



OUTSIDE THE BOX ANNUAL REPORT 2021

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.

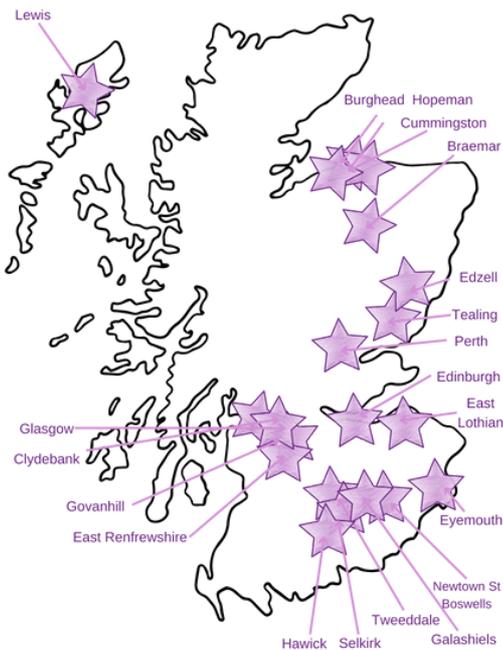
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WE WORK ALONGSIDE PEOPLE TO CREATE STRONG INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES.

OUTSIDE THE BOX IN 2021

In 2021 we continued our focus on supporting different connections for people, groups, and communities through the pandemic and other challenges. We worked in person and using digital technologies, to help develop new partnerships and networks and include more people.



THIS YEAR WE...

Worked together with more than 100 community groups and organisations creating sustainable community solutions.

Supported over 1500 people, in 40 local areas across Scotland to be more involved and shape their communities.

Created 10 biteable videos, 8 digital workshops, and 42 resources reaching more than 5000 people.

Contributed to national policy conversations and responded to national and local consultations feeding in the issues raised by people we work alongside.

And we **assisted and cheered on** two projects that started in Outside the Box - Central Wellbeing and Support Choices - to become new independent organisations.

KEY THEMES IN OUR WORK

There are key themes that run through everything we do:



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I have retired as Chief Executive at Outside the Box and Louise Willson – formerly our Depute CE – takes over as the new Chief Executive. For me, this is a very positive and exciting stage for Outside the Box and I know Louise, with a strong board and a wonderful team, will be doing great things in the future.

In many ways it is the last step in what we set out to achieve almost 20 years ago. At that time, a few of us knew of people who wanted to do good things for their communities but were struggling to get development support. What they wanted to do did not fit the way things were organised.

- The gap they saw was for people with lived experience, but they saw themselves as more than people who used a particular health or social service and wanted to change how society worked for them, or at least one or two aspects of that.
- They were part of more than one equalities community.
- They were concerned with their natural local community, but that didn't fit any arrangements for Councils and formal services, and even straddled across Council and NHS Board boundaries.
- They didn't know whether to become a charity, or a social enterprise, or a community association, or just do this one activity – and hadn't heard of these so didn't think of going to a dedicated source of support.
- They wanted to influence and change how other people do things, and to be part of making things better.
- They had other things happening in their lives and didn't have the time or resources to get to the office of people who could give them support.

So a few people got together and we set up Outside the Box. In the past 18 years we have worked with over 1,000 small community groups, people starting on their own with an idea, and people in bigger organisations who want help to do something different. For us, the success is life being better for people and people and communities knowing there are more choices and opportunities that they can follow.

Every day I am amazed at what people do and the impacts they make. We've worked alongside people in lots of different circumstances – this mostly started because we heard people describing a problem that wasn't getting picked up yet, or a pal told them we were worth talking to.

Looking ahead, Outside the Box will keep working with people we know and getting involved with new communities and their priorities. Louise and the whole team are looking forward to working with you.

Thanks to everyone who has helped us and worked with us over the years, and good luck in what you are doing.

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Anne Connor,
Founder and former CE of Outside the Box



MOMENTS OF FREEDOM

Moments of Freedom, led by New Scot women resettled in Clydebank – is a safe space for women to come together to be themselves, make connections, share their skills and expertise to shape their local community for the meaningful integration of their families.

'Ever since our group sessions have returned to Centre 81 in real life, we have been talking a lot more about our favourite foods and recipes we tried during lockdown.

We talked about different desserts that are eaten during religious holidays in Syria. One of the women shared her favourite, Maamoul cookies, a butter cookie that can be filled with dried fruits or nuts. Other recipes shared by the women for desserts like Knafeh and Qatayef led to wider conversations about food. Food is an important part of cultural sharing, and it has been interesting to find out about similar dishes between the two cultures. We have started to share these recipes and foods on our Twitter and Instagram.

