



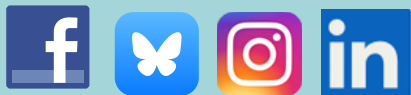
# OUTSIDE THE BOX ANNUAL REPORT 2024

OUTSIDE THE BOX IS A CHARITY AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE. WE BEGAN IN 2004 AND HAVE GROWN TO SUPPORT PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES ACROSS SCOTLAND.

WE HELP BUILD STRONG, INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES, BY CREATING THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT ENABLE THIS VISION TO BECOME REALITY.

YOU CAN FIND OUT  
MORE ABOUT OUR  
WORK BY VISITING  
[www.otbds.org](http://www.otbds.org).

OR FOLLOW US ON



WE WORK  
ALONGSIDE PEOPLE  
TO CREATE  
STRONG, INCLUSIVE  
COMMUNITIES.

## OUTSIDE THE BOX 2024

In our 20th year we kept learning and using our human-rights based approach to support community-led creativity, action and influence.

We supported people, groups and communities to build different connections and find ways to navigate challenges. We worked with people in new areas, developed new partnerships and networks across the UK, and worked with people turning good ideas into reality across Scotland.

## THIS YEAR WE...

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

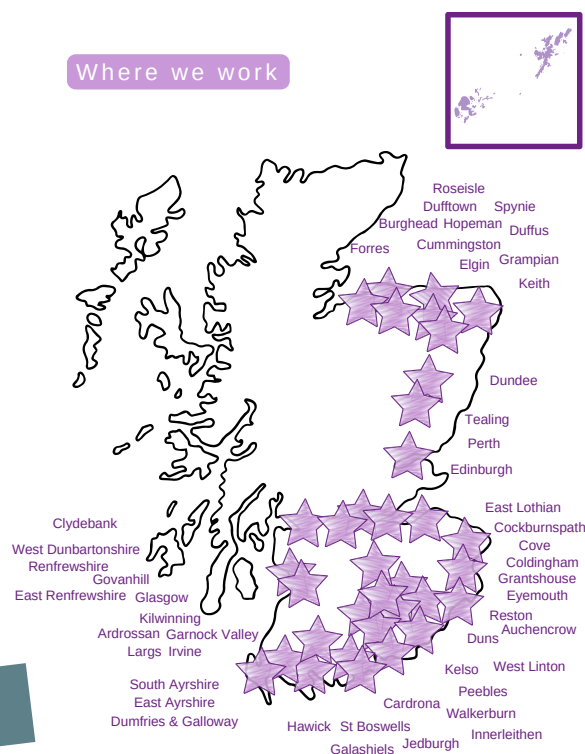
**Supported** over 2000 people, in 18 local authorities across Scotland to be more involved and shape their communities. 7500 more people were indirectly impacted, like community group members and people benefitting from new initiatives.

**Created and helped communities create** over 40 resources, and other creative media like film and poetry.

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



Where we work



Welcome to the Outside the Box annual report for 2024. This is our 20th year as an independent charity and social enterprise working across Scotland with people and communities who want to develop new ideas and initiatives.

**Our highlights this year include:**

*Queer Families* - gaining funding from the National Lottery Community Fund to support the existing peer support group for LGBTQI+ families in Glasgow and to establish new groups.

*Moments of Freedom* - supporting the group to make new connections across Scotland and create new resources which support cultural integration.

*Climate Chat* - working with people and groups who face many challenges to explore small everyday changes we can all make to tackle climate change.

**Our social enterprise activity has increased this year and includes:**

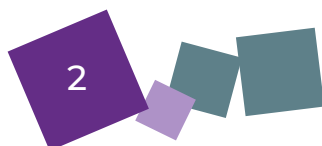
- Designing and delivering over 30 local community drop-in events in Southwest Scotland as part of the formal consultation for a National Park in the area.
- Community perceptions survey and focus groups for a nature restoration project in the Trossachs: Wild Strathfillan.
- Exploring ways to increase participation in a community café and foodbank in Levenmouth.
- Facilitating family friendly workshop sessions for working parents in Cornwall.
- Consulting with people with acquired head injuries on the service they would like in Renfrewshire.

Thank you to the staff and board for their tremendous hard work and creativity that supports our work and makes a difference to people's lives. Thanks to all of our funders.

