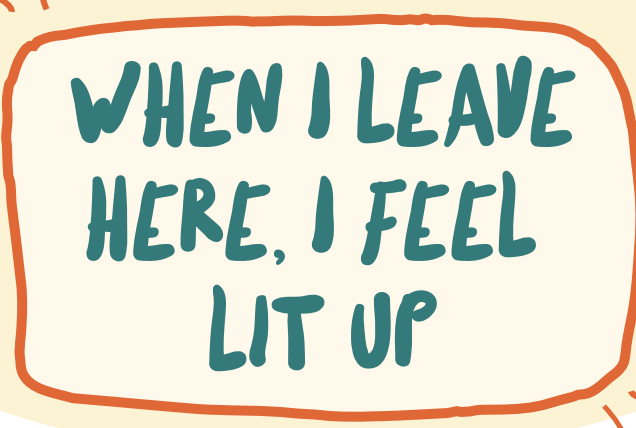




WHEN I LEAVE
HERE, I FEEL
LIT UP

well
together

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This community shed has restored me. I come every week it runs. I wish it ran every week, instead of every fortnight, because two weeks is too long to wait for the next one! I was really nervous the first day, but when I came in and started, I just clocked out completely, and just focused on making things, and then gradually people would come over and start talking to me, and that made me feel at ease. I'm still not going out the house very much, but this Wednesday night just makes it for me. I just love it here.

I'm making a bird table today, it's tricky but they are helping me. These people are amazing. They are always here to help, they are really friendly and they understand people, they just do. I absolutely love it. I have a lot of illnesses and conditions, and I've recently been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. I'm really on my own now, and I have no family here. I'm an introvert, and I was becoming more introverted, being on my own. I spend most of my time in the house. I don't go out unless I've got a hospital or doctor's appointment or to go to the shop to buy food. Apart from that, this is the only time I go out. I don't even like answering the phone or the door. But having something like this every two weeks has just restored me.

Coming to the community shed has pushed me into decorating my bedroom! Even though I'm not well enough to do it, and it's taken me two weeks, it's pushed me into doing it up, and I'm nearly finished it now. I've just got the gloss paint to do. It was hard work putting the wallpaper up, oh dear! I got some cut-price Laura Ashley wallpaper from when Homebase closed. So I've got that on two walls, and I've got white textured wallpaper on the other two walls. Coming here made me realise that, if I can make things here, even though I'm slow, then I can do that wallpaper myself. I just thought, I could do it ten years ago, so I can do it now! And this place kind of pushed me. And I am so proud of myself, so proud of myself.

There's not enough things like this. I used to do a lot of sewing and embroidery, but I can't do that now because of my hands. I tried another place that does wood, but it was too busy and intimidating. This place is great. There is space, and especially if you've got mental health issues, you don't want to be coming into a crowded place. It's definitely making me more sociable, because I've got to know a lot of these people now, like the women who run it, I got to know them and I just feel really comfortable with them.

And then someone said that one of the staff wanted to get a dog, and I was looking for a new forever home for my dog, because I can't cope with him any more, I can't cope with going out in the cold, even with my mobility scooter it was just too much for me. And I have a bad chest, you can probably tell, and his long fur was making it worse. I knew she was going to be the right person for my dog as soon as I heard, and he seems to love her and the family. When we have all had time to adjust, I will go and visit them.

There's a guy who runs workshops here, carving spoons and other things, I keep asking him, "When is the next one?" - because they are always fully booked. So I say, "Please tell me as soon as there is a space!" Because it gets me out. There's not enough things like this that are free, and the wood is free, it's just amazing. The fact it's free makes a difference to me, it gives me peace of mind, and I don't have to worry about whether I can afford to pay for the next one.

Having something like this to do to is just amazing. When I leave here on a Wednesday evening, I feel kind of lit up - like I've achieved something. Like, I'm not stuck within the four walls of the house. When I'm having a bad day with my back, I just sit and watch telly, and I think, "What am I doing?". But nothing motivated me to get up and do something. But now, I am motivated - this motivates me to do things in the house - like the decorating. I'm so proud of my bedroom - and I am going to be doing the garden! I know I am going to have to do a bit and then sit down, and then do a bit more, and I might get a hypo so I will have to go and eat some fruit or something - it's like that all the time, but I'm still achieving it in the end!

It's good that it's on a Wednesday as well, because it splits the week up. Because when there's nothing to do all week, or when you are not motivated or well enough to do it, you just lose track of time. I don't know what day it is most of the time. But having this in the middle of the week, I know it's coming. The longest time is the week that it's not on, I say, "Oh, I wish it was next Wednesday!". I didn't come one week because I wasn't feeling up to it, and I really missed it, and I kept saying, "Go on, go on, go", but I just wasn't well enough to go, and then I had a whole month to wait - it was terrible!

I wish this ran every week, and I wish there was more money to put more things on that are free, like this community shed and the sessions the carving guy runs. It's all down to money. A lot of the staff are volunteers, and a lot of the wood comes from offcuts from the shop downstairs. So they try to keep it as cheap as possible to run, but it's all down to money. But I say, please find the money, it's worth it.





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.