In early August we hosted an online cultural sharing storytelling event, with older women living in Trust Housing in Lewis. This was an incredible experience of learning about the history of life for women on the island and seeing the parallels of women from different generations across two different cultures. The stories we shared highlighted what home means, the ways it can affect your identity and how people perceive you. We're planning more community events about sharing what it is to be a Muslim woman, while learning from others about their experiences.

We wrote a story in the Clydesider community magazine on how we'll welcome new families from Afghanistan and help set up peer-support. Lots of people pick up the Clydesider for stories, poems, competitions and interesting things happening locally, so it's a good way to share our story with people in Clydebank. Local media and networks are helping us stay connected with the local community, making new links and moving forward to create meaningful inclusion together.'



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The year has taught us new skills - learning quickly how to stay connected.
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In the fast-changing world, we've all had to find different ways to share our story. We've tried out Canva (a graphic design app), and are looking at different ways to use photography, audio, and other story-telling tools to share our experiences and connect with people.
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Thanks to funding and support from West Dunbartonshire Council and the AMIF New Scots Refugee Delivery Fund.

FAMILIES SUPPORTING EACH OTHER

The Families Supporting Families projects are creating space for peer support, community leadership, and building connected networks.

We published our Mums' Peer Support research report, looking at the impacts of informal peer support for mums and their children at different life stages. The stigma surrounding mental wellbeing is still prevalent for many mums, and there are gaps in provision, inclusivity and access - including for mums living rurally.

The report emphasises the preventative role informal peer support can play within communities. Informal peer support can create safe spaces to talk about emotional wellbeing and build meaningful relationships based on mutual understanding and support. We shared resources to help people set up activities, like mums' practical tips for setting up buggy walks and keeping them going. To get things going that are accessible and enjoyable for families, it starts with everyone's needs and the skills and ideas they bring.

Queer Families has continued to grow and evolve. We have been making new community connections, and our monthly peer support group has seen new members join, and existing families grow. Meeting up in Rumpus Room, a cosy local youth arts space, we have tea and chat, do creative activities and make art, or head outside to connect with nature - using play to centre children's rights and giving whole families a chance to build friendships.

Community storytelling and peer support through the perinatal period is really important, especially for families whose experiences are less understood and supported. We've worked with new partners to develop more focused events, looking at Fertility Systems and Support for LGBTQ+ parents, and sharing Queer Birth Stories. The group is continuing to explore access to services and good support, and build capacity to support each other and challenge barriers.

The Families Supporting Families projects are growing all the time, and we're excited to see what the future holds!



CONSULTATIONS AND CONVERSATIONS

Supporting consultations, participation, and opportunities for good conversations is a big part of what we do.

This year we were commissioned by East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership to carry out some community engagement around community-based services for people with complex needs. We used a creative approach to engage with people, and gather stories, views and experiences to influence the next stages for the service. We met with community-based organisations like the New Beginnings Club in Dunbar and Neighbourhood Networks and observed and participated in activities, to learn about what matters to people.

We brought everyone together and facilitated a workshop session for everyone to explore ideas and options for the future – what support works, what creates barriers, what’s important for the future? And, because creating accessible opportunities to have a say is never one-size-fits-all, we also held small conversations with people using services, unpaid carers, and family members. Having afternoon tea and a chat with some carers was a wonderful, relaxed opportunity to bring in their insights. It was brilliant getting to know people and helping pull together all their ideas and priorities to advise and shape the services they use. Online or out in the world, we love finding creative ways to help communities develop their plans.



“ It was really important that we talked and listened to people in the community about what was important to them. For community consultation, the best people to ask are Outside the Box. ”



RURAL WISDOM



Rural Wisdom supported older people to shape and influence their rural communities, to have their voices heard, and act on the issues important to them. Funded by The National Lottery Community Fund it ran from 2017 to 2022 in nine areas across Scotland and Wales.

Over the 5-years the project adapted based on what we were hearing from communities and what we were learning from each other. The project evaluation highlighted how crucial this was to the success of the project, especially throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Shared learning opportunities were built into the project from the very start and were a focus in the final year of the project as we hosted seven 'Conversation Starter' learning exchanges. From Older People's Commissioners to mobile men's sheds, fuel poverty to dementia friendly communities, we brought together over 250 people to share their ideas and wisdom.

Over 8,000 people were involved in the project, contributing to policy making across Scotland and Wales to ensure long-lasting national impact. The project secured £390,000 in grants for local communities and helped local groups secure another £740,000 for their local activities. One of the greatest legacies of the project is the network of relationships between local people, community groups, and organisations across Scotland and Wales.

