

# Addressing loneliness and social isolation in Plymouth

2021-2025



Participatory grant-making, with its emphasis on 'nothing about us without us' starts to shift the power about grant-making decisions by involving the people most affected by the issues or problems, and empowers and gives agency to those people who benefit from funding to determine the priorities.  
(With thanks to GrantCraft)

#### Organisation names and website links

Trevi <https://trevi.org.uk/>

Routeways <https://www.routeways.org.uk/>

Plymouth Play Scrapstore [https://www.facebook.com/plymouthscrapstore/?locale=en\\_GB](https://www.facebook.com/plymouthscrapstore/?locale=en_GB)

Plymouth and Devon Race Equality Council <https://www.plymouthanddevonrec.org.uk/>

Nudge Community Builders <https://www.nudge.community/>

Four Greens Community Trust <https://www.fourgreenscommunitytrust.co.uk/>

Bikespace <https://www.bikespace.org.uk/>

Memory Matters <https://www.memorymatters.org.uk/>

Fotonow <https://www.fotonow.org/>

Plymouth Argyle Community Trust <https://argylecommunitytrust.co.uk/>

Devon Business Incubator <https://www.dbi.org.uk/>

Firestone Plymouth <https://www.firestoneplymouth.org.uk/>

Plymouth Hope <https://plymouthhope.com/>

Conscious Sisters <https://www.theconscioussisters.com/>

Tulgey Woods Sanctuary <https://www.tulgeywoods.co.uk/>

Elder Tree Plymouth <https://eldertreeplymouth.co.uk/>

Gifted Women <https://www.giftedwomen.co.uk/>

Iridescent Ideas <https://www.iridescentideas.com/>

Real Ideas <https://realideas.org/>

Take A Part <https://takeapart.org.uk/>

# Recipients actively shaped the grant-making process and created 15 times the social value of each £1 invested

Since 2018, the Rank Foundation has invested nearly £5.5m to support the social enterprise sector in Plymouth. During that time, some 50 of the city's social purpose organisations benefitted from this support. It has contributed to building a more resilient and sustainable social purpose sector that is now much better positioned to address many of Plymouth's social, economic, and health challenges. During the last three years, The Rank Foundation has focused on targeting its support at social enterprises so that they can make a significant contribution towards addressing loneliness and social isolation in the local communities they serve so well. Rank has been joined in that endeavour by Livewell Southwest, Plymouth's integrated health and social care provider, which has contributed match funding to enable more beneficiaries to be reached.

## **Participatory grant-making and projects aimed at addressing and combatting loneliness and social isolation in Plymouth 2021-2025**

At the end of 2021, the Rank Foundation launched a £1m fund to support projects delivered by social enterprises to address social isolation and loneliness, which had been thrown into sharp relief during the Covid pandemic in Plymouth. At one level, there's little particularly newsworthy about that development. It is significantly more interesting that Rank delegated the decisions about which projects should receive funding to a local panel of decision makers, comprising representatives from the local social purpose sector plus community representatives with lived experience. This participatory

grant-making panel approved the first 13 projects, which began supporting their local communities in March 2022. These organisations have significantly contributed to addressing loneliness and isolation by bringing their skills, experience and access to local communities to bear on this issue, supporting those particularly affected by the pandemic and its legacy. In 2022, Livewell Southwest, a social enterprise, committed £0.5m of match funding to extend the number of projects to 27. This additional match funding from Livewell Southwest came about because they recognised that the first 13 projects had made such an impact on the beneficiaries, particularly their contribution to anticipatory care.

The Rank Foundation commissioned Kate Smith, CEO of Memory Matters, to lead the process of setting up a participatory Grant Making Programme. PGM is a collaborative approach to funding where potential grant recipients actively shape the grant-making process. It empowers communities to identify their needs, prioritise projects, and decide how funds are allocated. With no experience in PGM, the local team sought to build on others' experience. During the planning stages, the team met with the National Lottery Community Fund representatives who were coordinating their approach to PGM to learn from their experiences. There followed a period of in-depth desk research plus active membership in worldwide online PGM groups to share ideas, engage in discussions, and disseminate information from other organisations' experiences to shape the Plymouth team's plans. To support the local team in their work, the first stage was to establish, recruit, and convene an expert >>

panel to advise on Plymouth's priorities for action around loneliness and social isolation and identify ways the Rank network might best respond through project-based activities. The principal function of this advisory panel was to determine the priorities for how that £1m might be allocated. This resulted in the publication of a prospectus providing guidance to potential applicants about what type of projects Rank seeks to support, the criteria which will be applied, the application process, and the monitoring and evaluation criteria.

Once the Advisory Panel determined the key priorities, Rank sought applications from its local network for projects of up to £30,000 per annum for a maximum of two years. A separate group, the participatory grant-making panel, was established to consider the applications, using the priorities/criteria determined by the Advisory Panel to guide their decision-making about what gets funded. This group comprised those with lived experience from local communities plus representatives from some of the social enterprises Rank was already supporting to decide what gets funded. To prepare the PGM panel, the central Rank team provided a training programme for the PGM group so that the panel were confident that they had the skills to assess applications and contribute to the decision-making deliberations. The PGM panel approved those 27 projects to be delivered by local social enterprises with an initial total financial commitment of £1.5m.

To provide a nationally-recognised, robust measure of impact all projects used Upshot, a monitoring and evaluation tool, to record activity ensuring a common approach to data analysis. In addition, each of the partners have been using the Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Survey (SWEMWBS) to ensure that there is a consistent measure of impact across all of the projects. Each

organisation's beneficiaries have completed a minimum of ten baseline surveys at the outset of the project and then completed a follow-up survey during the lifetime of the project. In total there were 12,500 regular participants supported across the whole programme who were registered on a project (there were many thousands of attendances which were not classified as registered). In summary, the survey's principal purpose is to provide a statistical measure of distance travelled in relation to loneliness and social isolation at the point of enrolment to the end of the project. SWEMWBS has been widely used in the UK and elsewhere, including in the Health Survey for England and the Department of Health's Public Health Outcomes Framework. By using their formula and projecting this against the total number of registered beneficiaries gives a net social value £15m, or, put another way, for every pound invested in the PGM programme has a net social value of £15.

So, the case studies in this publication have been selected to represent what the project teams have achieved. Any of the projects could have been included, as they all warrant exploration, but of course, space is limited.



Kate Smith  
CEO, Memory  
Matters, and Chair,  
PGM panel



Geoff Baines  
Deputy Chief  
Executive,  
Livewell Southwest



Phil Davies  
Rank Associate for  
Plymouth

May 2025



# Woodland project has the qualities that create well-being

The Conscious Sisters CIC is a socially engaged arts company based in Plymouth, which produces unique art projects working with and for the community. The project specialises in work that explores identity, drawing from over 40 years of experience in inclusion and race work. Working in an accessible way is key for The Conscious Sisters CIC, which believes with a passion that art can transform lives. The real-life sisters love collaborative working with communities. This led to this collaboration with Tulgey Woods Sanctuary CIC, nearly 10 acres of mixed woodland in the heart of Plymouth, to curate life-changing creative experiences in the woods. Tulgey Woods is a conservation project that aims to increase habitat and biodiversity, educate and promote environmental innovation, and create an oasis of calm and refuge within the city for those in need. The woodland is a haven for wildlife and serves as a source of social, physical, and mental benefits for those involved.

Many activities took place in the inspirational woods, bringing people together, including foraging, orchard

management, woodland skills, woodland sculpture creation, and a history walk and talk. In total, 105 Workshops were delivered, which were attended by 161 unique participants between March 2023 and 2025, with a further 691 recorded by headcount as attending the larger events.