Thank you all of the partners – from the biggest services to the tiniest community groups supporters, community members and friends of Outside the Box who make the work possible.

Everything worth doing is best done together!

*Louise Willson, Chief Executive, 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

The women of Moments of Freedom had a busy 2024. They created new resources, hosted events, strengthened community relationships and even visited the Scottish Parliament.

In February the group welcomed over 50 attendees from across the community. The women wanted to host an event that brought community members together in a comfortable, approachable space where they could get support and information about organisations operating where they live with the help of the interpreter.

In June, the group hosted a community gathering in Centre 81, Clydebank as part of Refugee Festival Week. The women were joined by local Councillors, staff from West Dunbartonshire Council, HSCP, third sector and community groups. In July we successfully recruited a Project Worker to support our work in West Dunbartonshire, this includes our work alongside New Scots and the Moments of Freedom project.

The group spent the summer working with the Clydesider Magazine doing creative workshops. A huge part of their work over the last few years has been around food and cultural sharing, and this has included cooking and preparing Syrian dishes for members of the West Dunbartonshire community. The resource that came out of the sessions is now being used to help other New Scot women across Scotland, sharing their tips, advice and even their favourite recipes. You can download it here: [A flavour of new life](#).

The women also visited Carleith Primary School to talk about life as New Scot families in West Dunbartonshire. The group finished off the year with a visit to the Scottish Parliament with Marie McNair MSP who also came out to the group to hold two advice surgeries.



“What a model you’ve got for demonstrating practice in action”

Partner organisation



Thanks to funding and support from West Dunbartonshire Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund, ASDA Foundation, Scottish Refugee Council and the Robertson Trust

# Queer Families

## Peer support and community among LGBTQI+ parents, carers and families

In 2024 the Queer Families peer-support group kept growing, with over 50 different families joining our 12 monthly in-person events in Glasgow. Our monthly get-togethers are set up to be a relaxed third space – a free, LGBTQ family weekend gathering, where people can drop in and connect with other parents and carers sharing similar experiences. People describe it as a space where they can discuss challenges or exclusion they face, feel understood and supported without having to explain everything, and talk about life as LGBTQ families.

We know parenting can be quite an isolating experience, and everyone needs community around them. Some people find it's particularly isolating if they're only talking to non-LGBTQ parents who don't face the same barriers and assumptions, and don't always understand. So we make sure to have space for peer-support conversations, as well as fun, creative ways to spend time together.

This year we planted wildflowers together, played in the yard, and made toys with air-drying clay which we then used for imaginative play and stop-motion animations. We hosted a fun family friendly film event in March at the Deep End, curating it together based on the families' needs and interests. For example, as well as short films aimed at nursery age children which showed LGBTQ family as equally natural and positive, we included animations with penguins, cats and foxes – animals the children were really interested to see!

We tried out different kinds of storytelling across the year, so everyone could shape the story and build a space that supports families' sense of belonging and connection to their environment. After reading inclusive storybooks together, parents had the idea to create our own storybook too. The parents and children shared a lot of ideas and together we started planning a story about helping families feel welcome in their community.

We can't wait to keep working on our storytelling, host another film event, and take part in more events for connecting with our wider communities in 2025.



The Queer Families Project is supported by an award from The National Lottery Community Fund, made possible by National Lottery players.



# Future & Chosen Families

## Queer Future Families

Over time, more and more people started getting in touch with the Queer Families group, asking if we knew of any space for LGBTQIA+ people planning to start families. It became very clear that a lot of people needed a community peer-support space for their family-starting journey, especially as it often takes many years, and LGBTQIA+ people face specific barriers. We heard how isolating it was, dealing with those barriers for so long without having space to get together and talk to people going through the same thing.

So in 2024 we started with online peer-support events, which then led to in-person gatherings too, for all LGBTQIA+ people wanting to start families in Scotland. This includes people planning to conceive, to access Assisted Conception Services (e.g. for gamete storage, IUI and IVF), to adopt, foster, or use surrogacy, to form families based on Queer Platonic Co-parenting, and other paths. The community also includes people facing various barriers – for example finding some options aren't on the table due to fertility, income and finances, background, marriage or civil partnership status, disability and other factors as well as their gender or sexuality.

