

I'M NOT SO
SHY NOW

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“Coming to this community larder has helped me make friends. I'm not so shy now and I've come out of my shell, getting involved in all the community, getting to know the next door neighbours, and that, and people who walk down the road. You always get a friendly welcome and they know your name and say, "Hello, how are you?" and I say, "Oh I'm fine, how are you?" and then, of course, we get into a conversation, which I like. Before I was really, I was shy, I didn't get into chats, but since I got to know people here, I always speak to people now.

With the food I get from here, I can do my own cooking at home, and I am cooking more now - mainly curries! Which is great because there's lots of veg to choose from here. I am a lot healthier since I came here.

Before I came here, I couldn't walk that far, but now, because of all the stuff I'm getting from here, and I'm eating healthier, it's building my vitality up and I can walk further. Coming here has improved my health quite well. I used to catch the bus to go down the road, but now I walk. I can walk one and a half to two miles now, and I could never walk before. I have sciatica in my back and arthritis in my knees.

I feel happier too. I met an artist and he got me into painting murals on my fence. I have done an article in the [local newsletter] about my street art which will be in the next newsletter coming out this week. I've put my contact details in the newsletter so people can contact me about doing murals for them. They all know I do my artwork on my fence, and they always stop and chat, and they always want a photo of it. Now I'm involved in doing stuff with the community now and I know a lot more people. Like I turn things that people throw away, like paper plates and toilet roll holders, into bird feeders and butterfly feeders. I'm going to make them at the next repair café, showing people how to make them.

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To help us understand the impact of Well Together, for organisers and attendees of funded activities, we have used storytelling as a component of our evaluation framework. Storytelling is an approach based on the Most Significant Change technique that has been used by the Old Fire Station since 2017, who now offer training and support to partners across Oxfordshire.

The Well Together stories are being gathered from organisers volunteering or working for a range of groups and organisations, and from the people who take part in the activities provided by groups. They are being collected in 2025 by the Well Together programme team who have been trained as story collectors.

By telling their stories, participants taking part in this approach, have the chance to reflect on what has changed for them through their involvement in providing activities and / or participating in them. How has it affected their life? Why has it been important to them?

The stories were recorded, transcribed and then edited down to two pages each - aiming to use the teller's own words, retaining their "voice" and reflecting the teller's insights into the impacts and the significance for them.

*For more information about this methodology, and to read stories collected from a range of other projects visit the Old Fire Station's website dedicated to this approach:
[Storytelling: Human-friendly evaluation](#)*

With thanks to our story tellers

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