

LIFE CHANGES TRUST
GET OUTDOORS PROGRAMME
EVALUATION

SPORTING MEMORIES EVALUATION SUMMARY

2019/2020

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 Sporting Memories Get Outdoors project. The full evaluation report is [here](#).

Sporting Memories is a charity that aims to unite older people, mainly men, who used to enjoy sport to come together and share memories and photos. Their Get Outdoors project mainly centred around Wishaw South Bowls Club and Beveridge Park Bowls Club in Kirkcaldy. The sessions included some gentle sporting activity in the form of Lawn Bowls. In Wishaw and Kirkcaldy, the project was coordinated by Sporting Memories staff and volunteers with support from the bowling club. In total, they worked with 3 bowls clubs, 12 participants, 5 volunteers, one care home and its residents – offering a game of bowls and an important social time of tea, biscuits and a good chat.

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.



“Never knew bowls could be so much fun to play”
Originally J came just to support her husband and had no intention of joining in. But once she saw him enjoying himself, she felt comfortable enough to try it too. J wants to play next year when we hold more sessions at the club.

A man in his nineties arrived being pushed by wheelchair onto the bowling green. Staff uncovered his old bowls from his locker – and we discovered he was a former champion! He managed to stand and use the bowls himself; we witnessed his concentration and determination as he bowled. Though he had little muscle strength it was obvious he had played before; he spat on his hand and bowled with such focus that he managed to stay steady on his feet.



One of the men at the bowls session normally uses a walking stick to support him but set off walking down the green without it. It's much easier to walk on the green and he was caught up in the moment and the play and didn't need it.

We persuaded T to have a shot at bowling. He had never played before but used to be a weightlifter. He loved it and he played till the end of the session and really enjoyed it, the others all encouraged him and he was smiling by the end. He said he would be back next week to play again.

KEY THEMES: SUPPORTING BETTER LIVES FOR PEOPLE

IMPACT FOR CARERS

"Enjoy the company when playing bowls"

"I have a new set of friends I didn't have before – it's like the old days when I used to play bowls regularly."



"It's just the calm and peacefulness here I love"



KEY THEMES: SUPPORTING BETTER LIVES FOR PEOPLE

IMPROVED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

“The bowling’s great exercise...better than doing yoga! You feel it in your legs the next day! I go to the gym but it’s hard work...this is much more fun...and cheaper!”

“My mum has started sending him to the shops – she never used to – not sure if it’s because she’s less able, but she would have worried about him before – now she sends him shopping.”



IMPROVED CONFIDENCE AND WELLBEING

“One man had never played and played for the first time today, loved it!”

“He mentions people from the group then sometimes might introduce me to them – but he has a new set of friends I don’t know about – like in the old days – it has given him back some independence, the fact that I don’t know all his friends!”

“When this programme started he said he’d come along and watch – but he couldn’t help himself, as soon as 3 bowls had been played he felt compelled to join in and show people how to do it – ‘he loved it!’. He wouldn’t have tried again if it wasn’t for this group. He goes to 2 Sporting Memories groups in the week, this is ‘the high point’ of his week. He loves the SM meet-ups.”

CHALLENGES

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

Short season

The lawn bowls season is short with clubs closed during winter months. There were also existing demands from clubs for regular sessions and competitions, making it difficult for Sporting Memories to book and secure regular and consecutive times for their sessions. For the next season Sporting Memories included additional planning and development so they could submit proposals to the bowling clubs early in the season.

Weather

Even during the summer months poor weather disrupted bowling activity. To ensure a sense of continuity, camaraderie and friendship, alternative indoor activities that could be held in the club house were offered such as boccia, carpet bowls, pool and quizzes.

Specialist Equipment and Resources

Bowls is not accessible to everyone due to the range of movement needed. Sporting Memories worked with Bowls Scotland and accessed resources used for 'Try Bowls' such as brightly coloured targets and smaller lighter balls and fun games to build confidence and enjoyment in the activity.

Volunteer Recruitment

Initially it was difficult to recruit volunteers who were confident to deliver 'fun and inclusive' bowls activities, as many club members preferred to play a more traditional game. A team approach was adopted with club volunteers supported by Sporting Memories staff and volunteers during each session. The resulting feedback from volunteers was overwhelmingly positive, they enjoyed playing with people who wouldn't normally engage in the club.

KEY LEARNING

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

- Have a range of activities ready and go outside when the weather is good and come back inside when it's not so good.
- Have alternative indoor activities and competitions for the days when you simply can't get outside.
- Small groups of people work well, especially when they are supported by a mixture of workers, volunteers and unpaid carers. People want to help out and contribute and having a role and tasks really helps increasing confidence and wellbeing
- Flexible sessions and activities offering choice tend to support friendships and informal conversations around sharing experiences - especially important for unpaid carers.

OVERALL

The Sporting Memories project used Lawn Bowls as an inclusive activity to engage people living with dementia, and their unpaid carers, with meaningful opportunities to be outdoors - this was done with great success.