This project is set to continue and grow, in collaboration with community members and based on their needs. The priority will be to make sure there's a regular, welcoming space where everyone can connect for peer support around their access to LGBTQIA+ reproductive rights and journeys to starting families.

## Queer Chosen Families

In April we also started a monthly peer support group for LGBTQI+ people and the people they see as their family. Each month the group tried a new activity from crochet, to cooking to identifying trees. Some sessions were even led by the members themselves. During the year we also held online sessions on topics of interest such as human rights, where we looked at specific LGBTQI+ rights, and the law, including family law.



*Thanks to funding from the  
Communities Mental Health &  
Wellbeing Fund*

# Multiply Adult Cooking

As part of the legacy of our LINKS project in Eyemouth we received UK Levelling Up funding to deliver a series of adult cooking classes in the Borders. These were with a view to supporting numeracy skills but they also helped develop confidence, cooking and nutrition skills, team-building and general employability and social skills

We ran a series of classes in Eyemouth, Galashiels, Jedburgh and Duns. We covered basic cooking skills using our own equipment and specially designed visual recipes. These recipes were very popular as they were accessible for everyone.

The numeracy covered happened incidentally within each class: weighing, measuring, estimating, converting, timing, multiplying and dividing and much more played a part. People were having such good fun – and focusing on the food – that they didn't notice they were doing 'maths'!

Since delivering these classes we have been asked to deliver further sessions, and we can also offer 'train the trainer' classes to support other groups to deliver this sort of thing themselves. At least one of our groups is looking for further funding to enable them to continue to meet and cook simple healthy meals together.

It was also interesting and useful to network with the diverse range of additional projects funded by Multiply, to share ideas, learning and challenges and make new connections.



*Thanks to funding from UK Levelling Up Fund through Scottish Borders Council*

# EAST RENFREWSHIRE EQUALITIES FORUM

In autumn 2023, East Renfrewshire Council contracted us to establish a new Equalities Forum for the area.

Between September 2023 to May 2024, we worked with community groups, organisations, and service providers to encourage and support local people to participate in this new Forum and create a Terms of Reference to guide good practice going forward.

In May we held a successful launch event for the Forum, recognising and celebrating progress, showcasing the Terms of Reference, and setting dates and locations for future meetings.

In December, the Forum invited us back to deliver an interactive training session for members on inclusive communication and language. We collated the ideas from this session into a resource shared with members and continue to engage and work with the contacts we made.



“

*We really need something like this for East Ren. We're looking forward to taking part.*

”

You can find further information about the Forum on our website or you can email [listening@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:listening@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk).

# Borders Buddies

Building networks of social connection and support in the Borders

Borders Buddies ran in the Borders as a two-year project thanks to National Lottery Community Fund (Improving Lives) funding. This enabled us to support people in wider outlying areas of Tweeddale as well as people in the Hawick area of the Scottish Borders.

## Summary of activities

We started with a model of setting people up with a Buddy to support them to get out and about a bit more, do things they enjoy and make connections in their community. As time went on some of the Buddy pairs were asking us for group activities, so we ran a series of activity sessions in each area. Activities offered ranged from art and crafts to new age kurling, all with an important element of tea and chat! These sessions attracted a mix of people of all ages and abilities, the youngest being pre-school, the eldest in their 80s!

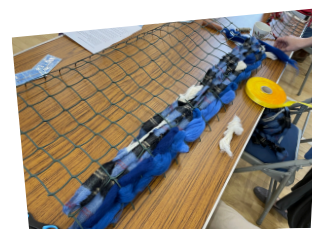
## Summary of outcomes

Borders Buddies supported people who were isolated to have more connections in their communities, improve their mental and physical wellbeing, join other groups and meet old and new friends. Some of the Buddy volunteers helped out at the activity sessions, giving them a platform for trying out their own enterprise ideas and building their confidence at delivering a group session.

## Legacy of Borders Buddies

Although the Lottery funding has now finished, several Buddy pairs still continue to meet up, having established firm friendships. Several other groups and organisations have come to us for advice on setting up a Buddy project, and we have modified the model to work with others, for example adults with learning disabilities.

