## 5 years Project, co-created by the over 60's, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund



# Connects2Project

"Helping you to help yourself"

"Connects2Project is my anti-depressant!"

#### Positive individual and group activities:-



- to improve physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.
- to make new friends, support and inspire each other.
  - to combat isolation and help you cope better with every day life.
- to work through life issues in a welcoming and supportive space.

...And providing volunteering opportunities to share your skills and talents with your peers.

John Galloway took this photo of us in 2011, way back in the beginning of, Connects, time!!! Woah... little did we know back then about what a pleasure and a privilege working for the over 60's in our community was going to be...years of bingo and the slosh? ...far from it...! Hopefully this book goes some way in capturing and sharing the good times and not so good times that we were lucky enough to grow with each other through Connects Project and then Connects2Project..



#### **Content Page**

#### Introduction

### Positive Activities – developing and practising "The Arts of Wellbeing" all classes based in the Annexe

- Slow and Gentle Yoga, Grow Stronger Live Longer and Wellbeing Yoga Plus
- Partick Pluckers
   Ukulele group
- Margaret Thomson Talent Showcase
- Our "Lightbulbs"- band of merry, much appreciated, volunteers
- Introduction to Knit and Natter
   too much to capture here so they merit
   their very own book which is to follow! :) x
- Flower arranging
- Health Walks
- Gentle Exercise
- Art Classes
   – Beginners and Intermediates.
- Creative Writing

   short story

   The day we went to Luss, Oh."
- Time Capsule
- The Men's Group
- Circle Social Dancing
- Stained Glass Class
- Sing Along Choir
- Twinkle Toes
- Group Meditation
- Positive Living Class
- Blanket Stitch Up
- Complementary Therapies
- Halloween and Themed Lunch Clubs
- Amazing Globe trotting Grace
- Glasgow Print Studio comes to Annexe
- Then we visit Glasgow Print Studio
  - Another Content Page– this time out and about!



Wow, will be 9 years funding all in, 5 years funding for Connects2Project from the Big Lottery, now known as the National Lottery Community Fund, for the over 60's based here in Partick, Glasgow, Scotland. We had, way back, completed a 3 years NHS contract in Townhead, Knightswood and Netherton where it had become very apparent that there were many folk over 60 years old who were needing a bit of support, love and listened to. Many caring for a partner or family member with no support or time for themselves, running themselves into the ground... As if they had been watching over our shoulders The Big Lottery Scotland came out with a fund that was perfect to take this work forwards into working out together what we could all do to help each other. 3 years of the initial Connects Project taught us, big time, that our "hello, how can we help?" mantle, actually in many cases, backfired a bit and disempowered people, the exact opposite of what we intended! A year in between of change for our funder but they still kept it all going into our 5 years Connects2Project with the new mantle of how can we "help you to help yourself!" This book will focus on the last 5 years-Connects2Project- but will include seeds of ideas, inspiration, volunteering of folks skills and talents—the ground that Connects2Project grew from. Not all has been a bed of roses, we have been through many ups and downs along the way! Challenges, learning, talking and listening, friendships lost and found, family issues shared and steps taken to heal, physical, mental and emotional times to work on and through, skills and talents to be encouraged into classes and activities for peers to enjoy and blossom, health scares and battles overcome, good laughs and hard losses, inspirational stories and heart

breaking news, networks of support for each other developed and personality clashes worked through and resolved. New skills were learned, positive living encouraged to counteract or balance off addictions, anxiety, depression and worry, long held dreams and aspirations realised, supporting each other in, and through, times of need or grieving the loss of a loved one, supporting the balancing of caring responsibilities for others whilst keeping self sane ... So .... Basically ... All of life's rich tapestry was woven together by everyone into their community led project. Powerful-By the community for the community. All washed down with, 1000s of, good strong cups of tea! Massive respect!!! As we said before a real privilege and pleasure.... Pictured here are Betty and Brenda- two of our community that sadly are no longer with us but their essence, stories and lives are still woven in with ours ...





