

S2R

CREATE
SPACE

S2R

THE GREAT
OUTDOORS
PROJECT

ANNUAL REPORT

2020/21

THE GREAT OUTDOORS PROJECT

About Us.... What We Do and Why

The Great Outdoors Project is commissioned by Kirklees Council and is one of several projects delivered by the mental health and wellbeing charity S2R Support to Recovery. We know from national and recognised research, along with the testimony of professional referrers and the positive outcomes and benefits of people who have taken part in the project, that being connected to nature and the outdoors enhances our emotional and physical wellbeing. Connecting people with nature as part of a group in an outdoor activity or indoor workshop is a great way to improve emotional and physical wellbeing, reduce anxiety, create social connections, help people learn about themselves and develop an interest in the natural world around them

We offer all* adults in Kirklees the chance to take their first steps into nature on our taster courses; to explore their relationship with the outdoors on mindful walks and through the direct experience of open spaces, to interact and contribute on practical tasks at our Allotment Group, Garden Upcycling or community Work Days, ways to express themselves creatively using eco-crafts, natural art and photography, to be active and to enjoy themselves by walking and running in the biggest gym possible.

**Participants must be able to work in a small group setting either independently or with the help of a carer.*



I can quite honestly say it has been a year like no other! 2020 started off with lots of plans and new developments for indoor and outdoor activities... then came lockdown. First impressions were that after a few weeks, things would be mostly back to normal - how wrong we were. It quickly emerged that we were going through something that no services could have foreseen, let alone plan for. We had to design ways of providing a service, supporting and remaining connected to people whilst being told to stop all social contact and work from home. The team were up for the challenge, and quickly came up with a delivery plan to accommodate different support areas. Our regular attendees were offered phone, text, email and written contact, we developed a programme of engaging and practical online activities and created monthly wellbeing activity packs that were available online and posted out to those who did not have digital connectivity. These measures ensured that we stayed connected and engaged with people.

The team have been amazing - focused and positive throughout, working remotely, adapting to the situation, and putting our attendees welfare at the forefront of their attention. It is a pleasure to play a small part of their achievements . Thank you to you all.

Paula Wood *Senior Manager*

Operating This Year...

The COVID-19 crisis was as much a shock to mental health services as it was to all parts of our lives in 2020 and 2021. Our established methods of engaging and bringing people together to gain confidence and improve their wellbeing in the outdoors and with nature were instantly made redundant as people were asked to 'Stay Home, Protect the NHS, Save Lives'. With face-to-face sessions out of the question and the need for wellbeing services increasing, S2R fell back on its greatest asset - the passion and creativity of its staff and their tried and tested ability to share wellbeing messages in an accessible and inspirational manner.



Our face-to-face sessions were quickly replaced by video content and the TGO message became a mainstay of the 'S2R Wellbeing Packs' in both written and digital form for distribution by local action groups to those most isolated by the pandemic. These online formats helped us reach audiences we previously had not reached, and by offering digital content at convenient times we were able to reach sometimes thousands of people with a single post! But digital was not for everyone, and many people (including a lot of our regulars) were actively avoiding social media to help manage their anxiety. So for those people, we instigated a regime of courtesy phone calls each week. This enabled us to monitor people's wellbeing, give them a social outlet and offer signposting to other services based on the outcomes of these conversations.

**“THESE PHONE CALLS KEEP ME GOING,
YOU’RE THE ONLY PERSON WHO RINGS ME
THAT ISN’T ASKING ABOUT BILLS!”**

We followed a path of co-production throughout the year, testing the waters about what sort of sessions people wanted to take part in and what they felt comfortable doing, only moving on when our staff and participants felt confident to do so. The outdoor nature of our work allowed us occasional windows in-between lockdowns which enabled our participants to meet up again and enjoy activities together.

In the second half of the year following some one-off pilot events, our participants felt confident enough to engage in some virtual workshops using the Zoom or Teams platforms and these different mediums have helped us prevent loneliness and keep our participants from becoming disengaged with their personal wellbeing journey.



