



LEADER case study: Mums Supporting Mums

What are the aims of your project?

The main aim is to develop activities led by mums with young children who live in rural areas, as a way of supporting each other and being less isolated.

Social isolation is not good for mums or their children. Around 1 in 3 mums have not-so-good mental well-being in the few years after having a baby. Feeling part of a community and having peer support from other mums can make a big difference, but it can be more of a challenge for people living in small rural communities.

Where is it?

The project started in late 2012 and by August 2013 mums were getting together regularly in 6 locations in the western part of Scottish Borders.

Since then we have met with people in central and eastern Borders and some of the first groups are expanding into spin-off activities.

Who's involved?

There are 2 part-time sessional workers, who together work around 16 hours a week. They get new groups going, help them become established, and provide a contact for anyone wanting information. They also link in with other services for families across Scottish Borders. Women are running most of the local groups themselves now.

By August there were 48 mums, 9 dads, 2 grans and 1 granddad involved and a lot of babies and toddlers. Since then more parents have got involved along with more babies and children.

How is it funded?

A Big Lottery Fund Investing in Ideas grant got the project started. Then funding came from LEADER, Comic Relief's small grants scheme and NHS Borders. Outside the Box contributed some money and additional staff time. The LEADER funding felt very important to us as it reinforced the message that this is about strong, sustainable rural communities.

Since August 2013 the project has continued with funding from NHS Borders and help in kind from Outside the Box.

The mums are doing their own fundraising to keep their own local groups going and NHS Borders has given a small grant to support a follow-on group at Walkerburn. Fundraising has included donations from local businesses, raffles, a fancy dress buggy walk and a sponsored toddle waddle - even the babies and toddlers are helping!

Where did you go for help and advice?

Outside the Box supports new groups to get started so we drew on the experience of many community groups. Mums in Scottish Borders and in other places fed into the planning for the project.

Our partner was the Borders Healthy Living Network based at NHS Borders. They were a good source of advice at the setting up stage and have continued to give help and advice to the mums' groups.

As part of the project we developed a set of Hints and Tips to share our experience from this project with other people.

What's been your greatest achievement so far?

The mums have given great support to each other - women tell us what a difference it has made to them and their children when they make friends.

The project has also enabled people to be more active in their villages - examples include people helping plan local events, supporting other groups, helping keep the village halls going and much more.

Neighbours and local businesses are helping the mums' groups too, by donating equipment and funds and introducing people to the informal networks which are such an important part of rural life.

"Before the group there was nothing to bring mums together. It's helped rid the feeling of isolation."

"We've all been there, struggling a bit and needing a wee hand."

"We're using services like the library bus and toddler groups I didn't know about before, which I heard about through the group."

"I feel more part of the community. This is a great place to live!"

"The local cafe is now seen as very family friendly. People stay on longer after the group finishes. They go back at other times during the week. Other people have heard about the cafe through our promotion of the project."

"Since attending the group my confidence has increased and with the encouragement from other mums I have now started my own business. I would have never thought this possible before."

And the biggest challenge?

We started similar projects in rural South Lanarkshire and at West Wigtownshire in Dumfries and Galloway at about the same time. Mums in all 3 areas contributed to activities which are having a bigger impact, such as making the DVD to show why mums in rural areas need this peer support and contributing to the set of Hints and Tips to help groups in other areas get similar services

underway. Working with the other groups brought advantages but it took a lot more work than expected and slowed down some elements.

Any tips for someone for someone setting up a similar project?

- Talk to people who are a bit isolated and ask what will help them feel part of their community.
- Try things. If they don't work at first, keep the door open. People may just need time or confidence to get used to the idea of a new activity being there.
- Be open to each village or area wanting something different and taking a different approach.
- Tell the group in each village what the others are doing. It encourages people to come up with more ideas and to keep going if they come across any difficulties. People tell us how it feels easier and better when you are part of something bigger.
- Work in partnership with people in lots of situations. We got help from local businesses as well as from the Health Visitors, community groups, walking groups, the Library Service and many more people.

What's next for your project?

We are planning to extend the groups into other parts of Scottish Borders which we haven't reached yet. We are also looking to follow up ideas which the mums have suggested, including groups for dads and groups which meet at weekends to support mums who are working during the week.

More info (links to website, photos, videos, documents etc)

There is more information about the project in Scottish Borders and in the other areas at our new website: <http://mumssupportingmums.org.uk>

The film shows some of what we are doing and the difference it makes for mums, their families and for their communities. It is now available on youtube to watch and share – [Our Story So Far](#).

If you have any problem accessing the video through youtube, it is also available through Healthy Valleys website: www.healthyvalleys.org.uk or you can contact Outside the Box.

The report from the project and the Hints and Tips are at <http://mumssupportingmums.org.uk/project-resources/>

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