*Sue shared her experience of well-being:*

*"I have been coming to the Being Well in the Woods group on Friday afternoons for almost a year. I was encouraged to join after losing my partner and mum in close succession in 2021. Was suffering from depression, loneliness and social isolation. This group of wonderful people have helped me understand my grief by providing a safe place to socialise, meet people and participate in fun, productive outdoor activities. Thanks to Karen and her colleagues, I feel more able to manage my stress and mental well-being and stay as mentally and physically healthy as possible. I now feel I have a sense of purpose and mission in life."*



*A Conscious Sisters' well-being session taking place in the Tulgey Woods Conservation Project, Plymouth*

# Lunch and Learn, a community recipe for connection and curiosity

**MEMORY Matters** is a social enterprise providing essential support for individuals affected by dementia through tailored services. Dementia specialists offer personalised advice and support from a dedicated dementia information hub. They also run Moments Cafe from the same building, and all profits help fund dementia services. Memory Matters ran two projects during the funding term. Moments Cafe is a Memory Matters run project. A cafe with a conscience and a big heart, it sees many of the city's vulnerable population who enjoy the safe, non-judgmental space. Community groups often meet either in the cafe or the meeting spaces upstairs.



*Fitness training for fun in one of the group sessions*



*A group enjoys one of the Engage Central lunchtime sessions*

## Engage Central

Ran between March 2022 - 2024. Engage Central was set up to link with other organisations within the Rank network and Improving Lives, Livewell, Colebrook Housing and GP surgeries to offer a referral-based monthly lunch and learn. This consisted of events where people experiencing loneliness could meet in a safe environment to have a free lunch and participate in an activity. Activities included tea dances, meditation workshops, and Oceans for All (an immersive experience using virtual reality), hate crime awareness and soulful singing, to name a few. Alongside the Lunch & Learn programme, they ran weekly sessions of interest to encourage participation, including mindful colouring, knit and natter and crafting groups from the cafe. >>



Engage Central attracted 215 people to attend monthly sessions, with the weekly groups seeing 70 people who attended up to or more than three sessions of their chosen group. Many of the people who attended lunch and learns have joined other community groups that meet at the cafe, which has provided them with a much wider social network and activity opportunities.

*An Engage Central participant said: "This gets me out of the house and gives me a routine. I wouldn't come here on my own otherwise."*

### **Memory Matters CIC**

**ACTING Up at Moments** - Together with Theatre Royal, Memory Matters ran **Moments Acting Up**. This drama programme for people over 50 runs for over 10 weeks. They ran five 10-week programmes over the funding period March 2023 - March 2025.

The workshops encourage those who have previously enjoyed drama and those with no experience, including people affected by dementia.

These sessions allowed beneficiaries to explore creativity in a safe environment. Socialising among those over 50 keeps the brain sharp. In addition to the cognitive health benefits, it can improve mental health, provide a sense of belonging and increase self-esteem and communication skills.

People with dementia often find that they can enjoy activities that they had previously not thought to do, such as changes to the brain, which allow them to explore new ways of communication and express emotions. Drama is a means of keeping active, freeing the imagination, and bringing emotional benefits, including fun and happiness.



*Participants enjoying a visit to the theatre as part of the Meet at the Matinee events*

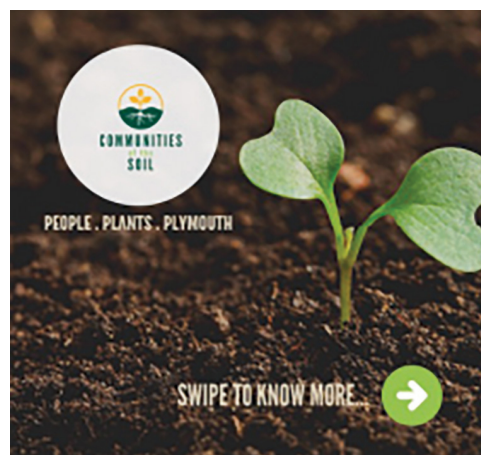
Each of the 10-week programs ended with a performance for family and friends. Alongside the groups, there were "meet at the matinee" outings at the theatre, enjoying cake and a matinee performance. At Christmas, 60 people, including those with dementia, enjoyed a pantomime performance, which was enjoyed by all. This project opened up accessing the theatre for people who would not have the means to go under normal circumstances or didn't want to attend on their own. The workshops had 142 unique beneficiaries, with 110 people attending theatre productions and the pantomime.

*An Acting Up at Moments participant said: "I had so much fun at the theatre, I would never go on my own but there were so many of us, and the staff were really nice."*

# Becoming rooted with Communities of the Soil

DIVERSITY Business Incubator's (DBI) mission is to elevate the economic development and resilience in the BAME communities living in the South West. Helping them thrive in business and integrate effectively into the wider community. DBI evolved in response to the recognition that only a small number of businesses in Plymouth had ethnically diverse leadership. DBI supports newly-settled Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicities (BAME) groups to start up their own businesses. DBI's base is in Stonehouse, which is the most deprived neighbourhood in Plymouth ranking 1 (where 1 is the most deprived and 39 is the least deprived of the city's neighbourhoods). Stonehouse has a rich population of BAME communities, asylum seekers and refugees and DBI is well established as the go-to organisation for ideas of development and has created trust and expertise within the community.

**Communities of the Soil.** This project was designed as a way of getting people to come out, or supporting them out of isolation after COVID. DBI wanted to



find a creative way of combatting social isolation through all generations of BAME working together to devise and create growing spaces for the well-being of the community. This would lead to people finding connections, shared stories and cultural memories. Permaculture methods were used to survey and consult with young and old starting from the question 'What is your soil?' (or 'where are you from?'). This built upon existing support for BAME people who have often been uprooted from one soil to feel more grounded in the urban soil of Stonehouse, with a greater sense of belonging, identity, livelihood and purpose. People involved in the Communities of the Soil project took part in various workshops, events and shared activities including gardening sessions, cooking workshops and food preservation where social bonds were strengthened, and cross-cultural understanding was promoted.

The project successfully engaged with the 136 unique participants via 100 sessions also engaging a further 367 via headcount who have attended events over the duration of the project.





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Memory Matters Engage Central - a beneficiary story told by a group facilitator. ST started attending Engage Central with a support worker as she did not feel confident coming alone. Although she enjoyed the sessions, she did not feel able to contribute but enjoyed watching everyone else get involved. After each session, she would tell her carer what she enjoyed.

ST had the same routine every time she came to the group. She would come upstairs via the lift, and MM staff would see her coming out of the lift and greet her, always asking how she was, etc. Similarly, at the end of the session, MM staff always saw her waiting for the lift and would ask how the session was and if she had fun.

These brief conversations across the weeks led to real progression. ST became more engaged, very chatty, and animated about the activities and the people she met, 'I had so much fun at the theatre, I would never go on my own, and there were so many of us! The theatre was amazing, and the staff were nice; I think I will join the theatre group too!'. ST acknowledged that she didn't feel pressure to join in if she was having a bad day, 'if I am having a bad day, it's ok, no one makes me join in, and I can still come and enjoy the atmosphere'.

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Plymouth Play and Scrapstore - Connecting Communities with Creativity - Gill & Lou's story told by Scrapstore connector Charlotte

Gill and Lou. We met Gill and her grandchildren at a summer event in a park near her home. While the children crafted, we discussed the Scrapstore and connecting communities with creativity. Gill started attending the Gladrags group at the Scrapstore and brought her friend Lou along. Hearing about the repair cafe, they brought clocks to be mended. A few months later, they shared their love of dolls, using their expertise and knowledge to mend and bring precious dolls back to life! Gill and Lou are amazing. They are filling their lives following the deaths of their husbands and coping with their own health challenges, too. The Scrapstore is a place where they find company, conversation, and crafting with others, plus the bonus of some shopping, too!

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# House residents came together to enjoy creativity and walking in local nature and formed a bond

Firestone Plymouth provides supported accommodation for addicts seeking to maintain abstinence-based recovery using mutual aid fellowships.