As part of the bigger picture, we continue to feed in our experience to networks. We have also managed to secure some additional funding to continue with a few more activity sessions in the Tweeddale area.



*Thanks to funding and support from National Lottery Inspiring Lives*

# Climate Chat

We started working with communities on the Climate Chat project in 2023 thanks to Scottish Government Climate Engagement funding. The project's aim was to chat with communities, focusing on equalities groups, in engagement activities around climate action. We supported them to undertake small but practical everyday actions to reduce their carbon footprint, and to talk about what they were doing and how they felt about climate change. It's important that everyone in the community can feel that they can do their own wee bit to help fight the climate crisis.

From January to March 2024, we created over 15 resources in English and Arabic which were distributed to groups across Scotland. We held climate conversations with Moments of Freedom and completed a climate audit with the women to make their group more sustainable and eco-friendlier.

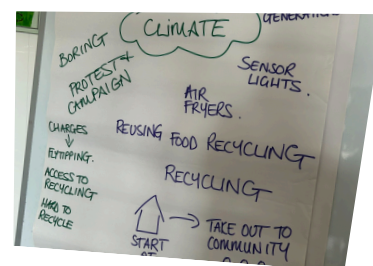
We supported the Eaglesham & Waterfoot Community Food Larder at one of their events by chatting to villagers about local climate action and little things people can do that can have a big impact. We chatted about recycling, public transport, food waste, community gardens and most importantly – food sharing! We provided climate goodie bags for attendees which were filled with vegetable and wildflower seed packets, a mini vegetable seed planter and information about food sharing in East Renfrewshire.

The project helped people to:

- Improve climate literacy, in terms of understanding what climate change means for them and their community and what actions Scotland is taking.
- Increase confidence and positive feelings about talking to others about climate change and action, and having a voice at a local and national level.
- Increase practical understanding and engagement in actions they can take in their daily life and in their local communities on climate change and where to find information and advice.



“ Making greener changes to the group like buying plastic reusable cups, cutlery and refreshments in bulk has saved the group so much money and helped them become much more sustainable ”



# Connecting Equalities



Through our Connecting Equalities project, we support diverse groups of older people to connect their everyday experiences with human rights and equalities

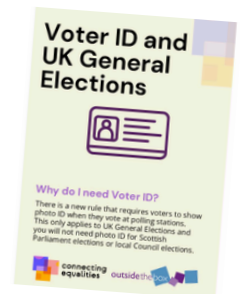
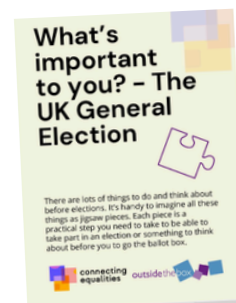
We delivered human rights training sessions to a range of groups in 2024, beginning with a planning day for the New Beginnings Club (nbc), focusing on human rights and responsibilities aimed to encourage members to become more involved in running the group and taking on new tasks. We took a creative approach to our sessions in North Ayrshire exploring everyday rights with a group of adults with disabilities using collage. In Greener Peebles we created posters on human rights to support group discussions on incorporating more of a human rights approach into planning, policies and practice.

We continue to develop our free human rights in communities training offer for professionals and this year our sessions in West Dunbartonshire and East Renfrewshire included how to represent a human rights and equalities approach in funding applications.

For the UK General Election in July, we created a range of new resources: Voting at the General Election – A Guide, What's important to you?, Voter ID, and UK General Elections: Useful words to know. To get these timely resources into people's hands, we took them on visits to community groups across Glasgow and North Ayrshire and delivered a fun, interactive session with nbc in East Lothian.

We continued to support Springwood Village Residents' Association to develop their policies, procedures and board membership. This led to working with the Scottish Confederation of Park Home Associations (SCOPHRA). Most park homeowners are older people and SCOPHRA approached us to work with them to develop their offer to support more residents' associations across Scotland.

We remain active members of the Cross-Party Group on Older People, Age and Ageing in the Scottish Parliament and the Older People Strategic Action Forum (OPSAF).



