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CREATE  
SPACE

Promoting Positive Mental Health

S2R

THE GREAT  
OUTDOORS  
PROJECT



THE GREAT OUTDOORS PROJECT  
**ANNUAL** 2017/18  
**REPORT**

# THE GREAT OUTDOORS PROJECT

The Great Outdoors is one of several projects delivered by the mental health and well-being charity Support to Recovery. We know, from independent academic research and the testimony of our own participants, that connecting people with nature as part of a group in an outdoor activity or an indoor workshop is a great way to improve emotional and physical well-being, reduce anxiety, create social connections and learn about both themselves and natural world.

We help people to take their first steps into nature and explore their relationship with the outdoors, through: directly experiencing of open spaces, on mindful walks and Bushcraft Lite; interacting with and contributing to practical tasks at Cemetery Road Community Allotment, Garden Upcycling or Tuesday Work Days; expressing themselves using ecological crafts, natural art, and photography; and, by walking and running in the biggest gym possible.

This helps people learn to thrive in natural settings, so that they can make use of this glorious, free, resource for themselves and go on to other volunteering opportunities in the community.

**“I’ve been able to come off my medication, since I started with this project.”**

“I am so pleased with the way our project continues to grow, flourish and evolve. This year our reputation has gone before us and we have attracted some fantastic people, who have offered their skills and passions, to the project. Both volunteers and new staff have brought their specialisms and passion, helping us develop fantastic new opportunities from bushcraft to horticulture to flower arranging and upcycling. All this keeps our programme vibrant and innovative, which engages new people with the project, so they can do things together outdoors that make them feel good.”

- Jason Kerry  
Project Leader, The Great Outdoors Project

“I think you will agree that this is a great review of the fantastic range of activities The Great Outdoors Project offers. This year has been a mixture of new workshops along with the old favourites. We continue to have co-production at the heart of service delivery and I would like to thank all our participants, volunteers and staff for an outstanding year, as well as our partners, who embrace and enhance what we do.”

- Paula Wood  
Manager, S2R Create Space



Kite Flying at TP Woods

At the start of this year we asked all our participants how they would like to see our service develop and that has helped us decide to keep the old favourites such as our Cemetery Road Community Allotment and ecological crafts; develop some existing ideas such as our Tuesday

Work Days, Garden Upcycling and Bushcraft Lite sessions and to try out some new ideas such as our Photography Club and a Camp in a Day session.

We have been developing our partnerships by delivering one off sessions with organisations such as Hoot Creative Arts, Aspire, Women's Institute and Chart Kirklees as well as delivering longer term projects such as the Peace Pit Growing Group and Drystone Walling Work Days with Kirklees Council Parks and Green Spaces.

We were very pleased that our Peace Pit Growing Group volunteers were able to take the plants they had grown and plant them in a show garden at the Harrogate Spring Flower Show. Their efforts were recognised with a Silver Gilt Medal and the Newby Cup for Excellence in Planting. The growers also won an award at this year's Kirklees Community Learning Awards.

We continued to develop our offer to Schools and Community Hubs, delivering sessions for the staff and for pupils and their families at Honley High School.

We also ran a Camp in a Day activity at Field Lane Primary School, leaving them with the skills and inspiration to do it again themselves.

Our partners have come to us for their own well-being too. Touchstone, Health Trainers and Locala have all benefited from a team day with The Great Outdoors Project.