Love how much the beneficiaries quickly slotted themselves right into all the fun and games. RIP Robbie Cullen and Anne Kilpatrick xx



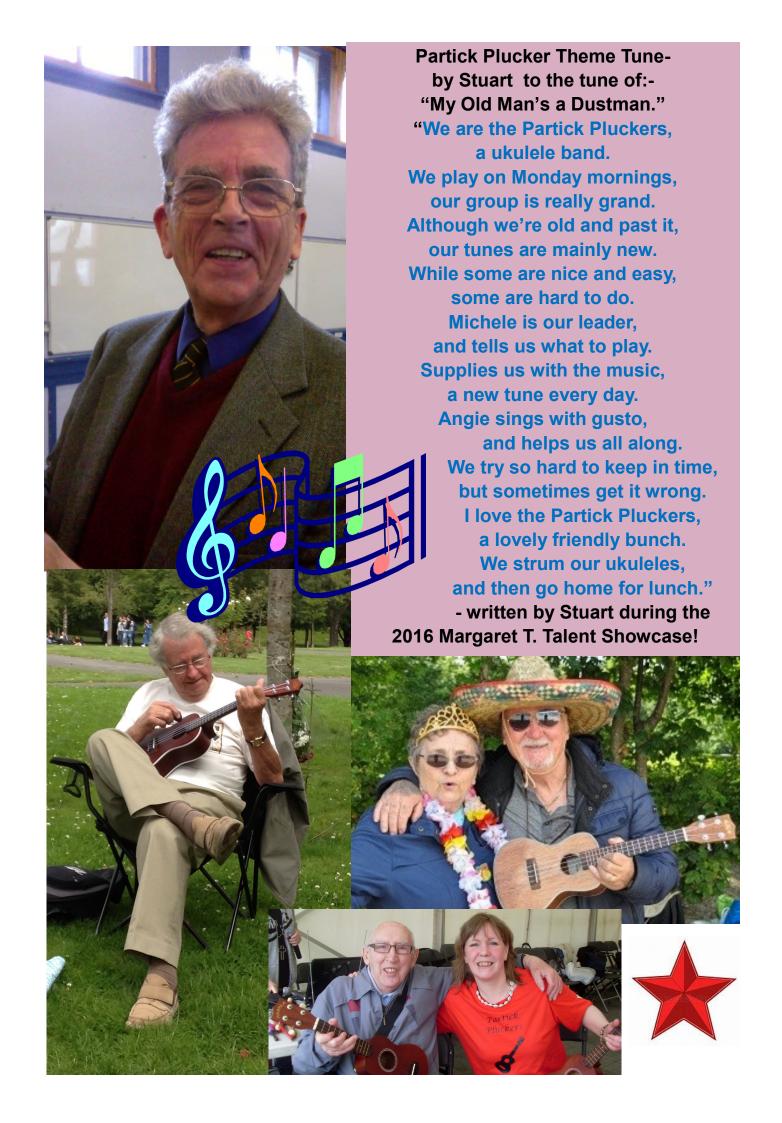
















"To do something I initially felt resistance to but see the need of it. It benefits me to do something that really helps people(TT), to feel their thanks and appreciation makes absolute sense. I enjoy the contact".



So many thanks to the "Lightbulbs" our amazing group of volunteers for their 1000's of hours of supporting the smooth running of many of the activities on offer in the Annexe for their peers. Your skills, talents, energy and thyme are very much appreciated. Thank you!!! :) x



## Introduction to Knit and natter– hand knitted with love, sent out to Glasgow, Scotland and the 7 continents of the world! Amazing!!!



