

Interest Link Borders Report to Peebles Common Good Fund on grant to Tweeddale Branch March 2021-22

Activities: From March to May we continued delivering our distance service, using Zoom, Penpal connections, newsletters, activity packs, WhatsApp, Facetime and telephone contact.

Our befriending groups were replicated on Zoom, and activities included Nonsense Drama Adventures, Bingo & Indoor Scavenger Hunt Nights, Snack & Chat sessions, Self Portrait Mindfulness, Uplifting Arts, Herbal Tea Tasting & Plant Folklore, Yoga Session and a Beetle Drive and various arts & crafts projects

1:1 links started meeting (mainly outdoors) from May, going for walks and picnics, or to cafes for coffee & cake, visiting charity shops. As the summer progressed, trips ventured further afield, to Edinburgh and sightseeing.

A new outdoors group was piloted from July to October, focusing primarily on gardening at Peebles Can Community Garden, and restarted in February as a longterm group.

Groups started meeting face-to-face in August for Decorating and Planting Pots with Flowers, and Halloween Storytelling Drama, Firework Art & Cake Decorating for Bonfire Night, Autumn Lanterns, and Christmas Celebrations. The children's and youth groups enjoyed a Creative Arts Programme during February and March involving art, drama and music.

The number of Peebles members supported was slightly lower than in the application (28 against 30), but with 40 family carers benefiting from respite as aimed for, and 20 Peebles volunteers involved as planned.

Impact:

At our annual survey in June 2021, results were:

Impact on Members	Friendships maintained	Greater Happiness	Improved Confidence	More Self-esteem	Better Distance Social Skills	Felt at least 1 outcome	Felt all outcomes
	100%	100%	89%	100%	89%	100%	89%

Impact on Carers	Helped Sustain Caring Role	Greater Wellbeing	Felt at least 1 outcome	Felt all outcomes
	75%	50%	100%	50%

Case study, November 2021

Elaine is 41 years old and lives with her mum, stepdad, and some of her siblings. She has learning disabilities and is deaf. Elaine has been a regular attendee at our Motivators Group for some years. Before lockdown the Motivators Group met fortnightly on Wednesday evenings and enjoyed a variety of social activities including games evenings, cooking, art and crafts, music and drama workshops, movie nights, tenpin bowling, fish and chip suppers and meals out at Wetherspoons. Elaine also enjoyed monthly social events organised by the Branch, including beetle drives and pot luck suppers.

Elaine is very fun loving and always happy to try something new. She is particularly creative and has produced some great art work and crafts over the years. She gets on really well with other group members and has made friendships that have flourished outside of the group too. Elaine says, 'I love going to Interest Link as I get to see my friends'.

During the pandemic Elaine regularly contributed to Motivators' Group newsletters with her news and photos of the things she had made at home. A pen pal link was also set up with one of the volunteers, and her sister Karen said Elaine loved writing letters to her pen pal and looked forward to the replies. Elaine also attended Motivators' Zoom sessions, which included Bingo nights, crafting and baking, and joined our Make That craft sessions on Zoom. Once lockdown lifted she was part of our face-to-face gardening project. Karen says all these activities helped keep Elaine's spirits up and stay connected during the pandemic.

Now that our groups have re-started back at our venue, Elaine is able to see her friends face to face again, and she is really enjoying meeting up with everyone once more.

Recent Feedback from Expressing Ourselves through Creative Arts Feb & March 2022: Members

"I loved the great activities and the time to chat with friends."

"I really liked being part of the group."

"The flowers are outside my house. I enjoyed planting and watering them. They make me cheerful."

"(I could) express what I felt like onto the calendar and make it look nice for the rest of the year. Put loads of detail to make it look really good. Was a lot of fun."

"Liked the sound we were making. Liked doing rhythms."

Carers:

"It has been lovely to see her grow in confidence especially when trying new things."

"Interest link has given my daughter something to look forward to and plan for and a sense of normality I can't thank them enough."

Tutors:

"The first group was so quiet with concentration that you could have heard a pin drop and they carried on through their break without stopping for breath! The 2nd group was full of excited chat about what they were doing."

"I could see their confidence growing throughout the sessions, and it was great to see everyone (whether they had previous experience of hand drumming or not) playing and being part of a group."

"The puppets enabled people to engage with others in different ways to normal and there was a lot of laughter both from actors and audience. I was very pleased that the puppets had created a fun, open platform in which the group could be spontaneous and talk about feelings without embarrassment."