

# OUTSIDE THE BOX SOUTH EAST NEWSLETTER: WINTER 2021

Hello and welcome to our latest Outside the Box South-East Newsletter. It has been a challenging year for many, however we are determined to take some positives from recent experiences. Like everyone, we have found new and creative ways of working and connecting with people. We have met new partners and explored some new opportunities which our flexible approach has helped us embrace. Here is a snapshot of some of the things we've been up to in recent months.

## NEWTOWN NEWS

This Halloween Fiona had her creative juices flowing again challenging the villagers to make Halloween themed scarecrows for their gardens using only recycled materials and boy did they rise to the challenge!

Households young and old across the village and the local primary school took part with one villager telling us "we had great fun making ours, it also got us out for a walk to look for scarecrows" Check out our video for more photos of some of the wonderful creations Newtown's Scarefest - <https://youtu.be/KphGIRUbAeM>

In the coming months we will be organising drop in sessions where villagers can come and find out information or feed in their views on topics of interest to those who live in the village. Keep an eye on the local notice boards and facebook page for more details.

*Fiona*



## EAST LoTHIAN UPDATE

Since our last newsletter our work in East Lothian has expanded.

Our Dunbar Grammar Digital Buddies project received additional funding from the Edinburgh & Lothian Health Fund which has allowed us to extend the project past the initial 6 months and purchase more devices for people who joined after the Connecting Scotland devices had been allocated. The learning isn't only for the older people; our young buddies are learning valuable life skills too as they support people to do an online food shop, register and bank online and order prescriptions from the GP.

Outside the Box was also successful in securing work with the Health and Social Care Partnership in East Lothian to carry out Community Engagement around the Community Transformation agenda with Adults with Complex Needs. This has been a really exciting piece of work and given us the opportunity to meet some fabulous people, community groups and organisations working across East Lothian including Neighbourhood Networks, Carers of East Lothian, VCEL & New Beginnings Club to name a few. Here is a video about it:

<https://vimeo.com/656610346>

We have also had the privilege of being part of the planning group for the new Meeting Centre for people living with dementia and their families and carers in Musselburgh which will be opening its doors in spring next year.



Borders Buddies is a project funded by the Scottish Borders Council Tweeddale Community Fund to support groups and individuals in the Tweeddale locality of the Scottish Borders to return to 'normal' activities as restrictions ease after the Covid 19 pandemic. As we all know, things have been slower than anticipated at getting back, and even now we may face further restrictions. Some people have lost their confidence about going out, and some have had rapidly deteriorating health. Here is the story of Angie, told in her own words:

<https://otbds.org/a-fire-in-my-belly-taking-action-for-local-accessibility/>

For further information and resources from Borders Buddies, take a look here: <https://otbds.org/9035-2/>

This project is due to end in the spring, however we are then hoping to take forward some new partnership initiatives to support people to continue with some of the activities they enjoy.



## EYEMOUTH WHOLE SYSTEMS PILOT - TACKLING CHILDHOOD OBESITY

Through our work supporting the LINKS Eyemouth project, we were invited to take part in this multi-partner initiative. This has taken place online and through a series of mapping exercises and contributions from different groups in the community, has been whittled down to a series of actions. These aim to support local families to be more active and eat healthily. We have been tasked with coordinating an exciting programme of activities around outdoor cooking and having fun in the outdoors. Look out for some photos in the next edition!

## LINKS – funding successes and future plans

LINKS Eyemouth have had some challenging times, like us all, with the recent storm hitting the town very badly. Nevertheless, they are still making plans for Christmas and have also been successful with some exciting new funding applications. Further information will be announced soon but we have been successful with bids to both the Dronehill Windfarm fund and Together for a Better Planet (National Lottery) fund. What's more, recently some of the volunteers received instalment 2 of the Co-op Community fund, demonstrating how much local people support the project.



## Mums supporting mums research

A number of years ago Outside the Box received funding from CORRA to support the setting up of some groups for young mums. This was following concerns around maternal mental health. Now, some of the babies and toddlers from those groups are at high school. We thought it would be good to catch up with some of those mums, and also some new 'Lockdown' mums, to find out the impact of informal peer support for those early days with a baby or toddler. We have now chatted to a variety of mums and will be publishing our report soon. Read below a guest blog about Buggy walking - a popular way of connecting, and follow the link for our tips and a short animation: [otbds.org/buggy-walks](https://otbds.org/buggy-walks)

### Buggy Walk Guest Blog

I first came across Buggy Walks on social media, when a promotional post was shared on a local mum group I was part of. The premise was simple and appealing - meet new people, go for a walk and enjoy friendly chat!

My baby was 5 months old, and it was early summer. The country was emerging from the first 2020 lockdown, there was still a great deal of uncertainty regarding what would re-open, and the new rules for socialising.

Before lockdown, I had only managed to attend a few mum and baby groups. While I was able to stay in contact with my "new mum" friends over group chats and social media, I was immediately drawn to the Buggy Walks, it seemed like an ideal way to meet people and have regular chats - safely and with minimal fuss - perfect for getting out and about with a wee one!

It was simple to get involved, the mum who organised our Buggy Walk suggested a meeting time, and location, then off we went!

For our group (around 10 of us) Buggy Walks were exactly what we needed at this time. Our babies ages ranged from 4 weeks, to 10 months old. All of us mums were keen to get out and about (baby and toddler sessions did not run at all for this period) stretch our legs, have a friendly chat, and share our experiences of new motherhood.

We met weekly, although there was no pressure to come every week, it was just as and when you could. By the time winter lockdown came along and stopped our weekly walks, we were a nicely established group, we stayed in touch via our group chat over the winter, and once we had returned to work from maternity leave.

The peer support was invaluable. When so much else had stopped, and families were still geographically separated, being able to meet a friend group outdoors was so important. I think all new parents will agree that sharing your experience with other people going through the same thing really helps you through. You don't feel alone, and you can comfortably share any concerns and all the delightful quirks of having a baby. The group of friends I met during Buggy Walks are still in touch, and I believe we will remain so for a long time to come!

Buggy walks are such a simple, successful way of bringing people together, the friendships and support gained for new mums have a big positive impact. I would highly recommend getting involved!



N.D.

## Peebles CAN – partnering for a relaunch of Garden Buddies

We are very excited to share the news of our partner Peebles CAN, who have been successful in a partnership funding bid (Scotland Loves Local) with us to relaunch our Garden Buddies project. This will link in nicely with Borders Buddies, supporting less able or harder to reach people in the community to take part in some gentle gardening (and socialising) events in their lovely community garden. Watch this space for ways to get involved, everyone of all ages and abilities will be welcome!



Digital Buddies at Dunbar Grammar, see p.1

## JOIN OUR MEMBERSHIP

We're developing our membership and looking to get more people involved! Learn about becoming a member, and join the Outside the Box family. Read more here: <https://otbds.org/outside-the-box-membership/>

## Get in touch

We work with many partners in the Scottish Borders, Midlothian, East Lothian and beyond...and are always looking at ways of supporting others. Please get in touch with Ruth or Christine if you have an idea for filling a gap to help make communities more connected and resilient.

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