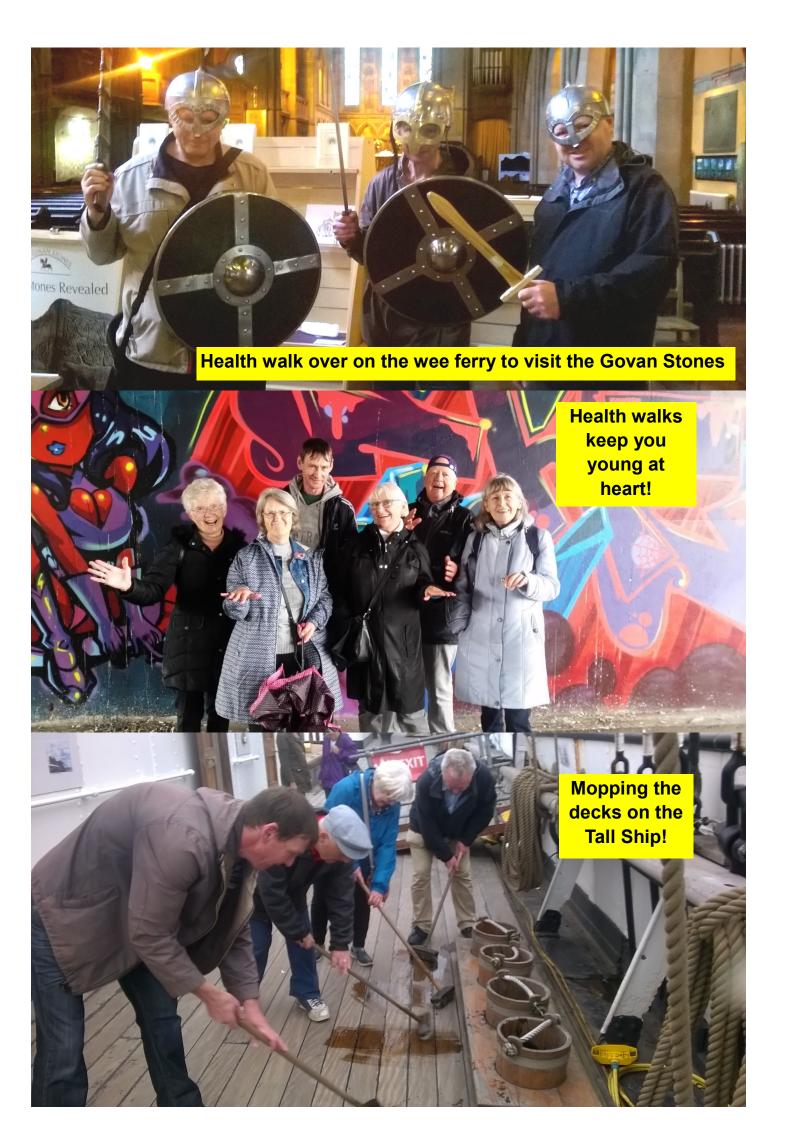






















"This class is worth its weight in gold! Jenny is to be treasured!"



THE DAY WE WENT TO LUSS – OH! By L.P. Lyon

"A bus trip organised for all the people who used the Annexe. All the walkers, the knitters, the artists, the singers, the ukulele players (Partick Pluckers), the therapy ladies and the wonderful people in the office, all welcome to get on the bus to

Luss. I hadn't been to Luss for oooh more than forty years, so decided I would join in the fun, get on the coach and head for Loch Lomond – hopefully by the low road. Every now and again I have the need to be '...doon by the watter', and this seemed the perfect opportunity to get my feet wet.

The day came, and it was a fine sunny day with hardly a cloud in the sky. I took my own camping chair (I can't sit on the ground nowadays), and with my ukulele and my lunch in my bag I set off for Partick to meet with all of those going on the trip. Eventually the bus came and everyone piled on grabbing a seat by the window and keeping the other one for their friend. I was happy to sit quite far back. Margaret counted heads, then counted again, and made sure we were belted up - 'it's the law!'

The journey was interesting, going far to the west of where I was used to. I didn't recognise any of the places we passed, and soon we were drawing into the parking area, getting our last minute announcements about toilets, coffee places and estimated time of departure. I followed the crowd and lo, there in front of me was the sparkling, rippling water of Loch Lomond, just begging for people to get their feet wet.