They run a ten-bedroom house in Plymouth for men only. Firestone has a strict rule about the need for abstinence, but otherwise encourages a culture of self-responsibility.

Firestone partnered with Rite to Freedom to offer a unique experience on Dartmoor. Rite to Freedom helps break down patterns of isolation and fear to pave the way for more peaceful, creative, happy lives.

The nature, connection, creativity and mindfulness project comprised 10 days out with 24 residents. The residents came together to enjoy nature, participating in organised walking sessions and mindfulness, and coming together when many felt isolated within the

house. As the residents bonded, it was thought that the experience would be better if they took over the planning and management. This led to two residents attending walking leader training.

The locations visited include Mount Edgcumbe, Chagford, Western Beacon and Cotehele. The project has coincided with a very marked improvement in outcomes at the house; compared with five evictions through relapse in 2022, there were no evictions in 2023.



Firestone residents enjoy a day out in the Devon countryside

***This is what one beneficiary said:***

***"I have been on all six sessions.***

***I was very anxious about the first session – this was mostly to do with the fact that I was in early recovery (full of self-loathing) and I was nervous about the mindfulness aspects – I had no interest in spirituality.***

***I was nervous about everyone and pretty much everything and didn't think that I'd get much out of it. The first session was ok – I survived the mindfulness sessions and the other activities. Mostly, I enjoyed being with nature. I also enjoyed the silent walk.***

***"I really enjoyed the last session – it was quite physically challenging, which I enjoyed. It was a really easy place to get to, but I'd never thought of going. I've actually been three times since. This session really inspired me to start going for walks. I've never felt as physically well as I am now – at least not for a very long time. The walking is really helping me with my anxiety."***

# Cultivating gardening skills to overcome social barriers

Routeways is a charity based in Plymouth that supports children, young people and adults to overcome barriers. Their mission is to support and enable individuals, families, and communities to navigate obstacles and overcome disadvantage. They aim to support personal growth so they can learn, socialise, have fun and flourish regardless of their circumstances. They do this by providing a wide range of inclusive activity sessions for children and young people, meeting various needs and interests as the young people develop towards adulthood. They offer safe space groups for all ages that give individuals a place to socialise, learn new skills, and get involved in activities where they can have fun and support their mental well-being.

**Routes to grow** - running from March 2022 - March 2024, a project focussing on garden activities utilising greenhouse space, polytunnels and raised beds in an area of the gardens at Devonport Park Activity Centre for the benefit of a range of vulnerable people at risk of social isolation and loneliness. The head gardener helped to guide attendees in focusing on the planning and development of the garden, cultivation of produce, and growing plants. Staff trained in psychology and mental health were onsite supporting in an informal, relaxed setting during activities to listen, support and signpost to additional help as required. Beneficiaries were given opportunities to get involved in all work areas within the garden. This provided them with awareness of growing and producing fresh, healthy food, reducing and managing waste through composting and recycling and developing wildlife conservation with wild areas that attract birds and insects.

The Project benefitted 83 unique participants over 224 sessions, and 126 community gardening sessions

saw 234 attendances. In addition to growing plants, the project grew vegetables and fruits to use in cooking to support healthy eating. Those not interested in cooking had other options, ranging from woodwork to sewing.



## **Routeways phase 2 project from March 2023-2025 Routes to Grow Online**

This Project aimed to transform the lives of socially and digitally isolated people in Plymouth by helping them learn how to use technology, as digital exclusion remains a big issue. They did this by providing one-to-one support tailored to match beneficiaries' individual needs, hoping to boost confidence and equip them with the skills, motivation, and trust to go online, enabling them to become digitally capable.

The Project completed 101 sessions with 25 unique beneficiaries learning techniques to help navigate the internet for a variety of needs, which included accessing Devon Home Choice to bid for property, tips on data security with advice on how to keep information safe online, registering with patient access to enable contact via a mobile with GP services, using Plymouth Council online services and information on how to navigate social media and access and send emails. The project also helped those who wanted one-off digital advice and information, enabling them to move past a specific block in accessing digital services. Some beneficiaries also benefited from joining some of the other activities taking place at Routeways.

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Ted has been linked to the project as a member of Age UK; he has been bringing his wife, Caroline, to social events and activities on offer.

Caroline and Ted have participated in activities with the artists working on the Happier Green Spaces project.

They used plant and vegetable-based inks and illustration equipment in one session. Caroline was not interested in joining in at first. After finding out that Caroline liked horses, Wendy (facilitator) got a picture of a horse on her phone for Caroline to copy. Wendy gently encouraged Caroline to draw a picture of a horse's head.

Ted was taken aback by this as it turned out that since Caroline's dementia had developed, she was not inclined to join in or engage with anything.

He said ' "It was so special for me to see her draw that horse; it was like seeing her being herself again."

Ted enjoys sharing his memories of Plymouth and childhood during the group sessions; it obviously brings him joy, and he needs to share them.

During a conversation at the Aquarium session,

Ted said, "I've loved this project, it's brought back so many memories. I'm looking after my wife. She is a different person from who she

was 10 years ago because of her dementia. She just doesn't speak now. I'm at home caring for her, and it's just so quiet. I like to bring her to social things like Age UK, but when I ask her if she's having fun, she shrugs and doesn't really talk. It's so important for me to come out and chat. Just chatting with you today is great; things like this, where I revisit my memories and think about other things, are so special.

Since COVID, my grandson hasn't talked to me anymore. I used to share things with him, like skills and knowledge from my Navy days... building things, fixing things. He doesn't want to know now.

I used to love learning from older people, but my grandson just wants to play games online and talk to friends. I've found that difficult. I really like that I am being listened to here, though. It's really nice and I really appreciate it."

Ted has also now started attending the Plymouth Repair cafe as a result of connections made during the HGS sessions. This will give him the opportunity to share his skills with others and make further social connections for himself while he is in his role as a carer for his wife.



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# Physical activity plays a role in social equality and equity

Plymouth Hope is a charitable organisation run by volunteers from all walks of life who believe in social equality and equity. They recognise the social and health benefits of well-being through social and physical activities, exercise, and psychosocial support. They work to ensure that children and young people have no barriers to access. Their vision is to seek hope for the less disadvantaged and forgotten; to foster social and community cohesion between different ethnic groups and implement sustainable programmes.

**Stand As One** - March 22 - March 25 - a concept conceived by Plymouth Hope personnel and beneficiaries in consultation with different partners following a series of co-production sessions. Stand As One (SAO) aimed to complement projects already delivered by organisations, setting up a city-wide engagement and outreach scheme (SAO hubs) and creating new platforms with activities to allow people to attend and connect with a social purpose. The concept was to enhance and embed four key elements in each project delivered: Connectedness to (psychosocial support workshop) and creating platforms with activities to bring people together to meet. Engagement to actively seek to engage with individuals from all backgrounds to increase participation in what is already available. Outreach to create mechanisms to reach out to those considered extremely isolated due to various social reasons. Build bridges to connect organisations and groups taking the programme to different neighbourhoods.

Activities were hosted by different groups across the city in schools, community centres and well-being hubs to provide cultural and traditional awareness of people from various backgrounds, easing



participation in activities open to the public. SAO has completed 515 sessions, delivering information to 295 unique participants and reaching 3000 people through attendance at activities and events. The sessions included 12 network presentations, 150 Youth education sessions, 42 Red Cross drop-in sessions, a Men's club, women's well-being, fit and fed and Ukrainian resettlement.

Attendees expressed how the gatherings assisted them in leaving their homes, engaging socially, and (Refugee Integration activity) connecting with others facing similar challenges. Many of the participants have subsequently joined additional activities.