# SCOTS SYRIAN ROSES

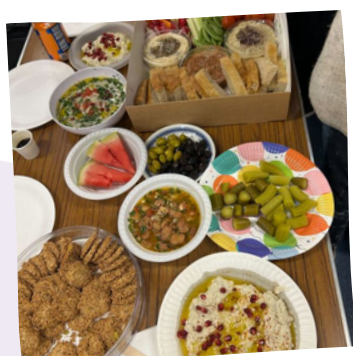
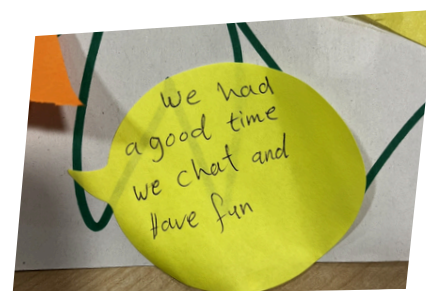
Outside the Box began to work with the New Scots women's group, Scots Syrian Roses, in May 2023. Scots Syrian Roses are a women's community group of Syrian New Scots who have resettled in North Ayrshire. We worked alongside the group to explore meaningful integration, their valuable contributions to community life, shared learning, networking and more.

From January to May 2024, we met fortnightly in North Ayrshire and worked with the group to increase their community connections, access to services and enhance their group activities. We played lots of indoor kurling, badminton, created resources, facilitated trips and speakers and enjoyed lots of lovely Syrian community breakfasts.

We arranged for KA Leisure's Activator Bus to come to the group to deliver free health checks to the women with the help of an interpreter. The Strathclyde Law Clinic came out again to run a follow-up Public Legal Education session and offer individual follow-up appointments in Glasgow.

11 of the women travelled by minibus to attend the Moments of Freedom Community Gathering in Clydebank and were introduced to national organisations who were able to offer information and support, such as Social Security Scotland.

Our time with the group concluded with the creation of a flyer and poster for the group to share with the community and organisations, describing their purpose and hopes for the future. Over the length of the project, we worked with the women to increase their community connections, access to services and enhance their women's group activities.



# IncludeAge

The IncludeAge project is a 3-year research project, led by Dundee University, focusing on how we can improve the inclusion of middle to older aged people (40+) with Learning Disabilities and/or people who identify as LGBT+ by learning about their experiences of being included in physical places and online spaces.

The goal is to build on what people tell us and to use this information to develop possible solutions to make communities more inclusive.

The work in 2024 focussed on interviews and continuation of the Place Study.

As community partners, Outside the Box will support the shared learning from the project through workshops, exhibitions and wider knowledge exchange.

We are looking forward to seeing the project develop further in 2025.

You can find out more about the project here: <https://includeage.co.uk/>



# Community consultations

Supporting inclusive community consultations, evaluation, and development is a big part of how we work to help communities thrive

Over the past year we've supported a wide variety of organisations, all working to have positive impacts on their communities across the UK.

## Inclusive community consultation

Good consultation is a powerful tool, connecting people and valuing their knowledge.

Over the past year we've continued to do consultations tailored to each context, building on strengths and making sure people feel listened to.

Our consultations have helped organisations gather evidence for funding applications, create plans that reflect their priorities and develop new services. Working with skilled graphic facilitators also helps us capture conversations and create local plans and roadmaps.

## Dumfries & Galloway

We were contracted by NatureScot to deliver 30 in-person and 3 online community consultation events. The purpose of the events was to share information about the proposed National Park and to find out what people thought about the proposals and their community.

We designed creative, accessible activities divided into 2 themes: sharing information and gaining people's views about the specifics of the proposal, and generally gaining views and feelings about the proposal overall. We spoke to a total of 1160 people across 3 local authority areas: South Ayrshire, East Ayrshire and Dumfries and Galloway.

## Renfrewshire

Renfrewshire Council commissioned us to find out what people wanted from a new head injuries service.

In October, we met and consulted with people with an Acquired Brain Injury, their carers, family members and professionals across Renfrewshire at six focus groups, an online survey and a community visit.

We are thankful to all who shared their experiences, opinions and ideas which we presented in a detailed report for Renfrewshire Council and a summary report for participants. This valuable feedback informed the creation of a new head injuries service in Renfrewshire.

“

We enjoyed working with the team at Outside the Box. Their flexibility and the speed at which they were able to get things in place was impressive. The inperson sessions I attended were certainly delivered with compassion and professionalism, and it created a great environment for people to express themselves openly. It's been a real pleasure to work with them.