**“THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR THE SESSION BYRON, I REALLY ENJOYED IT 😊
WAS MY VERY 1ST ZOOM SESSION, I MUST GET BOOKED IN FOR SOME MORE.”**



Wonderous Winter Walk and Stick Stars
3 weeks ago · 358 views



We Delivered...

1012
HOURS OF
FACE-TO-FACE
SESSIONS

329
HOURS OF VIRTUAL
CONTENT

426
SESSIONS
DELIVERED

77
PARTNERS
WORKED
WITH

26,839
FACEBOOK
VIDEO VIEWS

6,700
WEBSITE
VISITORS

27,160
PEOPLE
ENGAGED

321
PEOPLE ATTENDED
OUR SESSIONS
IN PERSON

The TGO Project grounds itself in the nationally recognised Five Ways to Wellbeing. We help people to Connect, Be active, Learn, Give and Take more notice. Using these proven indicators, participants are asked to use a self assessment scale to track their progress and also to indicate how confident they feel about making life decisions and living independently. Our outcomes represent average individual improvements and we use this to measure the success of the project.

Perhaps this year more than ever we should recognise that outside forces can have a huge effect on a person's wellbeing indicators. For example, many more people reported feeling more disconnected and lonely during the national lockdowns. In light of this, it is a great tribute to the value placed on our service by participants that all outcome indicators remained positive on average over this year.

Connecting People with Nature and Each Other

Connection and loneliness have been important themes this year. Disconnected people can lose confidence and miss out on the important social interactions that are so valuable to happiness and wellbeing. The TGO Project did its best to keep contact with regular participants and to reach out to new people feeling the effects of loneliness.

Throughout the year we kept in touch with our participants via weekly check-in calls. For some people, these calls were the only meaningful contact they had with another person. Many of our S2R groups were separated over lockdown and so we looked for ways to use nature to bring them together. A good example of this is our weaving group, who formed a WhatsApp group and were then given a Purple Shamrock cutting by one of our facilitators so they could all grow them together and check on each other's progress - like the many shoots taken from a single plant, separate but together.

⇒ [Shamrocks & Sisterhood video](#)

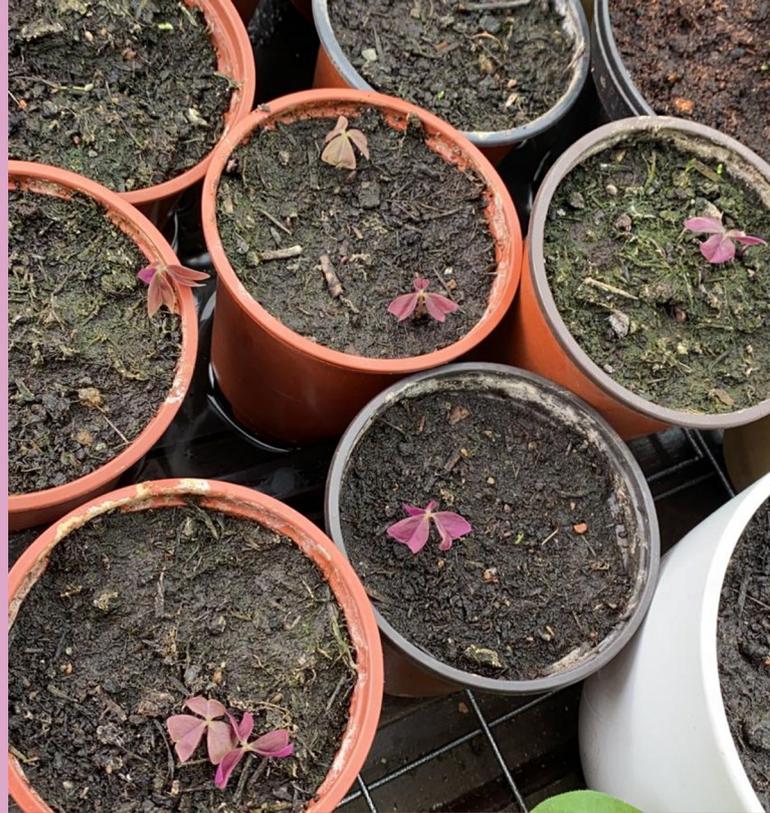
“GILL GREW SHAMROCKS FOR EACH OF US & WHEN LOCKDOWN WAS RELAXED, WE WERE ABLE TO MEET ONE AT A TIME FOR WALKS & THE SHAMROCKS WERE PASSED ON AS A REMINDER OF THE SUPPORT & LOVE SHARED BETWEEN US.”