# Nudging the way towards creating a healthy community

Nudge is a Community Benefit Society set up by local residents living in Stonehouse, Plymouth, whose mission is to nudge lasting change in surprising and enterprising ways to build a strong local community and economy. Their vision is to make Union Street a street the world loves again. Empty buildings in private ownership have caused long-term problems along the street for decades. An essential part of changing the street is ensuring that some buildings are community-owned. This means using these buildings to create a street that meets the needs of local people, and more of the economic impact from changes they make stays in the community. Nudge owns three buildings and leases two more on Union Street. One of those is The Plot, which is the focus of a PGM project - Together at The Plot March 22 - 25.

**Together at The Plot** - we aimed to grow the impact of four micro organisations operating from The Plot, a community space in Stonehouse. These projects work with people who experience loneliness and isolation in the community in special ways, informed by research and lived experience. The organisations involved are:

**Omnium Radio** creates more opportunities for people with additional needs to DJ and broadcast;

**Care Nest** - provides 1-1 trauma-informed care,

**Jar Squad** enables cooking opportunities to be shared through events and cooking afternoons;

**Creative Curiosities** supports families with children with autism through new activities and learning opportunities.

Nudge supported these organisations in planning more strategically whilst providing additional support and funding, budgeting for each to scale their offers, and covering space, time, and resources to



allow them to feel more confident and stable and concentrate on providing vital services to more people. All tenants' delivery has been across a mix of workshops, courses, teaching (Jar Squad in action) services, support groups and opportunities, delivering 62 sessions and reaching 166 unique participants. Networks and communities have been created, which continue today. Further funding was secured with Plymouth Jollof Kitchen participating in Fit & Fed and Care Nest scaled, which radically secured a larger contract.



*Jar Squad, one of Nudge's selected projects*

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#### Iridescent Ideas - Supporting Her in Enterprise

Embarking on my entrepreneurial journey was like stepping into the unknown, filled with excitement but also riddled with uncertainties. Iridescent Ideas and the SHE Plymouth Project came into my life like a guiding light, offering not just support but a community that felt like home. My name is Louise Knight, and I run SENDLou (an Educational Support Consultancy), which supports families and young people with their SEND Challenges within Education. I started in Summer 2023 to test the waters but fully launched in September 2023 and have been able to use the SHE Plymouth community as one of my support mechanisms. Their blend of practical business guidance and unwavering emotional support provided me with the tools I needed. SHE Plymouth helped me navigate the initial hurdles and barriers I have experienced, from networking opportunities to signposting other individuals for inspiration and informative financial offerings. Thanks to SHE Plymouth, my business of offering educational SEND support to families across the UK is a dream realised, made possible by the unwavering support of an extraordinary group of individuals. So here's to Iridescent Ideas CIC and the SHE Plymouth Project! Thank you for believing in me, guiding me, and helping me make that initial jump and even the next few steps. Here's to the journey ahead, filled with endless possibilities and boundless gratitude.

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#### Conscious Sisters with Tulgey Woods - Well-being in the Woods,

Chiharu Cole. Since I joined the Tulgey Woods group, it has become a very important part of my life and well-being. I feel positive energy from being in the company of friendly people. I am not good at making friends or talking, but coming to this gathering weekly prevents me from ever getting deeper into a dark hole of loneliness and negativity. They lift my mood brilliantly. Tulgey Woods is a great place, and I am glad that they welcomed me to the group. The activities are fun and stimulating. I admire Sam and Sid. I believe this place is special because of their vision, passion, and actions toward nature, people, and society. Making differences, thank you, Sam and Sid.

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# Business coach provided inspiration and flexible advice for isolated female social entrepreneurs

Iridescent Ideas CIC is a Plymouth-based social enterprise community interest company that delivers business advice and support to individuals, social enterprises, and charities across the UK. Their vision is a more socially enterprising, greener, and fairer economy. Their mission and purpose are to deliver excellent business advice that helps social enterprises start, grow, and succeed and influence policy and strategy making. They support new businesses and organisations to get established and existing ones to grow by helping find finance, develop business plans, and evaluate impact.

**Supporting Her Enterprise Plymouth or SHE - March 23 - March 25**

Iridescent Ideas employed a part-time business adviser/coach to provide flexible business advice and support to socially isolated women in Plymouth who have a great business or community idea and

worked with them to make it happen. The aim was to reduce isolation and support women to be more economically active by providing advice, support and coaching and creating a peer support network through flexible sessions in venue, timing and approach. These women are often isolated individual social entrepreneurs; by providing good quality advice, SHE supported them to develop 'soft skills' like confidence, public speaking and networking to help them develop their ideas.

SHE ran workshops, which included one-to-one sessions, online workshops and networking events, all of which contributed to bringing women together to collaborate and learn the skills and knowledge they needed to take their ideas forward. Practical sessions, including business planning, funding and finance and measuring impact, were delivered in a way that encouraged attendees to connect, support each other and collaborate, increasing their chances of success. SHE has run 284 sessions to 160 female entrepreneurs.



*'What's surprised me is that all the women have come through pretty much unanimously with a social purpose and with wanting to do good... they all want to make a difference for their family or their community... I think that's been inspiring more than anything' - Jo SHE Coach*



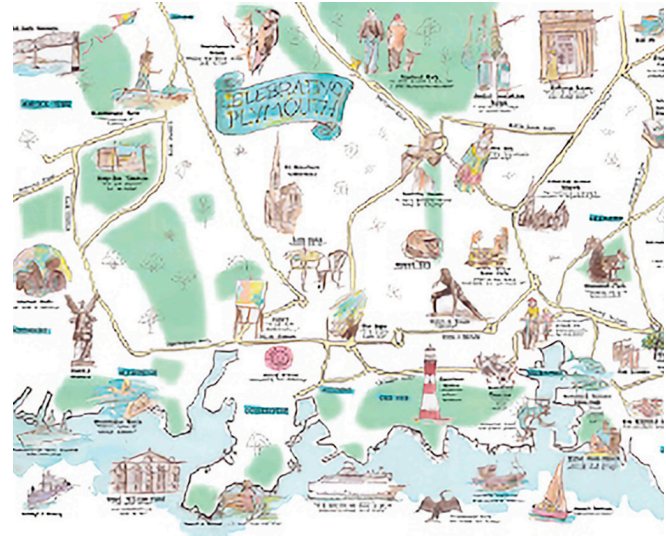
# Happy Green Spaces helped participants use art to develop natural confidence and self-awareness

Take A Part is the UK's leading socially engaged art (SEA) organisation, dedicated to supporting, furthering, and sustaining SEA practice, community co-creation, and community embedding placemaking in the UK. They take a community-first approach to culture, supporting areas and people under-represented and underserved in our society to develop cultural confidence, advocacy, and skills to take action on change in their own communities through culture.

**Happier Green Spaces** is a programme of art reflections and explorations on and in local green spaces in the East End of Plymouth, including Tothill Park, Teats Hill Park, Mount Wise, and Devonport Park. It engages local groups in art activities following the theme of green spaces in sessions across two years.

Opportunities to get involved included:

- Monthly art activities to Age UK in Mount Gould,
- Biodiversity explorations of local spaces,



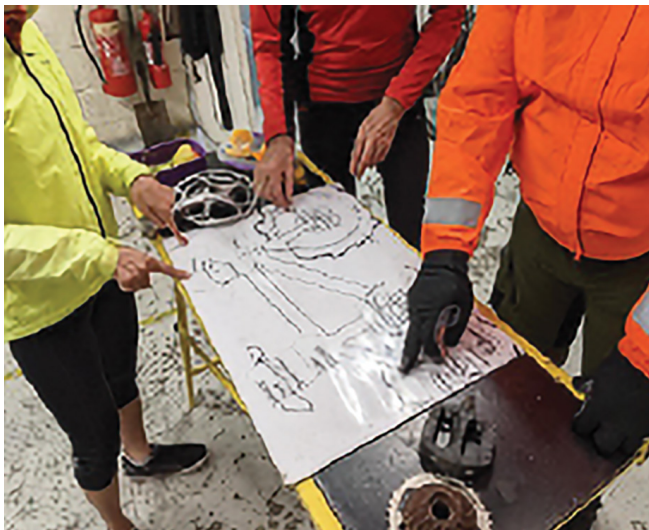
- Planting and labelling in local spaces,
- Foraging walks

A highlight for beneficiaries was learning skills in producing inks from their own habitat for watercolours. There were additional opportunities to reminisce about green spaces with local artists in Plymouth and to share stories. There were additional partnerships with The Barbican Theatre and other partners on city-wide initiatives, engaging city dwellers with the idea that nature should have rights. The project partnered with Plymouth Scrapstore to co-create a map representing the many interactions both organisations had with Plymothians about the benefits of green spaces and getting out and about. The map displays the spaces and places that inspire and entertain, along with helpful contacts and events. The project benefitted 345 unique participants over 33 sessions.

