

LIFE CHANGES TRUST  
GET OUTDOORS PROGRAMME  
EVALUATION

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# DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY FARMERS EVALUATION SUMMARY

2019/2020

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PRODUCED BY



## INTRODUCTION

The Get Outdoors Projects, funded by the Life Changes Trust, encourage people living with dementia to enjoy the benefits of spending time outside. Outside the Box was appointed to carry out an independent evaluation of the programme.

This is a summary of the Dumfries and Galloway Farmers Get Outdoors project. The full evaluation report is [here](#). The Dumfries and Galloway Farmers' project was an NHS-led initiative in Dumfries and Galloway with three key elements:

- A retired farmers 'social' meetup club
- Development of individual memory packs based around farming artefacts and photos
- Visits to working farms

## WHAT WE DID

To assess the projects we carried out the following activities

- Participating in, and observing activities.
- Holding conversations with people living with dementia, unpaid carers, and volunteers.
- Talking with staff, partners and stakeholders.
- Assessing materials and reports produced by the projects.

# MAGIC MOMENTS

From these activities we gathered 'Magic Moments' that showed the differences and impacts in lives. These moments are small but significant. Due to Covid-19 we were unable to participate in activities and talk directly with people.

We were looking to see the extent to which the outdoor activities were creating better lives for people living with dementia and for their unpaid carers. We were excited to contribute and share the learning around benefits of getting outdoors for people with dementia.

The dynamics of each visit meant that by the end, there was a group of people in a farming environment without the 'labels' they arrived with. Body language and behaviour indicates that all those involved relaxed during the visits.



"As soon as we got out and saw the cows, everyone was the same – we all loved them! It wasn't about who was the worker, who was the client- and the farmers were right at home!"



## KEY THEMES: SUPPORTING BETTER LIVES FOR PEOPLE

### IMPROVED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

“It's been great to see people enjoying the activities and engaging in what's going on”

“Helping people get people physically active again, sometimes without realising it, because it's a key part of the activity and the fun”

“We have seen the actual benefits of people getting outside with things like improved balance and hand-eye co-ordination”

### IMPROVED CONFIDENCE AND WELLBEING

“It has been fabulous to hear people's stories and to learn about the things they are interested in and the lives they used to live. Without this project we wouldn't have heard these things.”

The Stewartry Farmers' Social group began as part of the project and has become a separate entity.

“We saw that the benefits of getting outdoors went beyond reminiscence opportunities. The sense of enjoying being outside appeared to be more important than the act of reminiscence.”

“It has made us think differently about how we work because we have now seen the benefits of getting outdoors for all of us - both people and carers. We have also learnt how to minimise risk in new outdoor settings and that feels good too.”

The training offered to Health and Wellbeing staff and the delivery of the farm visit has contributed to increased confidence and reduced stigma around both dementia and supporting older people to spend time outside.

## CHALLENGES

All the projects faced different challenges and worked out different solutions. These are the main challenges that Dumfries and Galloway faced:

### **Changes in staff**

Over the course of the project there were staff changes and challenges around allocating staff time and resources delaying the delivery of the project. The new staff member responded by learning quickly about the project, testing out and developing different approaches and relationships with partners.

### **Complex project plans**

The project consisted of several different elements with different stakeholders, resources and user groups making it more complicated and time-consuming to organise and arrange. On reflection a focused approach on the outdoor visits to farms may have been more effective in getting people living with dementia outside.

### **Partnerships and Care providers**

It took longer than anticipated for the project to establish partners who wished to participate in the project. However, once the relationships were established everyone could see the benefits. And an unexpected outcome has been the partnership around rural transport.

### **Recruiting Participants**

People living in Care Homes tend to have higher care and support needs which made it harder to find people to participate in extended trips to farms. Using and being guided through risk assessments for the visits made staff more confident.

### **Winter**

Due to the delay in the project, many of the visits were organised during the winter months reducing the number of participants due to illness and bad weather.

## KEY LEARNING

These are some of the things we learnt from Dumfries and Galloway that support people living with dementia and their carers to enjoy the benefits of getting outside more:

- Using and developing local partnerships around sites and locations and ways to transport people work well and have the additional benefit of supporting the local economy.
- Outdoor activity and especially ‘days out’ help to rekindle memories and spark conversations and interests.
- Using and guiding staff through risk assessments for outdoor activities and visits, increases the confidence of staff to support people living with dementia to go outside more.
- Activities that have a range of people in different roles, like paid carer, family member, volunteer and paid staff to support them, work well for people living with dementia.
- Development and planning time are a crucial part of developing activities and often takes much longer than anticipated, especially when projects develop and change over time.

## OVERALL

The Dumfries and Galloway Farmers’ Project was a well-planned and ambitious project and many elements could be revisited with success. One of the farms is considering setting up a micro social enterprise to continue the visits. The farm visits are a powerful tool for Improvement of physical and cognitive wellbeing - creating better lives for people living with dementia.