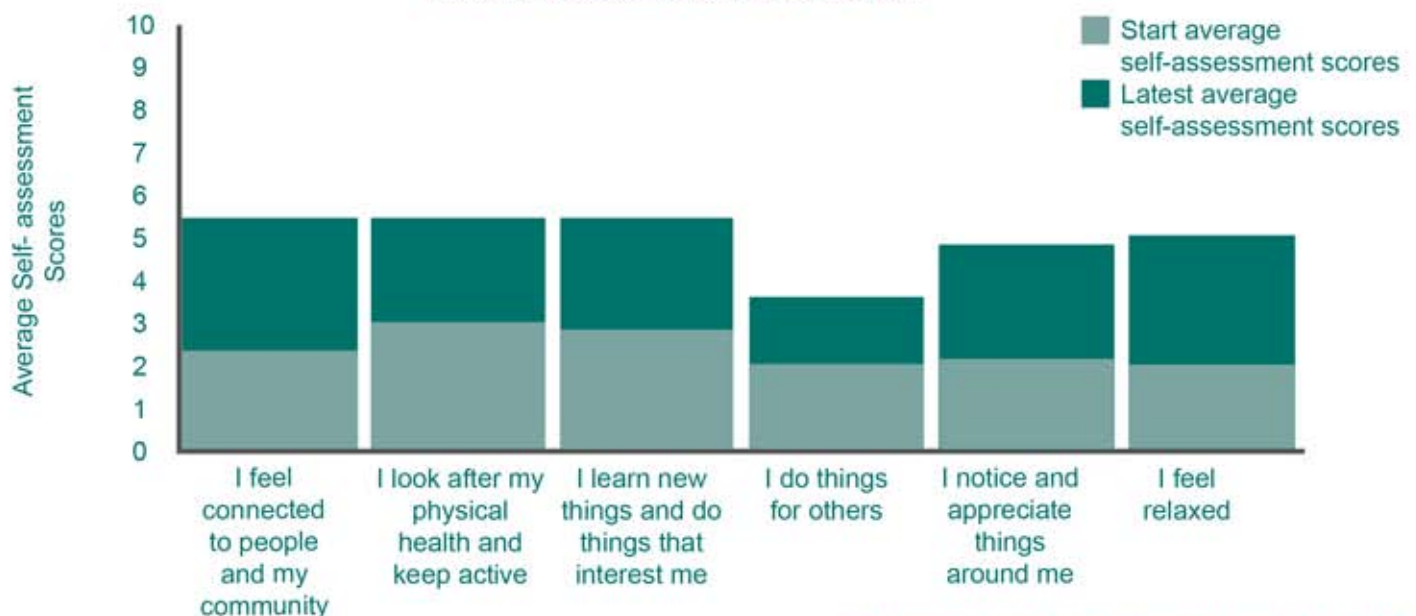
One way we have been able to deliver such a wide variety of activities this year is by making the most of the skills and interests of our volunteers. By allowing them to pass on their passions, they inspire others and improve their own well-being. Another way is by generating revenue from goods and services such as workshops and team days with partners and the sale of upcycled products, including benches and garden planters.



Camp in a Day at Field Lane Primary School

# OUTCOMES

We measure people's personal outcomes through a self-assessment scale, questions based on the Five Ways to Well-being. The questionnaire captures how being involved with The Great Outdoors Project improves individual health and well-being. Below the graph shows the average scores when people started with the project and compared to their latest self-assessment over the past year.



# CONNECT

I feel connected to people and my community



Team Building Day at Cemetery Road Allotments

Connecting people to each other and to their environment has been shown to significantly improve well-being. It is at the core of our small group approach and it underpins all our activities at The Great Outdoors Project. Longer courses develop this best such as Peace Pit Growing Group, Bee Happy and Cemetery Road Community Allotment. The connections made here lead to further engagement and progression.

This year we opened our doors to our partners and other organisations to help them in their stressful jobs. We aimed to improve their well-being and bond them together as a team. We gave them a relaxed safe space, activities that connected them with each other and nature and some techniques and understanding to help them lower their risk of developing mental health problems. Relaxation, mindfulness, ecological crafts, natural products, allotmenting and fire cooking were all on the menu.

**“I enjoyed the chance to get away from the workplace and be together as a team. Time and space to do things together in a safe space. The meditation was especially good and something to take away for us as individuals or as a team.”**



Outdoor Cooking at Honley High School

Starting a new school can be a difficult time, not just for the pupils but for the whole family. We spent a day fire cooking with Honley High School's Year 7 pupils and their families to help them all feel more part of the school community.

**“I enjoyed watching my daughter relax with other families as my grandson had good fun making new friends from his class.”**

**“Seeing my son having fun and joining in and smile, made me think how important socialising is.”**

## BE ACTIVE

I look after my physical health and keep active

All our courses encourage people to get out and about independently. As well as keeping us physically healthy, being active, particularly in the outdoors, promotes the production of 'feel good' chemicals in the body that improves our sense of well-being.

**"I enjoyed being outside. It reminded me in a good way of when I was in the Army. I decided to walk home, I was tired but I had a lovely day."**

Our Bushcraft Lite sessions allow those who have had their interest tweaked on other sessions to dig a little deeper into the world of outdoor cooking, shelter building, knot tying, foraging and generally thriving in the outdoors. When you are outdoors you are always moving and active even though you might feel relaxed.



Bushcraft Lite at Riddings Bank



Walk and Talk at S2R Create Space

**"I feel safe when I'm walking in a group. It also helps with confidence building."**

This year we started Walk and Talk, a walking group for black, Asian and minority ethnic women. Some of our participants asked us to help them to be outside more and improve their fitness. They also said that because of their cultural backgrounds they sometimes faced barriers that prevented them doing just this. Walking in a group is also a great way learn a language as there is always something to talk about.