# Creating a cycle of physical fitness, better mental health and vocational training plus a little hard pedalling

Bikespace has a mission to provide training opportunities and affordable, healthy transport for people of all ages. Bikespace exists to improve the community and has chosen to do this using the bicycle. Their core activity is supporting young people outside mainstream education by providing vocational training. They also offer training opportunities for vulnerable adults and partner with Devon and Cornwall Refugee Support to provide bicycles and support for refugees. Commercial activities include operating a busy bicycle repair workshop and providing logistical support to businesses. Plymouth has a growing cargo bike market, which it plays a significant part in through the sale of new cargo bikes.

**Trail Therapy March 2022** - March 2024 - Inspired by a Trail Therapy initiative in Scotland, which took groups of individuals with underlying mental health



issues on group bike rides to improve mental well-being and avoid using prescriptions. A desire to deliver something similar in Plymouth led to Bikespace developing Trail Therapy. The **Bikespace Trail Therapy** project involved a 10-12 week programme, combining a once-weekly bike workshop session with mountain biking locally.

Individuals were allowed to work on bikes in the workshop with a team leader and then partake in weekly rides to various locations to build confidence in addition to health and well-being. The sessions were based around local trail centres to develop skills and confidence. Each session included lunch, which ensured time to interact and talk as a group. The final sessions focused on safely riding from the local community to the Plym Valley. This enabled the participants to access facilities without motorised transport when the course finished. At the end of the sessions, the participants are provided with a refurbished Mountain Bike, helmet, jacket, and gloves. A total of 44 participants benefited from the Trail Therapy programme. One outcome of the project is the sense of community within each group. People of vastly different backgrounds, ages, and genders came together on the course to enjoy an everyday activity and to be in each other's company.

Trail Therapy was a great success. A stand out observation was that people wanted to do more, which led to a second project.

**Bikespace Hub**, March 2023 - March 2025. A new project open to all but also as a follow-up activity for Trail Therapy participants. The goal of Trail Therapy was to improve people's mental health through >>



access to outdoor spaces. However, the social element has shown to be as important as the trails. Bikespace Hub ran weekly during term time. The mornings were structured and accessed via a booking system, building consistency and gradually allowing people to get to know one another. In the afternoons, the sessions ran as a drop-in to welcome those who wanted to attend on a less structured basis. This also allowed the morning group participants to invite people they know along to the afternoon, which happened often and resulted in beneficiaries feeling a sense of pride in what they were doing.

Participants value being given something useful to take away to cement their sense of achievement in completing the structured sessions. Participants were presented with a basic tool kit to take away. Bikespace delivered 83 structured maintenance sessions to 65 participants alongside 43 well-attended drop-in sessions.



*Opposite page and above: Participants receive technical training on how to maintain bikes. Below, having a break in the Plym Valley during a safety riding session*





# Elder Tree Project supports dementia carers to find strength in shared journeys

Elder Tree Befriending supports older people in continuing to live independently and is a preventative service with a physical presence across every neighbourhood in Plymouth.

They support more than 1700 people over 50 and champion their continued independent living in their homes. They deliver over 90 innovative health and social engagement activities and are supported by 180 volunteers, many of whom engage with the most vulnerable, frail and socially isolated beneficiaries in their homes.

They also support over 200 people who have mild cognitive impairment or dementia-related illness.

**Breathing Space** is a project that runs weekly support groups for carers, which are co-located with groups for their loved ones living with dementia.

By creating separate spaces for carers, they are able to receive peer support, help each other to problem solve, and provide a space to focus on their own



*Elder Tree; supporting people to live independent lives*



*Playing carpet curling at one of the friendly sessions*

needs whilst knowing their looked-after person enjoys activities and is supported close by in a separate space. The project has been running in five separate venues five days a week across the city.

Carers often experience loneliness and isolation because of their challenging situation. They usually do not want to be away from their loved ones for a considerable time. Still, they seek a break in their week and time to be with others experiencing similar situations and understand the challenges. The format of these groups is co-designed with the carers to support their needs and wants, whether that is peer support and sharing tea and cake or a specific activity, which can be as diverse as a walk, craft activity or even a singing session.

A total of 89 carers received 4580 respite hours during 458 sessions.



# Volunteer network helped to break down barriers

PDREC believes that to build a fair and just society, everyone must have an equal chance to live, work and learn free from prejudice, discrimination and racism. It values diversity and works in partnership with individuals and organisations that are also committed to race equality. Their vision is to create a country where people from different ethnic backgrounds, cultures and faiths have equal life chances and live in mutual respect. Their project focused on bringing Plymouth's diverse, minoritised communities/individuals together to create a supportive, informative, active network to reduce isolation for people without a sense of belonging to the area.

A network of volunteers was set up to provide a space for minoritised individuals and communities to explore issues such as racism, inequality, and other barriers that prevent a feeling of belonging and create a sense of 'other', creating peer support for each other along with strategies to increase resilience and empower people to participate more on the broader community,

and city-wide events such as the Respect Festival, Refugee Week etc. and have a 'louder voice' to influence strategies and bring about change.

A new volunteer strategy was created for the organisation to help increase the number of volunteers from minoritised communities into meaningful volunteering roles in the city. This included engagement with partnerships such as Devon and Somerset Fire Service to look at how PDREC volunteers can support their work in community engagement. The project engaged 45 new volunteers via 21 sessions and events, attracting 296 people via headcount and 46 unique participants participating in volunteer activities.



*PDREC; building a fair and just society, everyone must have an equal chance to live, work and learn free from prejudice*

“

Devon Business Incubator (DBI)  
Beneficiary Story told by Jabo of DBI  
Maryam and her Family

Maryam and her three children, fleeing the turmoil in their homeland of Sudan, found a new beginning in Plymouth. As a young widow with two teenage daughters and a very young son, Maryam faced the challenges of resettlement in a completely foreign environment. The family struggled with the language barrier and the complexities of British culture, which intensified their sense of isolation. Mainly confined to their home, the teenagers, in particular, felt disconnected and lonely, with no friends to turn to.

Recognising their need for community and support, Maryam and her children were referred to our cooking sessions, which are known for being culturally sensitive, particularly regarding halal dietary practices. These sessions provided them a welcoming and familiar environment, especially for the teenagers who had yet to find their place in their new surroundings. During these cooking sessions, the two teenage girls began to open up and share their experiences in Sudan. They enthusiastically demonstrated how they used to make fire back home, recalling their long journeys to gather wood and fetch water. Their stories were vivid and evocative, shedding light on the hardships they had endured and the resilience they had shown.

Through these conversations, we helped the girls understand that Plymouth could be their new home. They realised that the long, arduous trips to collect firewood were no longer necessary and that they were now in a place where such hardships were a thing of the past. Our approach allowed them to process their experiences and gradually adjust to their new life. Taking them to the Apricot Centre, where they could engage directly with the land and experience a different connection, further facilitated their healing. The opportunity to relate their past traumas while transitioning to a new chapter in their lives was both therapeutic and empowering. This exposure to a new way of living, cooking with gas or electricity instead of traditional methods - helped the teenagers embrace their new environment and gradually let go of their past anxieties and traumas. As they engaged in these activities and shared their stories, Maryam's family felt more integrated and supported in their new community. The cooking sessions and farm visits became more than just practical engagements; they were crucial steps in their healing journey and their acceptance of Plymouth as their new home.