Angie and Michelle quickly found a place big enough to keep all of us together, and the blankets and chairs were set out, along with huge bags of – well, I didn't know what, till they were opened and funny hats were distributed, along with bubble blowers, leis made of paper flowers and other accoutrements, all to make the day more fun. Some of the group set off to walk along a newly developed Fairy Walk – they said it was lovely, while others made a bee-line for toilets and the coffee shop. There were lots of cars parked, but there seemed to be plenty of room for everyone both in the village and around the water's edge. There was a motor launch that would take you along the loch, and some people paddled canoes which soon became a spot on the water, but I just sat where I had planted my chair and enjoyed watching all the comings and goings.



I had my large-brimmed straw hat to protect my eyes, I had water to drink and even a newspaper which I borrowed – absolute BLISS.

There were a few mothers with very small children, encouraging them to get their feet in the water without much success in some cases. As we were all enjoying the lovely sunny day, there was a hush. ...

Everyone turned to watch the tall bronzed Adonis who came through the trees, wearing nothing more than the smallest of lime-green trunks and carrying a plastic bucket. He was obviously a body-builder with sculpted muscles in legs and arms, and (what I later learned is called) a six-pack abdomen. We watched as he went to the water's edge and bent down (wwhhheeewww!) to fill the bucket. Without any acknowledgement, he strode back through the trees and left us all gasping and laughing at what we had just seen. Five Minutes Later He Was Back! Complete with plastic bucket and the same muscly physique. Ah but this time he didn't get away so easily. Some of the ladies called out, Jane scurried to get her camera but he was off through the trees again. He came back again, and then again, and by this time we were bold enough to ask what he was doing with the water. Was there a fire back there and he was trying to put it out? No, nothing like that. He was filling his child's plastic pool. We'd all got guite chummy by now, and he agreed to pose with us, and somewhere there's a lovely photograph of him holding Angie and me on his arms.... Now we were all ready for a sing-song. Michelle and Angie tuned up their ukes, I took mine out of the case, but handed it over to someone else to play, I just wanted to sing quietly and enjoy the fun. The camera was clicking merrily by now, and all the dancers and singers and paddlers were asked to '...stand still!'. We'd all eaten our picnic, drunk all the water, and paddled till we were called to gather our bits and pieces, it was time to go home.

All the garbage was put in the proper bin, nothing and no-one was left behind, the driver of the bus agreed to let some of us off at a point near our own area, and we came home, tired but happy.

What a lovely day we had at Luss in July 2018.