“OUR FRIENDSHIP HAS GROWN IN STRENGTH & WE ARE LONGING TO BE BACK TOGETHER AGAIN FOR LAUGHTER, HUGS & THE SHARED JOY OF BEING CREATIVE. A TRULY SPECIAL & MAGICAL BOND IN THE DARK TIMES.”

AFTER ATTENDING OUR SESSIONS,
ON AVERAGE PEOPLE FELT

54%

**MORE CONNECTED TO PEOPLE
& THEIR COMMUNITY**



Being Active

This year, exercise and the outdoors have been more valuable to more people than ever before. Exercise venues such as gyms and sports clubs were closed, as were places to socialise such as cinemas, restaurants and places of worship. Sometimes our outdoor time was restricted but the great outdoors remained open, and often it was the only place to stretch your legs and meet people in relative safety.

The confidence to stride out locally often depends on knowing where to go and what to expect. During lockdown, TGO made a series of simple and comprehensive walking videos showing people local places to explore and activities they could do whilst they were out. These videos have been hugely popular, reaching 1000's of people.

⇒ [Grimescar Valley Walk video](#)

Levelling up people's outdoor activities was a challenge we met by creating video sessions from a personal trainer who was able to show people some simple techniques to help add a little extra movement to their daily walks without expensive equipment and the pumping music of the gym.

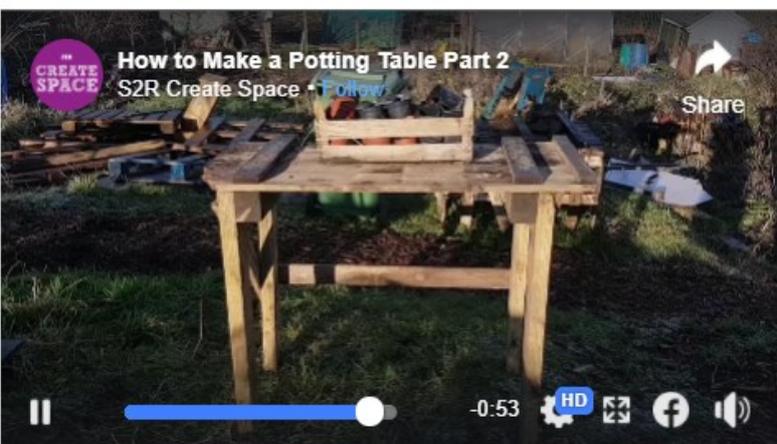
⇒ [Lockdown Outdoors Fitness playlist](#)

AFTER ATTENDING OUR SESSIONS,
ON AVERAGE PEOPLE FELT

90%

MORE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE

**"I HAVEN'T BEEN SLEEPING WELL...
NEED SOMETHING TO KEEP ME BUSY."**



**"I FEEL INSPIRED TO WORK
ON MY OWN GARDEN."**

AFTER ATTENDING OUR SESSIONS,
ON AVERAGE PEOPLE FELT

49%

MORE ENGAGED IN LEARNING

Learning

Lockdown gave many people the time and opportunity to learn some new skills and try out some new activities. This kind of activity keeps body and mind in good condition and gives us confidence when we see what we can achieve.

S2R reached out to thousands of people, from furloughed professionals to those struggling with long term mental health conditions, with a suite of pre-recorded, live and interactive workshops delivered online. This content has given us a solid bank of material that we can also use as resources for the future.

