

LIFE CHANGES TRUST  
GET OUTDOORS PROGRAMME  
EVALUATION

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# FROGLIFE GREEN PATHWAYS FOR LIFE 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 Froglife 'Green Pathways for Life' Get Outdoors project. The full evaluation report is [here](#).

The Froglife Trust (known as Froglife) is a national wildlife conservation charity with a specific focus on reptiles and amphibians and their habitats. The Green Pathways for Life project adapted the aims and ethos of Froglife (amphibian and reptile conservation) to a care home setting, with the emphasis on creating nature-based activities which could take place indoors or outdoors. The sessions ran from May 2018 to November 2019 in a range of locations including two care homes. Support sessions for people living with dementia were run by Alzheimer Scotland and Glasgow's Golden Generation. The sessions were developed and run by Louise Smith, the Learning Officer for Froglife. They tended to be small sessions of around 4 or 5 people living with dementia and supported by staff from the care homes or support organisations.

# MAGIC MOMENTS

## 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.

From these activities we gathered 'Magic Moments' that showed the differences and impacts in lives. These moments are small but significant. 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 also wanted to contribute and share the learning around benefits of getting outdoors for people with dementia. We found that the project had a very positive impact on the lives of people living with dementia and unpaid carers. These are some of the Magic Moments.

P has serious pain issues and is often unsettled and agitated. The activities help to relax him and he is distracted from the pain for a bit. He tells us how to do things. The activities need to have a reason so planting seeds and bulbs make sense to him and others.

The garden has helped people to relax. The fresh air, flowers and birds have given everyone a new focus. On warmer days the door to the garden is open and people go outside to check on things and walk round.

Everyone loved planting up the planters with flowers. D got really engaged with planting the flowers. She talked about her garden and the plants she used to tend to. These days she doesn't engage with many activities - just sits quietly and watches. But she got stuck into this. Her husband was also there helping her. He said that she would plant flowers every summer and loved her garden.

## KEY THEMES: SUPPORTING BETTER LIVES FOR PEOPLE

“We like going to the allotments, seeing what’s growing and meeting different groups and people who are there. We will be doing even more of it next year”

### INCREASED CONFIDENCE AND PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY

“It’s been good to see people learning new skills and refreshing old ones”

“If we don’t know [what the activities are] then you’d explain it to us so we can decide. We’ve always made the decision in what we’ve been doing. It’s never been made for us.”

“People feeling useful and part of things by making bird feeders and mini ponds for wildlife”



“P just smiles when he steps outside into the garden - you can see him filling up with fresh air and a sense of peace”

## KEY THEMES: SUPPORTING BETTER LIVES FOR PEOPLE

### IMPACTS FOR CARERS

“I’ve not seen him as alert all morning in a long time... I think he’s really enjoyed it... He was always interested in birds. And it’s been good for me to see it.”

“It’s great to know why my mum’s suddenly speaking about frogs!”

“I look forward to coming here. We always do interesting activities. My family like me coming here - they know I have a good time and have things to tell them when I get home.”

### IMPROVED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

“We got an average 7000 step count from visiting community gardens and wandering around looking at the flowers and plants!”

“It’s benefitted me personally, I’m walking a bit more now... it’s quite interesting.”

“It was nice to get out in the fresh air!”

“It’s so nice outside today! Makes a difference from being inside!”

## CHALLENGES

All the projects faced different challenges and worked out different solutions. These are main challenges Froglife faced:

### **Working with care providers**

A key part of the project was working with people living in care homes. It was difficult at times to make contact with care homes and activity co-ordinators mostly due to workloads, different priorities of care staff and staff initially not understanding the purpose of the project.

### **Size of the group**

There was some trial and error in getting the group size right for participants and for the learning officer to be able to deliver comfortably. People in care homes tend to have more advanced dementia and need people to support them within the group and with the activity.

### **Weather**

This was a significant barrier to people living with dementia going outside, particularly those living in care homes. A successful approach especially when working with people living in care homes was to bring the outside inside by having activities such as planting up pots, making bird boxes and insect hotels.

### **Physical abilities**

Some participants found it hard to take part in some of the activities due to poor eye sight, hand strength and mobility, for example creating materials for insect hotels requires the use of secateurs. People were encouraged to take breaks, and the secateurs were shared round several people and other activities were offered so everyone had something they could do.



## KEY LEARNING

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

- Have a collection of cold and wet weather clothing and equipment for ready use on poorer weather days.
- Very small groups of 4 or 5 work well, and support from care workers and volunteers is also needed so one or two people are helped to participate. This is especially important for people with advanced dementia.
- Have photo cards showing how the bird boxes or insect hotels will be used and what insects they will attract. They worked really well for conversation prompts and for connecting the purpose of activity.
- Holding sessions regularly helps to build relationships with participants.
- Developing partnerships - especially with care providers - takes time and a flexible approach.
- Holding separate feedback sessions for groups, staff and managers is effective in gaining more detailed and constructive feedback.

## OVERALL

Froglife successfully delivered a set of activities around supporting the habitats of reptiles, amphibians and wildlife to support and encourage people living with dementia to be active outside. They developed strong partnerships with support organisations and with two care providers and showed staff different options for outside activities and approaches that can be replicated. The flexible and considered approaches resulted in a positive impact for people living with dementia, including for people with more advanced dementia.