

LIFE CHANGES TRUST  
GET OUTDOORS PROGRAMME

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# EVALUATION SUMMARY REPORT - MAGIC MOMENTS

2019/2020

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Creating better lives.

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outside the box 

## Introduction

In April 2018 the Life Changes Trust funded six Get Outdoors projects for up to two years with the purpose of supporting projects and activities that encourage and support people living with dementia and their unpaid carers to spend more time outside.

This report is a summary of an independent evaluation of the Get Outdoors projects, carried out on behalf of the Life Changes Trust from August 2019 until September 2020.

The aim of the overall evaluation is to assess whether and how outdoor activities are creating better lives for people living with dementia and for their unpaid carers. It also assesses the projects in terms of the challenges and barriers they faced, their partnerships and sustainability and specific learning around the benefits of spending time outside.

This summary captures the 'Magic Moments' experienced by those who took part in the projects, with a brief summary of how each project worked.



## About the Get Outdoors projects

**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 co-ordinated 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.

**Instinctively Wild** is a Community Interest Company that delivers projects in outdoor learning, health and team building for a range of public and third sector organisations. For the Get Outdoors programme they ran blocks of eight week 'eco-therapy' sessions, using nature connection activities, indoors and outdoors. The sessions ran from May 2018 until Spring 2020 and were based in The Haining in Selkirk, Scottish Borders. People were referred to the sessions by the NHS Borders Mental Health and Older Adults and Occupational Therapy team. Around 9 people living with dementia participated in each session along with their unpaid carers, volunteers and NHS staff members.

**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 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, supporting sessions for people living with dementia 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.

**Evanton Wood** is a community owned woodland managed by the local community for the benefit of everyone. The community wood is 150 acres of mixed woodland with numerous paths and trails with the main ones being accessible for all abilities. Evanton Wood was designated by Paths for All in 2019 as the first 'Dementia Friendly' wood in Scotland. As part of the Get Outdoors programme they ran an outdoor-based project for around 10 people living with dementia and their unpaid carers, volunteers and care home staff. Participants spent time outside (or in the shelter when the weather was poor) and in the wood, engaging in different activities, including preparing and sharing food, music and crafts such as memory quilts.

**The Ecology Centre** is an environmental, community-based charity which sits on the edge of Kinghorn Loch in Fife. Their 'Wide Open Doors' project was designed to extend the dementia friendly activities on offer and "provide a safe and warm welcome for people living with dementia and their families." The project was based around activities in the Tool Shed such as refurbishing tools which were then circulated back into use by a range of project partners, or building raised beds where green-fingered shedders got to work planting fruit and vegetables. Each session finished with a social break time where shedders shared stories over a hot drink, home baking and a freshly made lunch.

**The Dumfries and Galloway** project was an NHS-led initiative in Dumfries and Galloway with three key elements. The first element supported a retired farmers' 'social' meetup club. The second two elements were based around people living with dementia in care homes, development of individual memory packs based around farming artefacts and photos and also around visits to local working farms.

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# MAGIC MOMENTS

Creating Better Lives for people living with dementia

Improved confidence and wellbeing

PROJECT	PERSON	MAGIC MOMENT	THEME
Instinctively Wild	Unpaid Carer	T becomes her dad's 'hands' to make butterfly pictures. He gave directions and T did the work creating the picture he envisaged. They talked about it whilst out walking, with dad in wheelchair, gloves and 'bad' hands.	Having a purpose
Instinctively Wild	Person with dementia	R is in his nineties and has a sister of a similar age who lives in Canada, who he hasn't seen for many years. At the end of the session, R smiled as his daughter stuck the photos in the log book and said 'my sister will enjoy these ones'. They plan to send the book to her in Canada when they finish.	Having a purpose Prompting Memories
Sporting Memories	Person with dementia	W, hadn't wanted to come – he thought he was no longer able to play bowls but as he became impatient watching the younger folk have a go, his urge to show them how it was done took over and soon he was teaching others. At the second session he was teaching everyone else, showing them exactly where to stand, how to hold the bowl, technique etc...	Improved confidence and wellbeing Having a purpose
Sporting Memories	Person with dementia	P, age 92 arrived in wheelchair from the local care home who had just discovered he used to bowl. P got out of wheelchair, spat on hand and bowled with concentration. The care worker was scared he would 'topple' but he was so focused on the bowling. He didn't have strength but still had technique. P doesn't talk but grunted to show his displeasure at a bad shot. We found his old bowls still in his locker and his name on the hall of fame board as former champion.	Improved confidence and wellbeing Having a purpose
Ecology Centre	Worker	"Our inclusive philosophy is that everyone has the right to offer meaningful contributions to their community and that it is our responsibility to create the conditions which enable this. Service users are called volunteers in recognition of them giving their time to be part of making The Ecology Centre what it is. As such, people living with dementia who attend the dementia friendly outdoor sessions are called volunteers, as are their partners."	Improved confidence and wellbeing