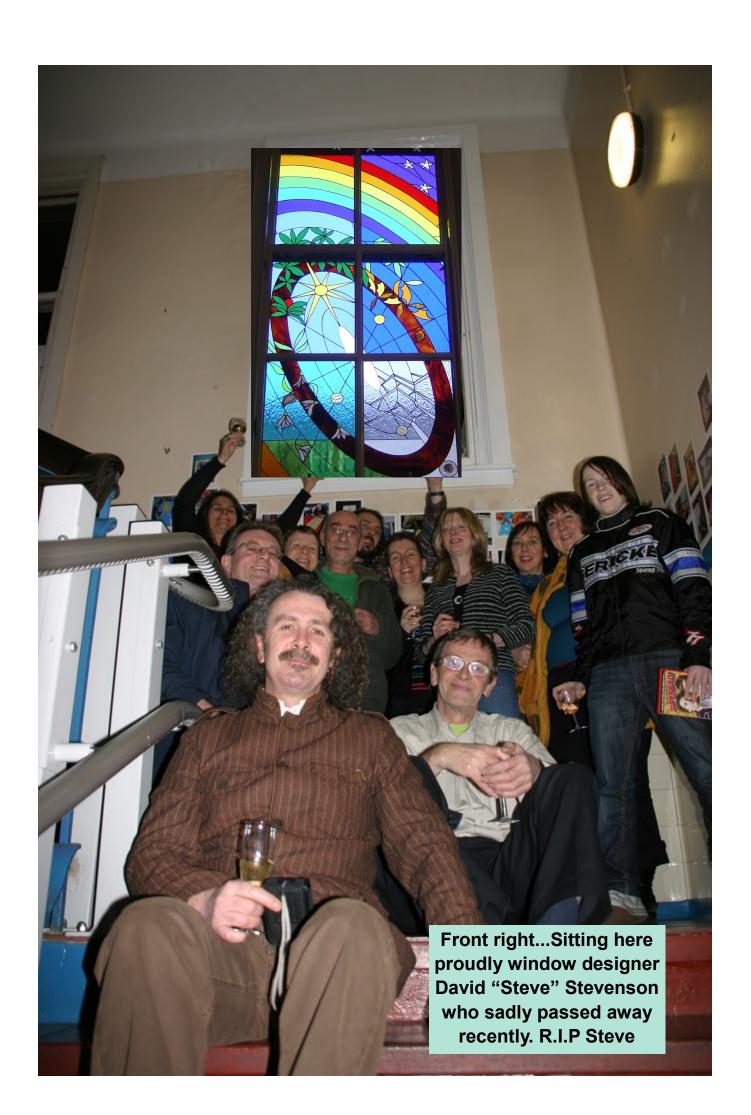




Smashing time had by all on a Monday nights at Stained Glass Class







## Hands up if you love singing and want a sing along choir!?









"This is the best service in the world, really!"

"That's me off to the dancing!"

"This is amazing. I wish there were more organisations like you who are willing to facilitate the programme like you do. "
- NHS Positively Podiatry

"Here, I will be able to climb a Munro now."

"Great service, great value, thank you"



Twinkle Toes was nominated for the NHSGGC Chairman's Awards



"The class is very valuable. It teaches people to be reasonable and calmer in daily life



"Time to relax– forget problems and become optimistic– in company with others is calming and reassuring."









"Thursday morning positive thinking—I want to thank everyone for the support I have had. I came to the class never thinking how I would need the help you have all given me."

KEEP CALM AND TRUST THE UNIVERSE "Reminds
me
to
help
my
health
with
handy
tips."



















London emailed us looking for someone who has never been abroad before to star in the Sky TV programme of "50 ways to kill your Mammies" Out of 420 hopefuls our Grace won!!! :) x

SHE has spent a night in the Amazon rainforest, swum with sharks and joined police in Peru on a dangerous drugs bust – but it's all in a day's work for 73-year-old Grace Sergeant.

Throw in hunting wild animals, speeding down Dubai's longest water slide at 80mph and walking around Canada's CN Tower, not to mention paragliding and camping in the desert

It's a remarkable list for the pensioner, who hadn't left Scotland until she was invited to appear on the TV show 50 Ways to Kill Your Mammies.

Grace travels to Dubai, Canada and Peru to star Ashmawy and proves age is no parrier as she goes from one adrenaline rush to the next. She said: "I never thought

t my age that I would be risking my life to complete a list of crazy challenges. But it's the best thing

## Fearless Scot desert, went or

I've ever done and pushed me out of my comfort zone. Most of the trials were pretty scary but it was better than sitting at home doing nothing.

Grace decided to apply for the programme - which features four new mammies joining Baz and his mum Nancy on their travels - after hearing about it at her local

community centre.

She said: "It was such an

She said: It was such an unexpected opportunity and at first I was quite sceptical.

Twent home and emailed the production team and thought it would never come to anything. But a few days later I was invited to London to meet Baz and Nancy.

We hat it off straight away and I was invited to Dubat to film.

Grace, from Pollokshuelds.