”

# Linking generations with immersive sensory content

Real Ideas solves problems and creates opportunity. From supporting young people to find work and develop skills to helping start-ups and enterprises thrive, they work to solve problems and create positive and lasting social change. They are committed to making a positive social impact through five business units: Real Immersive, Real Art Make Print, Real Pathways, and Nature and Neighbourhoods. Real Ideas ran a project from Real Immersive.

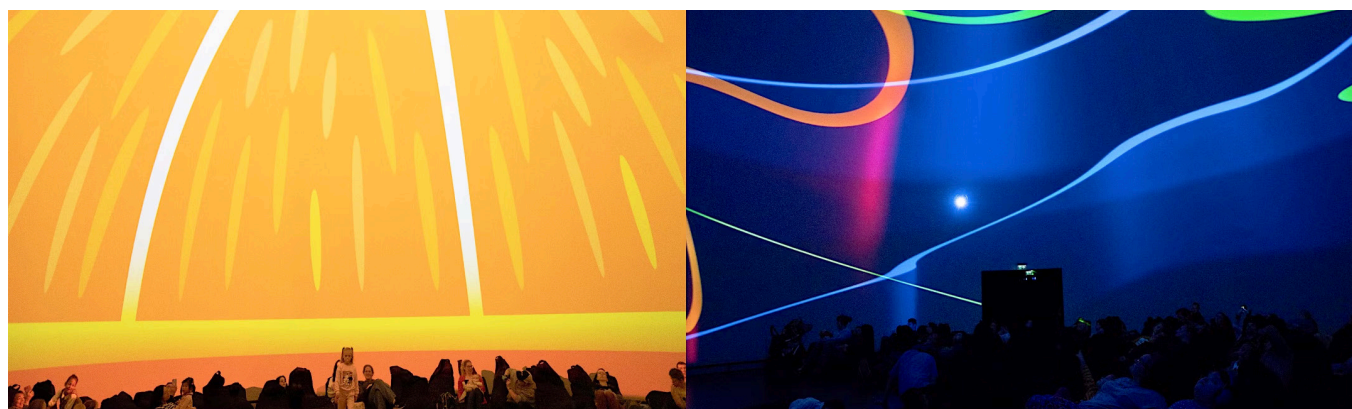
## **Creating Connections Through Shared Memories**

March 23 - March 25

Through their work at Real Ideas, they identified two community groups who experienced social isolation to work with for this project: parents of children in their early years and older residents of the local area. The project involved co-creating sensory content for the immersive dome. The aim of the project was to design, evaluate, and work alongside visual artists as a group, strengthening the bond between the individuals, which allows them to work together towards a common goal while creating connections and memories along the way.

The project started with co-creating content suitable for early years children working with Action for

Children and their Step by Step group who, support parents of early years children with additional needs. Throughout the sessions, parents met other parents of children of similar ages and abilities, forming stronger connections through working on a collaborative project. They bonded over the similarities and differences of their children, highlighting themes that would create experiences that appeal to more parents and more families as a legacy from the project. Older members of the local community were invited to attend the première of the content for the early years. Connecting both isolated groups to share learning, celebrate achievements, and encourage intergenerational connections between people living in the same area. This then led to repeating the process with older community members, focusing on reminiscences of Devonport as part of the celebrations of the 200th anniversary of Devonport's founding as a town. The project engaged Red Velvet Cinema, running 16 sessions during the winter months, often a difficult time of year for the older generation. Overall, the project engaged with 717 people, including unique participants from various groups and audience participation over 39 sessions.



# Using the exciting power of football to inspire, engage and help people to reach their full potential

Plymouth Argyle Community Trust: Argyle Community Trust (ACT) is the official charitable partner of Plymouth Argyle Football Club (PAFC). They use the power of football to inspire, engage and help individuals to achieve their full potential. They use their affiliation with PAFC, alongside a variety of sports and education initiatives, to support individuals from all populations and break down potential barriers (health, well-being, education, employment, low levels of physical activity, high deprivation, disability and low attainment) with an overall aim to build stronger, more resilient communities. Whilst football and sport are at the heart of their local delivery, neither is used in isolation. Instead, the football club's power and diverse output are used to engage, educate, and inspire participants from all walks of life. ACT ran two projects from PGM funding.

**Team Talk March** - 2022 - March 2024. Team Talk aimed to reduce social isolation and increase physical



Enjoying the Fit Plymouth sessions

activity levels amongst older adults within the local community. Three weekly sessions, two hours each, allow older people to come together and access social and health-related activities. The concept of the project was centred around creating a safe social space where like-minded people could come together and develop a sense of pride and belonging. 337 Sessions took place with 180 identified unique participants. There were three main groups, Extra Time Hub – Inclusive sessions encouraging people of retirement age to get out into the community, socialise, and become more physically active. A range of activities are provided, including seated exercise, singing, table tennis, bowls, quizzes, and lots of opportunities for social interaction. Compassionate Café / Walk & Talk – A walking group for people living independently or who have recently gone through bereavement. Attendees were given access to bereavement support from trained staff and volunteers from St. Luke's Hospice. The walk was followed by refreshments to help attendees form friendships.

One participant said:

*"Thanks to the sessions, I'm making a habit of walking more often, whatever the weather. I now realise the beneficial effect this has on my physical and mental well-being."*

Dementia Café sessions provided people diagnosed with dementia with an opportunity to engage in various physical, social, and reminiscent activities that help exercise the brain. A space was also provided for partners/carers to gain respite and >>



give each other support and advice.

**Fit Plymouth** - March 23 - March 25

Fit Plymouth is a 12-week weight management and health improvement programme for males and females with an overweight BMI. The programme consisted of sessions lasting 90 minutes, including an hour of theory and classroom-based work followed by 30 minutes of physical activity. The theory-based learning covered different topics each week of the programme, including methods to help diet improvement, increase activity levels, reduce alcohol intake, and lose weight in a controlled manner. The exercise elements were gently introduced as

the programme progressed. They were tailored to suit the needs and physical capabilities of each participant. 186 sessions were attended by 252 participants. These were across three activity programmes, including a general boot camp class and sessions for Fit Fans Male and Fit Fans Female. 65.5% of participants said they had engaged in more physical activity since joining the programme. 93.1% agreed that sessions had supported them with their mental well-being. 68.9% of respondents said they felt more optimistic since joining the programme. 96.5% had developed new, lasting friendships since joining the programme.



*Participants taking part in the Walk & Talk sessions with the Argyle Community Trust*

# Digital photography and film helped break down barriers and taught participants useful tech and social skills

Fotonow CIC is a media social enterprise. Based in Plymouth since 2009, Fotonow provides a nurturing space for socially engaged photography and media. It runs innovative projects that make a real difference to the city, its geographic communities, and young people in particular. Working in collaboration with local creative and voluntary sector organisations and commercial clients, Fotonow showcases stories to create social impact. Fotonow ran two projects via PGM funding.

## **Creative Connections March 2022 - 2024.**

Creative Connections was a programme of informal digital media education working across four groups of diverse beneficiaries, all with experiences of loneliness and isolation due to complex circumstances. With 12 years of community engagement experience, using photography as an educational and empowering tool, Fotonow brought

together their socially engaged approach to teaching photography by establishing four regular groups with the programme, building on partnership work developed through successful pilot projects and established relationships. They worked with asylum seekers and refugees, connecting with Devon and Cornwall Refugee Support. Young people 16-25 connecting with Plymouth City Council Youth Service and Barnardos. Older People connecting with Age UK and Memory Matters Plymouth. Women in Recovery connecting with Sunflower Women's Centre, run by Trevi. The project ran regular workshop programmes developing digital skills, nurturing confidence, and focusing sessions on exploring cultural and green spaces across the city as a tool for wellbeing and helping individuals feel more involved in Plymouth communities.