**"It was great to be out walking and learning new things."**

**"One of the ladies was continuously practising her English throughout the walk."**

## KEEP LEARNING

I learn new things and do things that interest me

All our provision at The Great Outdoors Project gives people the opportunity to keep learning, through making natural well-being products, habitat building, gardening and mindfulness. Learning boosts self-confidence and self-esteem. It helps build a sense of purpose and enables you to connect with others.



Making Session at S2R Create Space

**“I think I’m actually learning, I’m enjoying it now.”**

Our Garden Upcycling classes give people the opportunity to re-use natural materials such as pallet wood to create useful outdoor furniture like benches, garden planters and even an outdoor music station! Participants gain confidence and skills with hand tools and learn some of the basics of design and construction. Those who enjoy it can progress to our Making Session, producing saleable items to help sustain our work at S2R Create Space. They take away new confidence and skills that they can use at home or in other situations like our Tuesday Work Days.

**“This is the best making session I’ve had...I feel so much better when the sun is out and we are working outside...life’s worth living again.”**



Window boxes made by Making Session volunteers

Working with our partners at Kirklees Council Parks and Green Spaces and Natural Kirklees, we have brought together those who are interested in learning about British fauna and flora with experts keen to pass on their skills. The more you know about the nature around you the more you feel part of it. By training up our participants we can help to create management plans for some of Kirklees’ outdoor spaces, maintained by volunteers.



Ecological Survey at TP Woods

# GIVE

I do things for others

Giving can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around us. The Great Outdoors Project offers people many opportunities to volunteer and give back. Whether it is running a session for us, growing plants to distribute to local community groups or making garden furniture and planters to sell.

The Peace Pit Growing Group gives people a chance to meet up in a tranquil location and donate their time to nurturing plants for community groups and schools across Kirklees. Our volunteers were also able to take the plants they had grown to The Harrogate Spring Flower Show where they planted an award winning show garden. The group also won a prize at this year's Adult Learning Awards!

**“It was good at the garden project in Harrogate today. I was very tired but it was an experience I will never forget. Just doing it and seeing how a show garden is made and learning from others.”**



Tuesday Work Day at Penny Spring Wood

Our Tuesday Work Days currently run on 4 Tuesdays each month and give participants the opportunity to engage in a fulfilling practical task that is both physically and mentally challenging. The end result is a pleasing finished product with new skills learnt. Planting, drystone walling, footpath step building, vegetation removal and bench painting are just some of tasks we have taken on. Volunteers often progress to join friends of groups themselves or even find employment.

**“This place really was an important part of my journey. It helped me a lot particularly the Work Days and the Upcycling. Being able to come in and break up a few pallets and make something useful out of them or improve a community space, like we did at the canal. It gave me a sense of worth. Now I’m employed by Proper Job as a talent matcher and I’ve come in to meet one of our new talents here at S2R Create Space today to see if I can get him interested in joining in with some of your activities. He’s really keen on outdoor things too.”**



Peace Pit Growing Group at Kirklees Peace Pit Depot

# TAKE NOTICE

I notice and appreciate things around me



Nature in You at Cold Hill in Berry Brow

Taking time to notice what is happening around us helps us to develop a sense of perspective and to recognise what is really important in our lives. By taking notice we are better able to appreciate and benefit from our environment. We notice things around us whilst out walking, we notice the changes in seasons and we notice how these things make us feel. It is a central part of our approach to well-being through ecotherapy.

**“I’m a little bit OCD, so just eating things that you pick in the wild is hard for me, but I enjoyed today as it stretched me a little.”**

A small self-led group of photographers meet regularly at S2R Create Space, sharing techniques and inspiration as they learn to look at the world in a very particular way.

**“It was good to spend some time in a place you know very well and spend some time noticing things you have never had time to see before and also see all these other people who will never look up and notice what is around them.”**

All around us are plants we can eat or use as medicine. Our experienced guides help to open people’s eyes to what is right in front of them!



Wild Forage at Aspley Marina



# RELAX

I feel relaxed

Being more at home and relaxed in the natural world enables us to benefit more from our interaction with it. Breathing space and 'me time' are important components of the experiences during our session, whether that's through mindful reflection during our walks, therapeutic immersion in gardening at Cemetery Road Community Allotment or creative satisfaction from ecological craft activities.

