

IT'S ABOUT FALLING IN LOVE WITH THE OUTDOORS

well
together

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We've always been interested in doing intergenerational events because we feel like that's what the communities are like. It's not just getting the older generation together and then getting the younger generation together. That doesn't create much of a "unity" kind of approach - and that's what we've always had.

Let's bring everyone together and then everyone can support each. We have quite a few people who are in their 60s coming on the hikes. It is great to see when they initially were so nervous to come along, and they didn't know what to expect. But they heard so much about it. They had seen the pictures and they're like, "We want to go to these kinds of places because we're always stuck here". A lot of the people, they didn't have cars, they didn't have transportation. So that's why we have the car sharing scheme.

It's not normalised for Black and Brown people to hike and go up mountains. We went to a conference, specifically to attract Black and Brown people out into nature held up in the Peak District. So there, one of the ladies who attended, she stood up and she said, "Look, just yesterday we were going on a hike and then we were told - 'you need to go back to where you came from'". She's Black African... and honestly it sent frequencies through the whole conference because everyone was like, "Yeah, we know, we feel it, we know it". And this is why a lot of people don't come as they've heard of these things happening. Ever since then, I was even more determined to bring even more people out.

You know that a lot of people who are younger are now getting ill earlier - we're seeing these illnesses affecting the younger population. We've been seeing people in their 30s have heart attacks and it's like, "What is going on with that with that demographic?". It's not right. It's been an important series of hikes that we've been doing all these years.

I do a lot of research to find out where the most interesting places - which are not too difficult, but still have some really interesting scenery, interesting places to go to. And then I'll suggest one or two, and some people might have their own thing to add - then we vote, and then once people vote then we settle on that one. It's all part of getting the ownership back to the community so they're choosing where they want to go.

There's a lot of different factors that put people off. Because they don't know the territory, they don't know the terrain, they don't know how long the routes are going to be, they don't know anything about the area. So it's easier to just stay at home - which is a shame, you know?

The idea is if we can build confidence in people in getting into hiking, getting the qualification, going abroad as well... And then that confidence will start to ooze throughout the whole community. Then we'll start to see people with a sedentary lifestyle that actually want to go out and do things. Most people who have come hiking, they've got the hiking bug now – they're like, "We want to keep on going!"

We also take the group camping. So, in the beginning one of the ladies, she didn't want to come. She has three children, all with special needs, because of that, her and even her husband were quite reclusive. They didn't really interact much with the community because they had no commonalities. But I managed to convince her to come camping a couple of years ago. She said, "What about my husband?". I said, "Just tell him, 'look, we have this option to go camping'. Go and enjoy yourself for a weekend and if you don't like it? Don't come again." And afterwards, she was so happy because her children were playing with everyone. Everyone was playing and she felt so accepted. Her kids felt so accepted. And there were other special needs kids as well there who they got on so well with. When she finished the camping trip and she was wanting to put things away back in the loft. Her husband stopped her and said "Don't put it too far back because we have another camping trip. Make sure it's right in the front. We can access it easy". So, when she told us like we're like, wow, "Oh my God, we converted him!"

It's about falling in love with the outdoors. That's what I tell people. We have to experience outdoors and be able to appreciate nature. And once we appreciate nature than we always want to be there... and do more to appreciate even more nature. But if you're never there – if you're always in your work, your office, your house, or your car - you're never going to experience it. All your memories might be just from you from back home, which is completely different, you know. You never actually get to see the beauty that the UK has or even just around us within a 20-mile radius. We won't be able to see the beauty that we have right around us on our doorstep. We live in such an individualistic society, it drives me crazy because it's not what we're about, you know? We don't have individualism, you know, we're a community.

We live in a very divisive society where, if you follow politics, there's a lot of divisive stuff that's going on. It's like there's a big difference between the international politics and the local politics.

People on the ground, they have that desire to just be together and to help you to connect. That's why we see so many people wanting to work together. When we just pose this idea that this is what we're trying to do - everyone's joining. You know, why shouldn't we join? It just works.





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

Well Together is delivered in partnership by OCVA and Community First Oxfordshire. The Programme is funded by the NHS Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board.