Grace, from Pollokshields Glasgow, was treated to a VIP stay at the luxurious Atlantis The Paim bote and admits scuba diving in the



many dare devil stunts including climbing the dizzy highs of CN **Tower Toronto, police** drugs raid in Peru and scuba diving- even though she couldn't swim in Dubai to name a few! Amazing, Grace!!! x





## Connects2Project Activities out with the Annexe and in partnership with other local organisations

- Kelvingrove Bowling, National Library of Scotland and Art Galleries
- Our trips doon the water to Largs on the Waverley
- Bus trips to Luss, Falkirk Wheel, The Kelpies
- Branching Out

  in Partnership with "Operation Play Outdoors"
- Intergenerational Activities with Hyndland After School Club
- Glasgow Science Centre and visit, with them, to Whiteless Windfarm
- Partnership working with Partick Housing Association
- Social Isolation and Loneliness in Scotland -research visit from Professor Jeanette Trauth an Associate Professor in Behavioural & Community Health Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh
- Summary of Connects2Project
- Connects2Project end of Project Fiesta Forever Party
- Letter of recognition from Sandra White MSP





Connects2Project out and about making the most of our free local attractions—
Art Galleries for their lunchtime Organ recitals, Library of Scotland for their fascinating archives and old films and outdoor Bowling on Kelvingrove Greens.















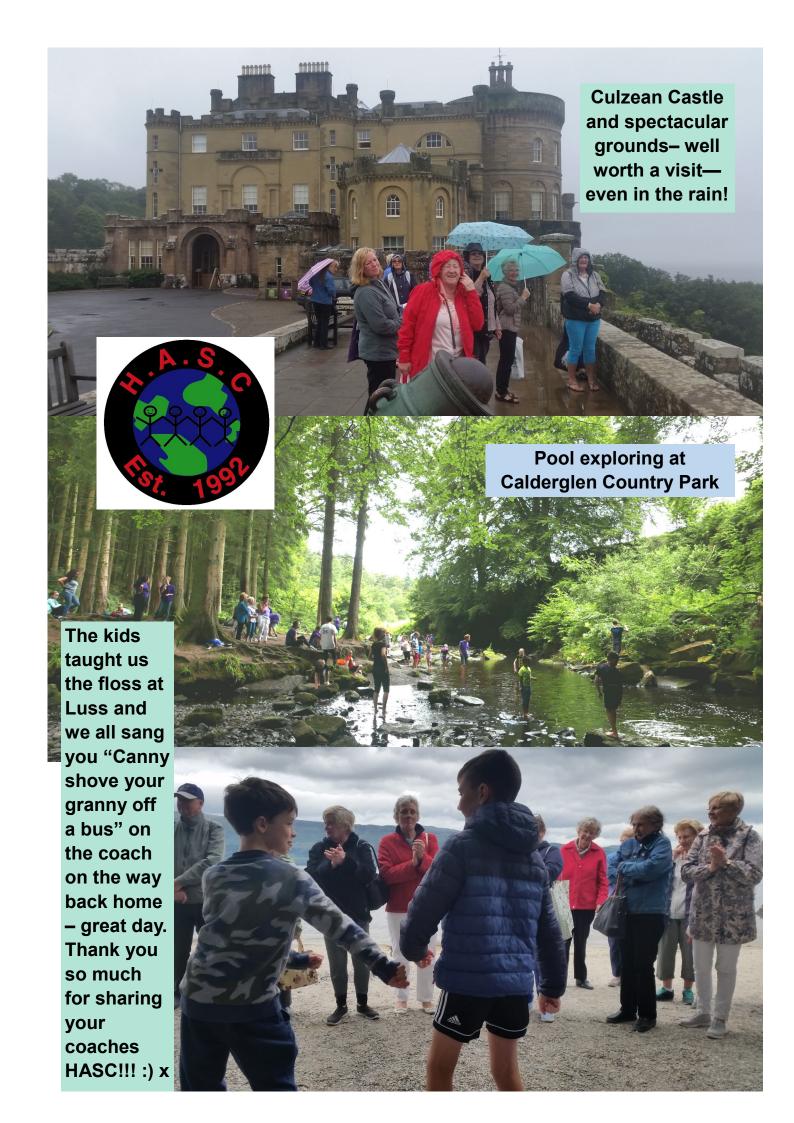






Sharing intergenerational activities with the kids from Hyndland After School Club- sewing, crafts, baking, gardening at the allotment and knitting with our Knit and natter group. HASC also, kindly, shared their coaches for all of us to go on trips to Ardrossan Beach, Culzean Castle, Calderglen and Finlaystone Country Parks and Luss.