**"I learnt a lot from the course, I felt very good and I got to know other members better over the four weeks. I've made some strong friends in the group and feel a lot happier. I surprised myself on the workshops by going out and doing it. I feel I pushed myself with walking, which I would not normally do. I found it hard at times but the others encouraged me and kept me going."**

You don't always have to go outside to benefit from connecting with nature. Our Natural Well-being Products workshops help you relax as you learn how to make soaps, lip balms and bath-bombs from natural ingredients. You leave with a package of handmade gifts, so you can relax and have some 'me time' at home.

**"Great class...I will definitely be making more natural things at home for myself and as gifts for friends and family...it's been really nice, so chill."**



Slack Line at Greenhead Park

Nature in You is an approach developed by The Great Outdoors Project that recognises how difficult those first steps into nature can be. Many people are not able to make use of the fabulous greenspaces around them or the volunteering opportunities in the community because of anxiety and fear of the unknown. This course helps people out of their front door by changing habits and expectation, by showing people that they can do it.

This course has been in demand by community groups and Schools across Kirklees and beyond and our delivery to these groups is limited only by our capacity.



Natural Well-being Products at S2R Create Space

Putting a financial figure on one's health and well-being can be difficult to quantify, but in these ever challenging times with pressures on services and resources it is important to demonstrate the benefits and impacts that projects like The Great Outdoors have on the wider economic sphere of social value.

Last year we documented some individual case studies from the experiences and journeys of those who access The Great Outdoors Project. We have and will continue to evaluate this work to demonstrate the beneficial impacts and outcomes that this has achieved, in terms of health and well-being, financial savings to statutory services and benefits to the wider community.

Whilst it is hard to put a monetary value on our work, for most people it is the individual case studies that tells the story.



Bee Happy in Lowerhouses

**"I took a leaflet home and then phoned two days later to book on the bee course. Wow. I soon realised there was nothing to worry about you, don't get treated any different if you have or don't have mental health problems and nobody makes you talk about anything. It really is a no stress zone. Although I was really nervous, anxious, scared and a whole load of emotions, when Byron and Jason said 'do you like being outdoors?', I was instantly at ease. I love being out in nature so we had lots in common.**

**There was a really cool PowerPoint on bees, we got to try some honey on crackers and I felt I didn't need to talk or do anything if I didn't want to. It was much better than the doctors, where they ask why your life is spiralling in all directions and you don't know the answer. All that was needed from me right then, was some of my attention to listen or to look at the slides, try honey or examine the combs.**

**It felt lovely being surrounded by some strangers, but we were all just there for one thing. To learn about bees. No pressure. No stress. I was still shaking and sweaty but I came out of that bee course feeling proud I'd made it out of the house, met some intelligent people and learnt something. Maybe things are OK.**

**Over the next 4 months I did quite a bit with S2R Create Space; wildlife ID, walking, painting benches, making a rockery, digging over a few gardens... and now I am back in work full time. I would recommend S2R Create Space to anybody. If I had not got involved with The Great Outdoors Project, well let's just say this story would have ended differently."**

Next year we will look for external funding to deliver some stand-alone courses in communities. Nature in You takes people on a shared journey into the Natural world and we have shown in our pilots that it produces benefits for both individuals and for their communities. There has been significant demand for this course and external funding will mean we can bring the energy of the outdoors into more of our communities.

We will continue expanding our upcycling project, employing volunteer upcyclers to produce outdoor furniture for private individuals and for public spaces like the Lawrence Batley Theatre.

We hope to expand on our work with asylum seekers and refugees at the Princesses Royal Health Centre, where we will make use of the show garden from Harrogate Spring Flower Show, donated by Kirklees Council, as a permanent well-being garden.

We will continue to work with our volunteers to develop projects they are passionate about and we will continue to ask our participants what they would like to do.

We will try to help Kirklees Council meet its new priority around well-being for its staff by engaging directly with them.

As always we will strive to evolve our delivery to meet challenges and to embrace the new opportunities that present themselves in 2018/19.



Cemetery Road Community Allotment in Birkby

## FINANCE

31 March 2017 to 31 March 2018

Income	£
Funding Received.....	91,950.00
Funding carried over.....	4,250.00
Income from sales.....	1,661.00
<b>Total Income.....</b>	<b>97,860.00</b>
Cost	
Staff Costs.....	67,840.00
Staff Expenses .....	290.00
Central Costs.....	24,000.00
Workshop Costs.....	1,133.80
Marketing.....	134.56
<b>Total Costs.....</b>	<b>93,395.36</b>

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to say a massive thank you to participants, volunteers, partner organisations, local businesses and donors for their continuous support, helping to keep The Great Outdoor Project growing and evolving into something wonderful.

We would also like to mention a few special thanks to some of those who have either given their time and support.

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