There have been 280 sessions across the project, delivered to 233 participants. Each focus group >>



*The Fotonow sessions engaged old and young, from the Memory Matters project to the city's Youth Service*





*Left, taking part in the Blue Space project at Mountbatten. Right, a stunning image taken by Lilly, a Youth Voice participant.*

has celebrated success. The women's group has seen several beneficiaries progress in taking on mentoring roles, teaching others with less experience how to use the cameras. The refugee and asylum seekers group saw participants conducting some great interviews with audio kits, with participants progressing with organising their own media production in the group and some starting volunteering with Fotonow. The older persons group participants shared a renewed sense of purpose. They enjoyed the "reason to get out of the house and talk to others"; for some, this was the only social outing of their week. The Youth Group has appointed a Fotonow Youth Ambassador, with Fotonow staff supporting her increased roles and responsibilities within paid work opportunities to represent Fotonow's youth voice. (Image Nature photography session)

#### **Get Connected (SEND Creative Media Clubs and Events) March 23 - March 25**

Get Connected is a programme of creative opportunities for young people 16-25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This

was a safe environment for young disabled people to explore and develop their creative ideas - encouraging them to push their ideas and change how they are perceived. Using digital technology (photography and film) to support groups to learn facilitated an outlet to creatively share their views and opinions and express themselves as individuals. Fotonow worked with partners to maximise their reach, Brook Green Centre for Learning, City College Plymouth and Friends and Families Plymouth, alongside one-to-one work with Dan from Fotonow. A total of 43 sessions were delivered across all services to 42 participants.

***An unexpected outcome both for Fotonow and the organisations who already knew the young people was that people in the group who didn't previously talk or interact that much fully embraced the interview activity, which seemed to 'unlock that opportunity for them to share... honestly, it just took me by surprise' - Dan Fotonow***

“

Trevi - Sunflower Women Social Engagement - Some words from beneficiaries

“Warrior Women has increased my confidence and allowed me to express myself more freely. Stick at it; attend every session to get the most out of it.”

“The course shows you that you have power and to support each other and every woman to be the best you can be.”

“It’s empowering, and you will be surprised.”

“I would say to any woman of any age to join forces with Sunflower

”

“

Trevi - Making Connections

Beneficiary story told by Sunflower Manager:

The phone service has had a significant impact, providing a vital first point of contact for women in urgent need. One example involves a woman who initially contacted us by phone in a state of distress, seeking support to leave an abusive relationship. Although she sensed that something was wrong, she struggled to identify the nature of the abuse, as her partner had been coercive, manipulative, and repeatedly gaslighting her—causing her to doubt her own perceptions and believe she was to blame for his behaviour.

Through a series of supportive phone conversations, we built a trusting relationship. We were eventually able to encourage her to visit our centre. Once she felt safe to meet in person, we listened to her story and validated her experiences, reassuring her that what she was going through was not imagined. She went on to engage in our group programmes, where she could connect with other women, hear their stories, and share her own. This helped her to gain clarity, feel supported, and begin to understand the patterns of abuse she had endured. Over time, she developed the confidence to set healthy boundaries—something she acknowledged had previously been missing.

She later shared that without that initial phone call and the ongoing support she received, she would not have been able to recognise the abuse or take steps toward reclaiming her independence. Today, she is studying to become a nail technician. She has secured employment in a salon—a powerful testament to her resilience and growth.

”



# Telephone service and peer support made a big impact

Trevi is a women's charity whose mission is to provide safe and nurturing spaces where women in recovery can heal, grow and thrive. There are three centres: Jasmine Mother's Recovery, a residential rehabilitation centre exclusively for mothers and their children. Sunflower Women's Centre offers wrap-around therapeutic support in the community. Daffodil Family Centre is a parenting assessment centre which provides focused, purposeful, time-limited residential assessments. Blossom Women's House is an accommodation specifically designed for women with complex and multiple needs.

Trevi ran two PGM-funded projects. **Sunflower Women Social Engagement Project** - March 2022 - March 2024. Each participant entered a 12-week programme accompanied by the Trevi Social Engagement team for support. The programme involved five phases: 1. Getting to know you (building trust) 2. Getting out of the house (building confidence) 3. Stepping over the threshold (building self-esteem) 4. Accessing support (enhancing self-management techniques) 5. Growing your social network (building social capital)

The Social Connectors accompanied participants on goal-orientated outings, including the Sunflower Women's Centre, where a package of support was designed for them. The Social Connectors researched, assessed and matched safe spaces and events for participants to access, broadening their social capital. 199 sessions were delivered to 90 women; activities such as - Crochet Enrichment, Freedom from Abuse, Freedom Safe Streets Key working, Mindful Art Recovery, Maintenance Phone Support, one for Mental Health, Debt Support, and Employment Support. A beneficiary said, *"Thank you. Without the Sunflower, I would never have learned some of the things I have to better myself as a person. Thank you so much!"*



**Making Connections** - March 23 - March 25. The Making Connections Project aimed to build on the Social Engagement Project and was led by the Peer Mentor Coordinator, who was responsible for recruiting a small army of volunteers to grow their making connections activities (walking, cost of living hacks, creative writing, etc.) and increase co-located partners who can also offer activities to make connections. The project also wanted to set up a new Women's Talkline. The Volunteer Coordinator increased the support for the telephone line, helping to trial different set-ups incorporating landlines and mobiles. The phone service has had a significant impact, providing a vital first point of contact for women in urgent need, particularly those experiencing mental health crises. It offers not only immediate emotional support but also clear information and guidance about Trevi services and those of their partner organisations.

The project successfully increased their creative arts therapies through recruitment and involvement of volunteer support and peer mentoring from those who have completed programmes and are ready to take on new challenges. The involvement of peer mentors has also helped Trevi to evolve the service and improve the overall programme culminating in 1745 participant attendances at various activities across the service.

# A veteran outreach worker appointed to work at the heart of the community assisted ex-service personnel

Four Greens Community Trust (FGCT) aims to eradicate poverty, social isolation, and health inequalities within their community.

Their mission is to develop diverse services and opportunities in partnership with the community to promote economic regeneration and reduce social inequality.

As a Wellbeing Hub, they provide advice, information, and a social prescribing service. There is access to befriending, time banking and a food bank alongside a programme of community activities, community gardening and family and youth services.

## The Pal Project (Programme Against Loneliness)

March 22 - March 24.

The Pal Project recognised that people who are



lonely or living in social isolation often have complex lives and many barriers to overcome. Initially, a trained staff member or volunteer worked to establish a relationship with a potential participant and then advocated for them whilst referring them to

specialist support if required.

FGCT ran free community cafés three days a week (and at different times and identified locations in the PL5 community) that encouraged the participant and their peer mentor to attend.

The cafés provided optional informal activities such as board games and craft sessions to facilitate natural interaction.

Other service providers attended informally to promote services and grow support structures to empower participants to greater community involvement.

The peer supporters remained in contact with the participants for as long as required, recognising the need to provide support levels that reflect a person's changing aspirations. The project has run 119 sessions, which have been attended by 158 unique participants.

All the cafés established during the project are still running. On average, 60 - 80 people access the community cafés weekly.

Many of the community cafés now provide wrap-around support, including financial planning, debt, and energy advice.

All of the groups also now pay a small fee to help with the running costs of the sessions, making the programme sustainable.

## Service For Life, March 2023 - March 2025

Service for Life was a second PGM project and was developed due to an emerging picture of >>

severe social isolation and loneliness experienced by veterans living within the hub community.

Covid and the Cost of Living crisis led to veterans having to access some of the hub crisis services, including warm spaces, emergency food/fuel poverty support and mental health interventions.