Social Isolation and Loneliness in Scotland -research visit from Professor Jeanette Trauth an Associate Professor in Behavioural & Community Health Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh. The purpose of her trip was to inform a doctoral seminar which addresses various social determinants of health. Jeanette was struck by the way policy makers nationally and locally are addressing his issue in Scotland and by the work being delivered with communities. She was able to visit a number of funded projects and recently sent us this report featuring our Knit and Natter group!



"When the average American thinks about their health or what it means to be healthy, it is frequently in terms of "not being sick or having anything wrong with them". Although this approach to health, characterized as a "medical model" has dominated our thinking for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, competing models of health have emerged in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> and into the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. In 1948, The World Health Organization defined health as "a complete state of physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." This more holistic approach to thinking about health continues to evolve and with it, new questions emerge such as how can we promote healthy social and physical environments for all individuals in today's complex society. For example, how do societies grapple with the growing health problem of social isolation and loneliness that is affecting the populations of many developed countries globally? Recent research has shown that the effect of loneliness and social isolation can be as harmful as smoking 15 cigarettes per day and is more damaging than obesity!

This past spring I received a Course Development Grant from the UCIS European Studies Centre, to travel to the UK to research this issue. The goal of this trip was to learn how policy makers, health researchers and community members in Scotland and England—who have been at the forefront of this issue-- are addressing this issue, and then apply what I learned to revise an existing doctoral seminar that I lead at Pitt Public Health that addresses various social determinants of health.

After spending three weeks in the UK—primarily in Scotland—I was struck by two things regarding how this country approaches the issues of social isolation and loneliness across the lifespan. First, there appears to be a genuine commitment to addressing this issue and policy makers at both the national and local levels have been engaged in planning and implementation efforts. Second, the strategies that have been used to

address loneliness focus on asset-based approaches. This means that community programs and initiatives address what people want and need

and also involves them in the process. This type of approach builds

individual and community capacity and is therefore more likely to be

sustained. When I first arrived in Glasgow, I met with staff from the Voluntary Action Fund (VAF) who provided me with an excellent orientation and introductions to a number of "third sector" (i.e. non-profit) organisations that I would be visiting. The VAF is a fund manager which invests in initiatives that address social inequalities and builds resilient communities. They support a range of different types of organizations but their core philosophy is to invest money, develop capacity and build relationships.

The following narrative describes the work of one of several organizations that was funded by the VAF that embody this philosophy.





Annexe Communities is a vibrant community centre located in west central Glasgow. This centre has a number of interesting programs, including the Connects2Project for individuals over 60 years of age to assist them with improving their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing, making new friends, supporting and inspiring one another and combating social isolation. They also strongly encourage participants to share their skills and talents with others. Several years ago, one person who came to the Annexe wanted to learn how to knit, and another person wanted to teach knitting. Hence the beginning of a group called: Knit and Natter—a group of highly engaged, talented women who get together to talk, laugh and socialize with one another while they knit blankets, clothes items and toys for those in need all over the globe--for earthquake victims in Nepal, orphans in India, Syrian refugees, Sri Lankans after floods and landslides, children in Peru, special needs children and single moms in Tanzania, a terminally ill 15 year old boy in Arizona as well as knitted items for Glaswegians! After a few years of all this knitting, the group realized that they had sent hand-knitted items to 6 of the 7 continents of the worldeverywhere but ANTARCTICA!!! Subsequently a contact was found-- a niece of a staff member worked with whales and penguins in Antarctica and thus Operation Penguin began—the shipment of knitted penguins and other items to Antarctica! The lessons that I learned from this experience were invaluable and provide an important frame of reference for revamping my existing health behavioural theory seminar. What is important for students to understand is the need for new ways of thinking about health and well-being in the United States—what has been proposed by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation as a *Culture of Health* that promotes individual and community well-being, creates healthy physical and social environments and supports access to high-quality health care for everyone. As I explored the issue of social Isolation and Ioneliness in the UK, I definitely saw a culture of health that reflected these values."

