developed a network of local activities which have gone on to benefit hundreds of parents (mostly mums) and their children.

We continued to talk to parents about the challenges they face and what could help them. They included dads, LGBT parents, people whose first language is not English and people who are far away from their own families, and parents of teenagers who found it difficult to get through this next transition.

From this, we developed plans for new work to develop peer support for a wider range of parents. This year we received funding from a new Scottish Government programme to take this forward and work began in Spring 2016.

We also started finding out how various types of community support could work for parents who need some extra advice and support on practical matters. This is part of a project that is also looking at the experiences of other people who need a small level of practical help and encouragement, such as young people who are living on their own.

“Some help on ways to cope as a family when I’m having a spell of poor mental health would be good.”

“Hearing about people in other places helps. It is sad to know they also have problems but it is reassuring to know it is not just us. And I find that seeing what other people can do cheers me up.”

Permission to Dream



Outside the Box worked with Grampian Opportunities and other partners to support smaller, user-led support providers when the new Self-directed Support arrangements began a few years ago. We worked together on Getting There, which gave a place for user-led groups to learn from each other. We also raised the profile of small and micro (very small) support providers and the contribution they can make to creating more choices.

People told us how information and choices for people with mental health problems was a big gap, and very few people were taking advantage of the increased flexibility SDS makes possible. Part of the difficulty was that the starting point for SDS is enabling people to have the type of support that will let them realise the outcomes that they want to achieve. But when someone has low confidence and does not think they can have a dream, they tend to stay with task-focussed services: help to keep the kitchen clean, rather than help to live independently and have friends who they can invite round for tea, for example.

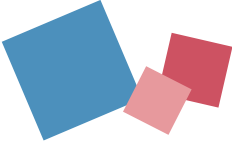
In 2014 we ran the first Permission to Dream events. We shared a good practice resource that we had asked Rich Watts at NDTi to develop for us, as it helped to have examples and evidence from other parts of the UK where people were a few years ahead on a similar policy and practice initiative. People from GO and other groups in Scotland shared what they were doing. Participants were able to follow up the contacts and ideas and use these in their local areas.

The event in Spring 2015 brought people together again. People described their dreams and the dreams they had for people they knew. Some were from people using services but most were from workers who were looking for ways to encourage people they supported to have wider aspirations.

This year, we took it a stage further and asked people in local areas what their dreams were for themselves. We used the approach that GO had learned was successful in small groups where people could encourage each other to think about their dreams. They had found that when people had low confidence they did not have ambitions for themselves but were often good at supporting someone else in a similar situation. Now we are looking ahead

to ways we can develop this approach further and share the approach with more people.

People we met through Permission to Dream also took part in the Voting Champions workshops. We had designed this to enable more older people to get the support they needed to vote. But groups that supported people with mental health problems - and people with other disabilities and younger people - were also keen to take part. We adapted the programme to include the issues that affected this wider group of people. The mixed group of participants included people who live with health problems as well as workers and volunteers, and more people were able to benefit.



“I want to live on my own, so I can eat when and what I want, and come and go as I please.”

“My dream is to climb Arthur’s Seat (which means I need to get fitter and find a friend to do it with me.)”

“I would like someone besides my dog to listen to me and try to understand.”

“I would like to be part of a group of people and do things.”

Opportunities for people who have complicated lives

We have worked with Tomorrow's Women in Glasgow for a couple of years. This service supports women who are in touch with the criminal justice system and who have a high risk of re-offending. All the women have complicated lives and are in touch with a wide range of services for their mental health needs, addictions and Children and Family services. We were supporting women who receive support to have greater participation in the way the project runs as well as in the services they receive.

We heard from people at Tomorrow's Women about the difficulties they often had around access to health services. We talked to more people about this and heard similar challenges facing other women who had additional challenges. This year we used a small grant from the Scottish Government to go out and hear the experiences of more women on the challenges they have faced in looking after their health and what has worked well for them. We also heard from staff about what they have learned about encouraging women who live in difficult circumstances to look after their health, and followed up the good practice. From this, we brought together suggestions on approaches that could benefit women in other places.

This year we also began working on a 3-year project that will explore how people in touch with the criminal justice system can use the flexibility in the Self-directed support arrangements for some of their social care needs. This is a partnership with Turning Point Scotland and the Glasgow Community Justice Authority. We are building on the experience we gained from earlier work that was part of the national capacity building programmes to support the implementation of SDS, and our experience of working with Tomorrow's Women.

During this year we also began working with Shelter, supporting a small staff team to carry out an innovative project. Shelter want to develop better response for people who have particularly complicated lives. Often people are in touch with many services but still find that their needs are not met because they do not fit with the way services are organised. We are working with Shelter over the coming year to check out what types of support - services, informal peer support and community resources - people do find helpful, and then to plan how Shelter can work with other organisations to give a response that works well for people in these circumstances.

The experiences and insights we are hearing from each of these projects are contributing to the others. On several occasions we have been able to ask people we have met through one project to help people who are part of another. We are now planning more ways to share what these projects are doing, to support staff working in difficult circumstances and bring more benefits to people whose needs can sometimes be overlooked.

“This has made a huge difference for my mum and for me. She’s feeling much more in control of her life now.”

“Tips on partnerships are great. We now have better communication with colleagues in other teams as well as with community groups.”

“Being part of the project has given those of us who use services a lot more confidence.”

“We learned that it was easier to include people than we had assumed – practical, achievable steps and more confidence that we are on the right lines.”

“The event was great – welcoming, upbeat, realistic about what is not right, what can change and how it will take time, and positive about what we all can do.”

“Outside the Box helped us put our message across and helped keep our group going when we were stuck.”

“Thank heavens for today. It was hard but good to talk about the difficult stuff.”

“It started with 2 mums talking in the playground. We’ve come so far since then.”

“It’s good to be able to learn from other projects: find out what works and what people wouldn’t do again.”

“Be prepared to be surprised about what communities can do and the lives and experiences older people have, and continue to live.”

“It’s nice to be with people who understand how scary change is and are still cheerful.”

“The whole process of Getting There was empowering.”

Income

We received grants and contract income from a range of sources. We want to thank all the organisations and people who supported our work.

- Alcohol Research UK
- Angus Council and NHS Tayside
- Big Lottery Fund
- Dumfries and Galloway Council
- Falkirk Council
- Falkirk Reshaping Care for Older People Change Fund
- Foundation Scotland
- Glasgow Community Justice Authority
- Gordon Fraser Trust
- James T Howat Charitable Trust
- Life Changes Trust
- NHS Borders
- Robertson Trust
- Scottish Government Equalities programme
- Scottish Government Health grants programme
- Scottish Government Self-directed support capacity building grants programme
- See Me
- Shelter
- Voluntary Action Fund
- Other voluntary organisations

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