These networks will continue to support the local people and communities who have taken on ideas and activities and made them their own. While the project has come to an end the partners, associations and relationships developed will ensure older people's contributions will continue to be recognised and valued for years to come.

“ It has changed how we work. Before Rural Wisdom we would never have held events in Eaglesham. It's a project of opportunities for individuals, communities and for HSCP - it's made such a difference to our knowledge and understanding of the community and the people who live there. ”

HSCP East Renfrewshire

“ Rural Wisdom is about making more people aware of older people living in rural areas, what we need, what we contribute and what the impact of this is for everyone. ”

Scottish Borders resident

“ Rural Wisdom gave me these opportunities. It's so exciting to even be considered and has given me such confidence to do more and take on new things. ”

Moray Resident



A joint project with Volunteering Matters Wales and the National Development Team for inclusion, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund.

FOOD NETWORKS

Building sustainable, local networks to make sure everyone can access enough good food, and enjoy being in a supportive community for sharing and learning.

LINKS in Eyemouth is supporting families with the cost of living with fun, community-driven activities around access to food. 100 families in Eyemouth are now working with local networks to share recipe bags – using warm, genuine peer support to ensure families have confidence, knowledge and access to healthy food, benefits and budgets information. Our worker is a mum herself and is constantly out in the community speaking to people, building access and connections in a genuine way, often while delivering a practical cookery demonstration.

LINKS has a strong local base and is reaching more families through networks – doing family cooking and outdoor activities too. They're working with the Eyemouth Gateway to Good Health pilot, Changeworks, Housing Associations and other organisations on addressing the cost of living, so families dealing with it have a say in planning solutions.

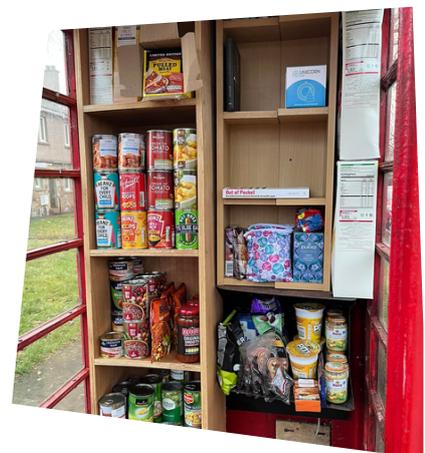
Mums and families in Eyemouth are involved in developing what happens, so it suits the needs of people in the area. As well as benefitting from community events planned and led by the community, people are gaining confidence to run their own activities. For example, one mum is going to hold an event to teach people how to make a Polish soup.



“ LINKS Eyemouth has made us feel like we are part of the bigger picture, where we are sharing things around food, recipes and budgeting to make sure our families get healthy food.

The support is amazing and getting to know people - it's gone from strength to strength even during lockdowns and being cut off by storms!

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Thanks to funding from Dronehill Windfarm Fund and National Lottery (Together for a Better Planet) with support from NHS Borders.

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS IN THE COMMUNITY

Not everyone feels comfortable about meeting up with others when Covid restrictions ease, even if the guidelines tell you it's ok. We set up [a project in the Scottish Borders](#) to support people to get together in a way that feels right for them. We started with a focus on outdoor connections and finding ways to make local spaces feel safe, from walking to community gardening and sometimes indoor activities too.

Pulling together different groups' tips on making activities Covid-safe and accessible, we created hints and tips postcards to share around and post to friends.

As well as evolving into lots of opportunities for outdoor community learning, participants have found new ways to connect people online. Borders Families Wellbeing started as a Facebook group to keep families connected in Lockdown. It's evolved into a self-driven group with regular posts on free and low-cost activities for families, mums and everyone else. The 286 members share what they know to help each other out, and make sure resources are getting to people who need them. They also attend local events to share information and do sign-posting to services and opportunities.

Access is multi-faceted, and we can all need support to navigate barriers in our digital, social and physical worlds. For one person who took part, the genuine peer support to get out in the community, build confidence and connect with different people led to her taking action around barriers that affect lots of people locally.

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It was only when I heard about Borders Buddies that things started to change a bit for me. Thanks to the support they gave me, I was able to take small baby steps, gradually getting out further on the mobility scooter. There are so many obstacles to overcome – things like pavement clutter, potholes, parked cars and lack of dropped kerbs.

My feelings of helplessness gradually turned to feelings of empowerment. If it was difficult for me, it was difficult for other people too – and that wasn't good enough! So I've been in touch with the local Access Panel, the Community Council and others to try to fix it. These things can take time but I'm feeding into a council map of dropped kerbs and raising awareness. When I go out I speak to other people with mobility issues and we share our stories.