⇒ [How to Make a Potting Table video](#)

We were able to help other organisations too. Locala for example, asked us to lead a Zoom session for their staff and volunteers on growing, and BBC Radio Leeds invited us to be a regular guest teaching their listeners crafting and aromatherapy.

**"THIS IS MY FIRST TIME GROWING
PLANTS ON MY OWN... I'M LOOKING
FORWARD TO PICKING MY FIRST
TOMATO... IT'S REALLY REWARDING!"**

Notice

Everyone was forced to slow down in 2020, and as spring was arriving as lockdown came into force, its progress was noticed more than ever, as was its beneficial effect on wellbeing.

Our participants reported walking more and we encouraged them to share their experiences with us. We helped Russell and Claire show us their favourite walk along the Birkby Bradley Greenway, and they talked to us about the area's local history and wildlife as they went.

⇒ [Route 66 Walk video](#)

Reflecting on people's personal journey was also a theme we explored at the start of the new year with our Wellbeing Journaling Video Guides. Our facilitator Waheeda gently guided participants and gave them the confidence to record their inner journeys whilst reflecting on what they could see around them with sketching and logged entries.

⇒ [Wellbeing Journaling video](#)



“THIS IS A SUPERB FILM AND INSPIRED ME TO FINISH MINE. LOVE THIS SO MUCH X.”

AFTER ATTENDING OUR SESSIONS,
ON AVERAGE PEOPLE NOTICED

44%

MORE OF THE WORLD AROUND THEM



“I RETIRED A WHILE AGO AND OVERNIGHT LOST ALL MY PURPOSE AND WITH IT MY CONFIDENCE. I’VE BEEN LOOKING FOR A WAY I CAN FIND THAT AGAIN.”

AFTER ATTENDING OUR SESSIONS,
ON AVERAGE PEOPLE GAVE

38%

MORE OF THEIR TIME TO OTHERS

Give

The COVID-19 pandemic made it hard for some people to see the value in their lives and what they were doing. Volunteering your time and skills to benefit others is a proven way to make you feel better about yourself and improve your self worth. Several times throughout the year, restrictions eased enough for TGO to take Work Day volunteers out to various locations around Kirklees, improving the environment for the local community and providing opportunities to get together again.

In October, we joined “Building African Caribbean Communities” and Kirklees Council to plant out the new Windrush Garden at Springwood. Our volunteers visit the garden in the centre of Huddersfield and are reminded of their part in creating this new green space, promoting the cultural heritage of Huddersfield and contributing to better community cohesion.

⇒ [Windrush Garden Work Day video](#)

In-between lockdowns, our polytunnel growers were able to spend some valuable time together, keeping the site ticking over, enjoying each other's company and the wellbeing effects provided by this oasis of calm. Naturally the site has not been as productive as in previous years, but as restrictions began to lift we were able to supply other groups with plants to get them up and running. We'd like to say a massive thank you to the staff at Kirklees Parks for helping with facilitation, maintenance and navigating health and safety protocols.

Confidence

Getting outdoors and connecting with nature whilst building on the Five Ways to Wellbeing can bring on some profound changes, including improved confidence and a greater ability to make important life decisions. The unprecedented isolation of Covid lockdowns seriously affected people's confidence, and we helped to slow this deterioration by getting people together when we could and keeping people busy with new ideas.

Down on our allotment, participants can build a relationship with the world around them as they grow food plants from seed to plate. They then take these skills home and can gain satisfaction from nurturing other living things. Sadly we only had small windows where we could invite people to the allotment this year, but each week we ran virtual workshops highlighting seasonal tasks and marking the turning of the year. We now have a full year of growing tips as a handy video library for future vegetable growers. A virtual gardening group on Zoom also enabled our facilitators to see what people grew at home and offer advice.

⇒ [Allotment Update Week 10 video](#)

During lockdown, S2R produced a series of Wellbeing Packs in both English and community languages and distributed them in digital format to services and individuals across Kirklees. We also produced printed versions for those most isolated and vulnerable. Along with our Kirklees community partners, we posted and disseminated over 5,950 packs to individual households.