The barriers for veterans living in the PL5 area to access existing veterans services include poor transport links, poor literacy skills, and veterans not wishing to admit that support is needed.

This project consisted of three strands.

The initial work was to identify and then encourage veterans to become involved in an aspect of the hub work or have the confidence to access the Centre for a conversation.

An outreach worker, a veteran himself, was

appointed to work in the heart of the community and coordinate the provision.

As a Wellbeing Hub, FGCT has an extensive network of contacts and professionals, which means they created a holistic wrap-around support package tailored to individual veterans' needs, including multiple complex medical needs.

This was achieved when veterans felt safe and secure within the hub surroundings.

Finally, a breadth of volunteering opportunities was developed for veterans to help improve personal self-esteem and confidence.

There were 348 sessions, which were attended by 296 registered participants. Because of the nature of drop-ins, another 500+ attended in a less formal, ad hoc way.



*The FGCT food bank ready for customers*

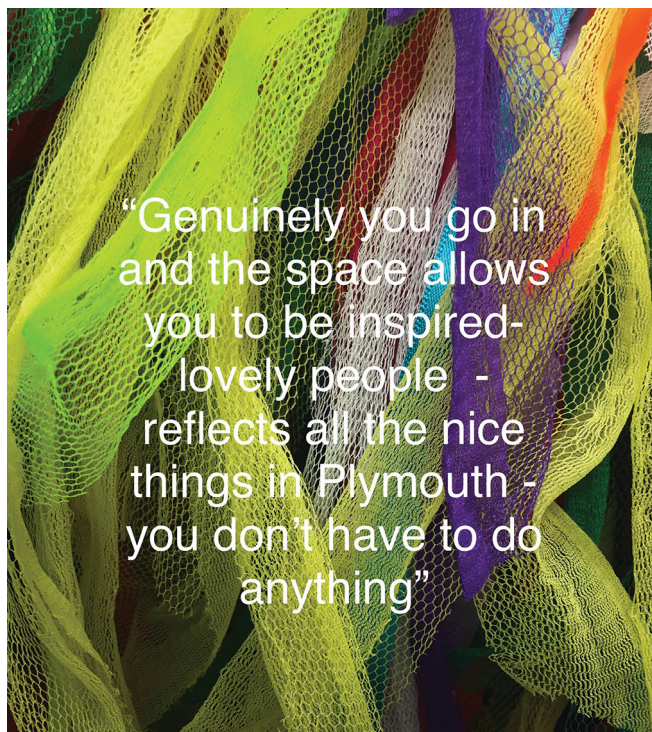


# Creating ‘happenings’ for people of all ages and backgrounds to build confidence through playing

Plymouth Play Scrapstore’s origins are in providing affordable, accessible opportunities for play and creativity for people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities, building confidence through playing and doing together.

Scrapstore provides a unique space/shop in Stonehouse, which draws in different people because it’s an affordable way to access materials; other people come because it’s accessible to all.

The space/shop is full to bursting with all kinds of materials, artefacts and interesting things.



*A quote left by a customer in the shop*

**Connecting Communities with Creativity**, March 22 - March 24

Scrapstore listened to their customers as they started to return following Covid, and they heard that people were feeling lonely and isolated. People acknowledged that crafting and being artistic had helped them through Covid. Now they needed more but were feeling nervous and scared. They didn’t know how to make those first steps.

Connecting Communities with Creativity project was designed in response to this.

Scrapstore wanted to offer groups at their site in Stonehouse and/or signpost people to other groups in the community. The Term “happening” was used to describe a generic encounter that grew into an action.

‘Happenings’ included creative workshops, events, activities and conversations.

The project worked with people to offer resources to build confidence through creativity and play and encourage curiosity, conversation, and exploration of possibilities. This gave them time to be supported through the stages of engagement, extending their boundaries and increasing their skills, confidence, and feeling connected to others.

Through creativity, they reached individuals and groups that don’t always have starting points for connection. The project aimed to be in as many places as possible to spread the word about the importance of play and creativity for all and how it brings people and communities together.

They ran several engagement sessions, including 12 Rummage and Recycle sessions, 51 connection sessions and six group visits. This resulted in >>



124 unique participants, and by attending 130 community events, their membership scheme reached a further 3,272 connections.

### **Cornucopia Plymouth**

Scrapstore ran an additional project from March 23 to March 25. During this time, Scrapstore heard from various community partners at Timebank South West, Nudge, Borrow Don't Buy, Art & Energy, Theatre Royal, and Plymouth University, asking them to strengthen their offer as demand had increased.

While continuing to enable new visitors to join in and take part, this project aimed to extend friendship groups, facilitate peer support and collaborations, and offer a regular space for visitors to connect with others in their creative pursuits.

They have focused on reducing loneliness and social isolation and encouraging participation and connection.

Scrapstore employed additional staff to focus on reaching new places to work directly with people introduced via the many collaborations and joint activities across Plymouth.

Examples include providing an activity alongside groups that already exist or where the offer doesn't meet all the needs—e.g., creative activities for children when the group's first focus is the adults; warm spaces that can host and feed, but where no activity is taking place; and new groups that community members want but who lack the skill, knowledge, and experience to begin. Cornucopia has delivered 386 sessions, which have resulted in 344 beneficiaries attending, and their membership has grown to more than 1,500 people.



*Setting up for a rummage and recycling session*

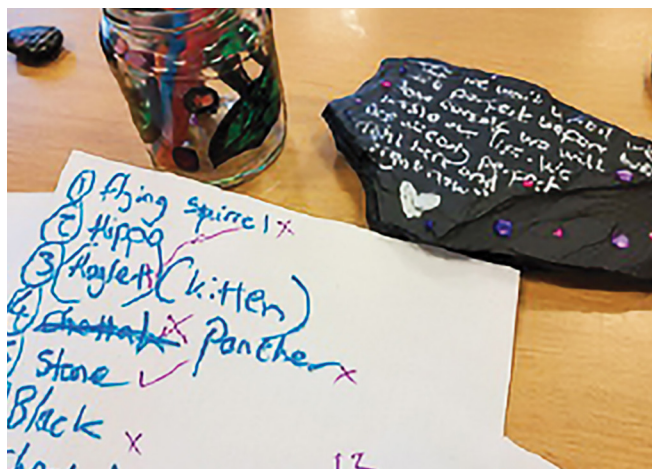
# A fun and useful way to help women return to work

Gifted Women is a registered charity supporting women in the Tavistock and Plymouth areas with getting into work. They exist for women who ordinarily feel very far from being able to access employment. Women may have had adverse life experiences and trauma, resulting in barriers such as substance misuse, contact with the criminal justice system, removal of children into care and homelessness. Gifted Women seeks to support women who have experienced multiple disadvantages to break the cycle and empower them to achieve their goals. They run an employability group work programme with work experience placements in local businesses, one-to-one support, peer mentoring, and help finding jobs or getting onto courses.

**Gifted Women Community Drop-In March 2023 - March 2025**—Gifted Women received referrals from HMP probation, Sunflower Women's Centre, Harbour, and other service providers for women who had expressed an interest in working. Often, they had not worked before or not for some time. This resulted in



some women not always being ready to start, with a lack of structure and routine in their lives to support completing an employability programme. This often ended with women starting a programme but not finishing, leaving them feeling more socially isolated. The weekly drop-in group allowed women to socialise, have fun, build confidence and learn about Gifted Women before starting an employability programme. The drop-in was a warm and welcoming space hosted by a mix of staff and volunteers who have been through the programme using their lived experience to support others. The activities included a range of themes that differed from week to week; they also included fun activities such as games and quizzes, creative, mindful art activities, educational content with sessions around budgeting and life skills, and lots of health and wellbeing focus. There have been 83 drop-in sessions attended by 87 women. Many women have moved onto the employability programme and completed volunteer placements to help build confidence and improve readiness to return to work.



*Fun quiz answers at a Drop-in session*







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