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INCLUSIVE IMPACT AND EVALUATION



We have begun to use our inclusive evaluation approach with different people, community projects and in different settings. It is such a versatile approach that works well for everyone including people with learning disabilities, people living with dementia, staff members and partner organisations. We work with people to identify and gather their 'magic moments'. These are the small but significant moments that show the difference in people's lives.

This year's highlights include working with...

PEOPLE FIRST FRASERBURGH to review the impact of the 'Lend a Hand' service. 'Lend a hand' offers advice and support around money, budgeting and benefits advice for people with learning disabilities.

“ I feel so much better. There's no panicking now. I am coping so much better with things because my money is sorted out. ”

SUPPORT CHOICES, a free community based independent service helping people organise social care and Self-directed support across Perth and Kinross. We talked with people and families who used the service, partner organisations and staff.

“ Working with Support Choices was the first time I thought someone is going to do something practical that will make a difference for us both and it did.” ”

PARKINSON'S ACTIVE PROGRAMME, facilitating an online review and planning discussion sessions with people connected and participating in the Active programme.

“ Exercise is for everyone, it's never too late to start, it may help manage symptoms and it boosts mental health and wellbeing. ”

RURAL WISDOM SCOTLAND, a partnership project that was about improving the lives of older people living in rural communities by listening and helping people to develop new activities and initiatives.

“ We have been talking about kindness and compassion in communities and thinking about what makes a good place for everyone. It's clear to us that strong communities have a place for everyone and especially young people.” ”

HUMAN RIGHTS IN OUR COMMUNITIES

Our Local People Linking project supported older people from diverse backgrounds and their wider community to come together around their rights, to take action, shape local activities and services important to them. During lockdown, we worked digitally with Neighbourhood Networks members from across Scotland to co-produce and deliver our community-based learning about rights sessions and resources. These were about extending our awareness of human rights in everyday language, so that collectively we can take ownership of our rights and inform what human rights approaches mean to us.

Key themes that came from our learning are: raising awareness and using language that is accessible to everyone, that access needs to be inclusive and intentional, collectivism enables empowerment, staying accountable (from decision makers and with ourselves), intersectionality and non-discrimination- when change takes place it needs to be reflective of people's different experiences.

“ Communities make human rights come to life. ”



In our work with communities across Scotland, we helped people feed into policy and share their lived experience on human rights in everyday life. We connect people with different policy channels, like meeting their elected politicians, and joining parliamentary groups and interest networks.

We also gave contributions to national policy conversations and responded to national and local consultations, highlighting issues raised by people we work alongside and making it more accessible. These included responding to Scottish government consultations on Mental Health & Wellbeing, A Fairer Scotland for Older People, National Care service, A Bill of Human Rights.



Thanks to funding from the Scottish Government as part of the Promoting Equality and Cohesion Fund and Equalities and Human Rights Fund

WHEN IDEAS SPIN OFF AND GROW ROOTS

Positive change needs a whole network of people working in tandem, so our strategy involves lifting up and supporting different community projects so the whole landscape can flourish. We work with people to think about the sustainable – or regenerative – future of local places. How they can be inclusive, human rights-based, and meet the needs of workers, community members, and the environment at the same time?

Small groups and organisations are often part of the answer, so we share our learning and experience in every way we can, from inclusion to business and governance. Throughout 2021 we've been staying in touch with countless projects which have taken on ideas in the communities we work with, from digital participation to accessible gardening and outdoor activities.

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You can't change communities if you don't involve everyone.

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This year saw two of our projects in Scotland spin off and incorporate as charitable organisations. As well as creating their own paths, they'll always be part of our Outside the Box family.

[SUPPORT CHOICES](#) gives independent social care advice and support, to enable people in Perth and Kinross to make good choices around the support they want in Perth and Kinross. It became an independent organisation in December 2021 with the staff transferring over. We miss the Support Choices team in our Outside the Box meetings, but it's wonderful to see them continue to thrive.

[CENTRAL WELLBEING](#) has set up to fill a wellbeing support gap in the Falkirk area. We've been working in Falkirk for a few years, around peer support activities that support people's health and wellbeing for people experiencing poor mental health, and for people living with dementia. During 2021 we worked with the staff and community to set up an independent SCIO called Central Wellbeing. It's going from strength to strength, delivering these services and building local sustainability and leadership at the same time.

Our website has a library of resources for community groups and anyone who wants to find more ways to make what they do inclusive and impactful.

Collaboration is the Outside the Box way, so we always welcome questions and chances to share learning. Please do get in touch if you have an idea or want to work together!

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 TIME, KNOWLEDGE AND GOOD IDEAS.



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