”

*Renfrewshire Council*

## Get in touch

If you would like to discuss how Outside the Box could support your work, you can get in touch with us by emailing [Christine@otbds.org](mailto:Christine@otbds.org) or using our contact form ([www.otbds.org/contact](http://www.otbds.org/contact)).

# Evaluation and development support

Supporting inclusive community consultations, evaluation, and development is a big part of how we work to help communities thrive

## Evaluations and evaluation support

Evaluations can be simple, meaningful and empowering. They are a good way to show the difference work is making and the impact for communities and people.

This year, in person or online, we've continued to use creative methods to involve everyone and share the outcomes and learning. It's been lovely working across Scotland, from rural villages to the big cities, to support robust, useful evaluations.

## Development support

Since Outside the Box began in 2004, we have supported a huge variety of organisations and community groups to develop in sustainable, inclusive ways.

We have continued to support projects (from neighbourhood groups to bigger collaborations) with their funding plans and applications, governance, strategic planning, mapping community needs, strengths and priorities, setting up strong, trusting partnerships, working with interpreters and translators, and more.

*"Thank you so much for providing another fantastic report to us, it's so encouraging to see Personal Growth & Wellness be understood and clearly be working in the way it was designed to. We feel the feedback you collected from conversations is so rich, and certainly not things we hear often showing the importance of external evaluation."*

Kingsway Community Connections

## Kingsway

We were delighted to be asked back to Kingsway Community Connections, this time to evaluate their Personal Growth and Wellness Approach. We worked with staff to develop an evaluation programme that worked well for its diverse community members. We understand that people have busy lives, so we used a range of methods that fitted around programme activity like the lunch club and coffee morning. We analysed this information alongside data from internal reports and used our 'Magic Moments' approach to organise our findings and show the positive impact the team are making. We are now working to evaluate their 3-year Welfare Advice Service.

## Get in touch

If you would like to discuss how Outside the Box could support your work, you can get in touch with us by emailing [Christine@otbds.org](mailto:Christine@otbds.org) or using our contact form ([www.otbds.org/contact](http://www.otbds.org/contact)).



# Family Friendly Workplaces

Supporting organisations to work in family-friendly ways for everyone's benefit

In 2018 we started a piece of work learning from working mums' and families' experiences, sharing good practice, and supporting employers to make simple changes. We worked with small businesses and their employees to explore challenges they face, and what kinds of support and practice make the most difference. Lots of the solutions we tried out together – like making pregnancy and parental leave policies clear, accessible and inclusive, and welcoming people returning to work – are simple, low-cost, and can make a big difference to employees' wellbeing.

In the years since then, we've developed our approach to supporting workplaces – from holding these sensitive, important conversations about pregnancy, work, parenting and caring, to putting together impactful interventions based on employees' experiences and our understanding of what works. We've combined our initial research with knowledge gained from working with single parent families, LGBTQI+ families, families who are new to Scotland, and parents and carers who are disabled or living with long-term health conditions.

We take an inclusive, whole-family approach, supporting employers to think about how different experiences and protected characteristics connect. There's no 'typical' family, so it's important to create practices which work for everyone by listening, expecting diversity, and being flexible.

We were approached by The Women's Forum at Cornwall Council because of our Mum Friendly Workplaces resources and asked to deliver online sessions for staff to share views on how to support working parents.

We ran a 1.5-hour workshop on three afternoons; two for staff who had recently returned from parental leave and one for managers, with 20 participants in total: 16 working parents and 4 managers. The interactive sessions were relaxed and chatty and focused on exploring the barriers and issues faced by working parents and identifying practical solutions to help support them. Feedback was then collated and analysed in our final report for the Forum.

This was a great opportunity for us to further develop our work in this area and expand our offer to employers with sessions for all working parents at any stage of their family life.

*“Working with Outside the Box has been a positive experience. The staff teams enjoyed the workshop sessions and we got some simple but effective ideas to enhance our practices to support working parents particularly with babies and young children.”*

*Women's Forum Co-Chair Cornwall Council*

**family**   
**friendly**  
**workplace**



# 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.



You can find out more about our work by visiting our website [www.otbds.org](http://www.otbds.org).

Or following us on