Nature and the outdoors formed a vital part of this offering and we encouraged people to explore their local neighbourhoods, provided seeds so they could grow plants at and helped people remain active with fun, creative and interactive challenges. The Wellbeing Packs were designed and written in easy to read but informed language to engage with all age groups. We would like to thank Grow to School for supplying the seeds and Richmond Fellowship for their contributions.

⇒ [Wellbeing Packs 1-12](#)

AFTER ATTENDING OUR SESSIONS,
ON AVERAGE PEOPLE FELT

52%

MORE CONFIDENT



"IT REALLY HELPED HEARING A VOICE FROM S2R - IT INSTANTLY MADE ME FEEL LESS TRAPPED. S2R HAS BEEN SUCH A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE FOR ME"

Website Statistics

- ⇒ 22,606 total page views
- ⇒ 6,632 brand new visitors
- ⇒ 6,700 visitors to the site
- ⇒ 85% of visitors from the UK



Developments

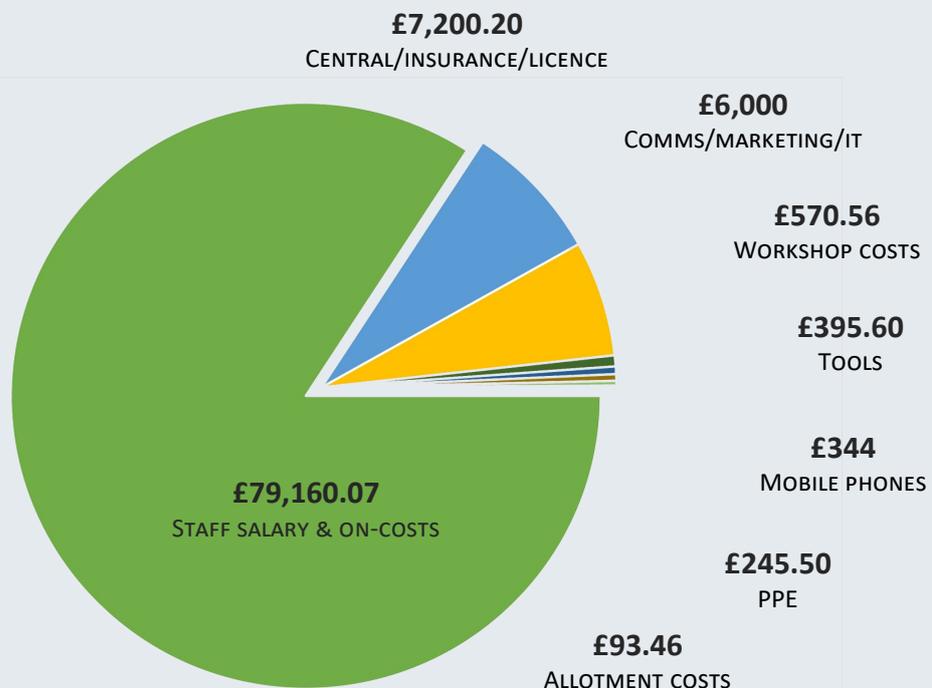
The Pandemic introduced S2R to largely unfamiliar ways of working. Through their passion and creativity, our team created new, accessible activities and resources that retained our trusted identity. From every negative comes a positive, and this new strand to our skill bank has enabled us to reach a wider audience across Kirklees and views of our online sessions have gone nationwide. Content and techniques we have developed will remain a feature and we will be providing a diverse range of online and group activities moving forward.

The effectiveness of our methods has reached beyond the traditional boundaries of mental health services, with different council departments now asking S2R to work in their communities. Here we can access more people closer to home, and tackle wider social priorities whilst improving wellbeing and challenging the stigma of mental health with activities aimed at everyone. These new sources will enable us to deepen our work and better reach geographic areas which have previously proved hard to reach.

The value of wellbeing and nature has never been so recognised as now, and more organisations now offer an outdoor wellbeing focus. S2R aims to remain the leader in this field and use all of our experience to support new and emerging partners with their offerings.