# MAGIC MOMENTS

Creating Better Lives for people living with dementia

Improved confidence and wellbeing

PROJECT	PERSON	MAGIC MOMENT	THEME
Ecology Centre	Worker	"The Ecology Centre continues to develop a dementia friendly culture, such as making low stimulation a factor in on-site service design. This benefits our other user groups such as people on the autistic spectrum. An example of this is the need to keep the building tidy and clean so that visual stimulation is low."	Improved confidence and wellbeing
Evanton	Unpaid Carer	Y said "At first she didn't want to come and didn't want to be 'labelled' as having dementia, because her diagnosis was recent. This project let her spend time with others without stigma or labels attached."	Having a purpose Prompting Memories
Evanton	Person with dementia	The group discovered D's talent for percussion and drumming when they met with another group of people. They now always keep spoons handy for him to use.	Having a purpose
Froglife	Worker	People feel useful and part of things by making bird feeders and mini ponds for wildlife. It's been good to see people learning new skills and refreshing old ones.	Improved confidence and wellbeing
Froglife	Worker	P just smiles when he steps outside into the garden - you can see him filling up with fresh air and a sense of peace.	Improved confidence and wellbeing
D&G	Worker	It's 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."	Improved confidence Managing risk
D&G	Worker	The dynamics of each visit meant that by the end, there was just 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.	Improved confidence and wellbeing

# MAGIC MOMENTS

## Increased physical activity and improved wellbeing

PROJECT	PERSON	MAGIC MOMENT	THEME
Evanton Wood	Person with dementia	A, prompted by photo display – told me about the bird boxes they'd made. There were photos of them using power tools 'I've learned to do things I didn't know I could do with my hands!'	Physical Activity
Evanton Wood	Person with dementia	Everyone made their own way up to woods. It was about ½ mile away, up an uneven uphill track. Some people drove a bit closer and then walked. G and her son arrived slightly late having walked the whole way - despite the fact she had a walking aid! G was very determined and although slow she climbed up uneven slope to join us at the children's play area. She was well equipped with decent shoes and gloves.	Enjoying being outside Physical ability Being equipped for being outdoors
Ecology Centre	Worker	We have noticed that people enjoy being able to work with tools and sometimes it feels that they are being trusted to do something that had maybe been taken from them.	Physical Ability
Froglife	Worker	"The suggested activities were to feed birds regularly, grow fruit and vegetables to be prepared and eaten during sessions and to prepare and make board games in-house from recycled materials...As a result volunteers now fill bird feeders each week if needed, are growing onions, cabbage, peas and beans in our dementia friendly raised beds and have completed one set of dominoes and one set of draughts (with board).	Physical ability Increased confidence and wellbeing
Instinctively Wild	Person with dementia	'Aye I can touch a nettle – watch this! It doesn't sting me! You've got to touch it like this, so you don't touch the edge of the leaves – that's the stingy bit!'	Managing risk
Froglife	Worker	"We got an average 7000 step count from visiting community gardens and wandering around looking at the flowers and plants!"	Increased Physical Activity
Froglife	Person with dementia	"It's benefitted me personally, I'm walking a bit more now...it's quite interesting."	Increased Physical Activity

# MAGIC MOMENTS

## Increased physical activity and improved wellbeing

PROJECT	PERSON	MAGIC MOMENT	THEME
Sporting Memories	Person with dementia	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.	Improved physical activity Friendships and social connections
Sporting Memories	Person with dementia	A also forgot his walking stick but he didn't need it on the bowling green - even though he usually needs it to walk along the street because the paving stones are uneven/tricky. His daughter told me her mum now sends him to the shops on his own, whereas she didn't before.	Improved physical activity Improved confidences
D&G	Worker	"We have seen the actual benefits of people getting outside with things like improved balance and hand eye co-ordination".	Improved physical activity
D&G	Worker	"Helping people get people physically active again, sometimes without realising it, because it's a key part of the activity and the fun".	Improved physical activity
Instinctively Wild	Carer	"The walks are good: we just take our time, some people are a lot faster but that's OK. We have a good look round and talk about what we can see - you can't do that at home, you quickly run out of things."	Improved physical activity Enjoying being outside