Lessons learnt in lockdown mean that S2R is in a great place to continue delivering a traditional service of face-to-face and distance activities, reaching people at times which suit them and are convenient for accessibility / childcare/ work or carer commitments. There are also people who may try a session or two online before going on to visit us face-to-face.

This year we will aim to look more closely at the things that keep people on their sofas and prevent them venturing outside. By combining general wellbeing sessions, delivered in a familiar environment at home or at a local centre, with a progression to the outdoors we can remove barriers by building understanding and confidence.



TGO Finance

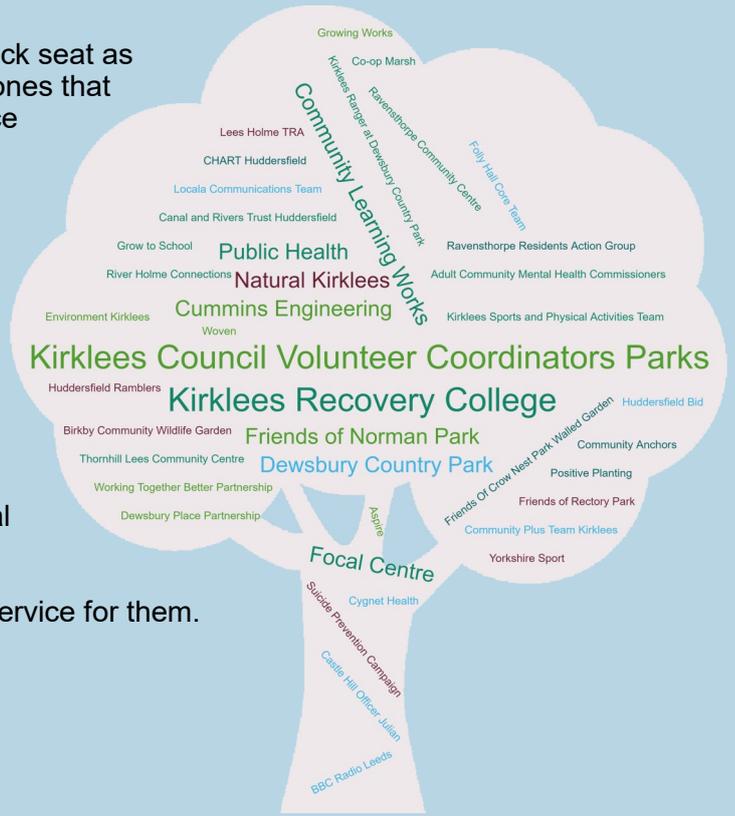
Partnership Work

The Great Outdoors Project relies on partners for everything from funding and referrals to project development ideas and advice on good practice. They allow us to remain current with our agendas and relevant to the wider aims of the community when we give our time there.

This year, many of our partnerships have taken a back seat as they were not able to operate during Covid, but the ones that remained became vital lifelines to keeping our service moving forward. As the year progressed, a group of new partners emerged for whom their partnership with S2R enabled them to work towards their goals throughout lockdown. Over the last year we worked closely with 42 partners, 21 of whom were new to us. Added to these are a plethora of less close connections such as referring GP surgeries and community groups sharing our wellbeing packs and online materials.

Over the past year, S2R have been working more closely than ever with our other third sector partners delivering the commissioned adult community mental health services in Kirklees. This *Working Together Better Partnership* produced a video to help people understand the different services and find the right service for them.

⇒ [Working Together Better partnership video](#)



“THANKS FOR THIS OUTDOOR RISK ASSESSMENT AND THE INFO FROM THE RAMBLERS. THAT IS GREAT AND VERY MUCH APPRECIATED. WE HOPE TO HAVE A SINGING GROUP OUTSIDE IN A COUPLE OF WEEKS AND WALKING GROUP.”

- KATHY ENGLER, WOMEN’S CENTRE



The Great Outdoors Project

To find out more about this project
call or text: 07541 095455
or email: contact@s2r.org.uk

www.s2r.org.uk

Support to Recovery
S2R Create Space
5-7 Brook Street,
Huddersfield
HD1 1EB

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