## Friendships, social connections and enjoying being outside

Froglife	Worker	"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".	Enjoying being outside
Instinctively Wild	Person with dementia	"The 'two H's' have formed a bond with same sense of humour. They banter back and forth and with noticeable energy when they come back inside after walk. Commenting on weather and scenery 'it's nice and bright', and 'it's lovely and dry and bright'.	Friendships and Social connections Conversations

# MAGIC MOMENTS

## Friendships, social connections and enjoying being outside

PROJECT	PERSON	MAGIC MOMENT	THEME
Sporting Memories	Volunteer	T was a bit worried at first about having a group of people living with dementia use the bowling green and the impact on the lawn. But has seen how much fun they have and thinks it's good for the club to be used in this way.	Friendships and social connections
The Ecology Centre	Worker	"Two volunteers from the outdoor afternoon sessions have also struck up a strong relationship and attend social events and dementia friendly activities outwith the Ecology Centre."	Friendships and social connections
The Ecology Centre	Worker	"The shared lunch is based on seasonal produce from our community garden, much of which has been grown with tools refurbished by the shedders and tended by our volunteers which includes the dementia friendly volunteers."	Friendships and social connections
Evanton	Person with dementia	Magnetic draw of the cooking area – everyone naturally gravitated over to the cooking area and gathered round it to share stories of the things they had cooked and food they had shared. It was obvious how important this element was for them. They showed us the sturdy tables/chairs etc – they obviously felt safe and at home there.	Friendships and social connections Conversations Having a 'safe space'
Evanton	Person with dementia	G had been a sheep farmer who loved the outdoors. It was his natural habitat. The memory quilt had sheep dogs on it and helped him with memories of being outside and with conversations	Improved physical activity Enjoying being outside
Evanton	Worker	L had fairly advanced dementia but was able to speak lucidly at times 'one does what one can' when asked about his activities and being outside.	Enjoying being outside
Evanton	Person with dementia	D used to be drummer in pipe band. D and H have regular conversations about the old days living in the Borders, music and rugby: 'Did you play rugby in the Borders...aye, I played with that team, we beat your team all the time!'	Friendships and Social connections

# MAGIC MOMENTS

## Memories and cognitive improvement

PROJECT	PERSON	MAGIC MOMENT	THEME
D&G	Worker	The benefits of getting outdoors went beyond reminiscence opportunities and included: balance; hand eye coordination; singing (environment triggered memories of old songs). The sense of enjoying being outside appeared to be more important than the act of reminiscence.	Enjoying being outside Physical ability Cognitive improvement
Instinctively Wild	Person with dementia	P had been to the Haining (the grand house where the project is based) before and told us about the history of the place.	Prompting memories
Evanton	Unpaid carer	"I think long term, taking part in these activities, being positive and being in the fresh air helps to slow down the progress of dementia."	Cognitive improvement
Evanton	Person with dementia	The walk up to the wood prompted chat with L about the history of the place names and that the wood was planted on the proceeds of slave trade. It is named after plantations in the Caribbean. L was a farming specialist in these areas and talked of places he had worked in abroad.	Conversations and memories
Sporting memories	Person with dementia	I sat at the side in a wheelchair throughout but enjoyed watching the game, chatting to people and commenting on the bowling 'Yes, I love it! It's lovely!'	Enjoying being outside Friendships and social connections
Instinctively Wild	Volunteer	We talked about the importance of living in the moment and that this can be difficult for people with dementia to have 'meaningful' chat with people. But through observing nature it can help towards 'living in the moment' because it's easier to appreciate and discuss what you can see, hear and smell...don't need to rely on memory for this...a way of sharing and communicating.	Enjoying being outside Conversations Friendships and social connections
Sporting Memories	Person with dementia	D, used to be a bowling club member but had stopped. When this programme started he said he'd come along and watch. But 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 two Sporting Memories groups in the week, this is 'the high point' of his week. He loves the SM meet-ups.	Friendships and social connections Enjoying being outside