Humbling and amazing to witness how a big part of Connects2Project mantra of "helping you to help yourself" was realised by many beneficiaries in the form of "helping others, helped themselves" Purpose and meaning proved central to manys journey and once untangled themselves from "drama", a whole bundle of life stages, outdated self-images, overwhelming caring responsibilities, and a whole plethora of family issues...they found themselves again and woah....watch them go, see the twinkle back in their eye! Kind of making up for lost time but not regretting the lost time, more using it to fuel their new found energy or zest for life. We learned that confidence was still there, just buried and as if it had just been knocked over and over again by life. Was beautiful to watch it pump back up! We definitely grow older but now we are not so sure that we necessarily grow up!

We learned that once you got the age label or older person label out of the way, much fell away, and there was left a passion or wonderment for a new lease of life, adventure, new love of life, have some fun, getting on with all the things that had been put off until "later on". Now was the time to do all these parked dreams and aspirations and how lovely and timely to have found an encouraging space and like-minded company to go for it, and share with this new found path. Long term habits and ways of being proved quite a hurdle to traverse for many, as there seemed to be a safety- comfort- zone element that was rooted in. But watching on and being inspired by others was a main player in others breaking through these patterns of behaviour that didn't serve them anymore.

As staff we learned that our tipping point for the one full time and 2 part time staff facilitating all the beneficiaries, with all their different paths through the Connects2Project, was around the 400 beneficiaries mark. After that the beneficiaries that had been here longer seemed to naturally flow into that space, and made friends, "showed them the ropes" inspired through being more positive. Staff saturation opened up the supportive bar for the new beneficiaries from the more practised beneficiaries! Yes, work needs to be done and thrives through encouragement and or by example.

Change of mind-set was pivotal for many, getting rid of worrying was a watershed too. Witnessing penny's dropping was extremely satisfying to see. Then a new energy seemed to come from the "underneath all that baggage."!

With 5 years of 40 weeks of activities a year equalling 200 weeks of activities, each timeslot on our brochure, each class, developed into a wee community of its own. Looking out for each other, sending love, flowers and cards if someone not well, keeping an eye on each other, getting a wee cup of tea for a class member that was having a hard time, being there for each other proved very powerful and contributed to their sense of wellbeing, belonging, being part of something bigger than themselves, part of a community that cared for them as a fellow human being.



Sandra White MSP for Glasgow Kelvin- PUTTING KELVIN FIRST couldn't make our Party but ask Euan to pop in a letter of thanks for our project and all involved in the "success of the Connects2Project"-

"Dear Julie & all of the Connects2 team, Celebrating the success of the Connects2Project- As you know, I have the honour of being the Constituency MSP for Glasgow Kelvin. The area represent stretches from Thornwood all the way to the Drygate; as you can imagine there are an abundance of fantastic organisations who are doing incredible work right across Glasgow Kelvin. It is no exaggeration though when I say that in your time providing the Connects2Project it has been without doubt one of the finest projects I have had the pleasure to visit and in turn play a small part in your story. The support provided, and in turn togetherness created, through your project has hugely impressed me and I am in no doubt of the incredible benefits Connects2 has had on all participants over the years. To be unable to celebrate the achievements of this wonderful project with you in person is therefore a great disappointment but I hope you will forgive my absence due to Parliamentary commitments. The invitation alone was most gratefully received. Going forward I know the whole team at the Annexe will continue to provide the highest quality of service to your local community, and other projects will in time fill the void left by Connects2. I have no doubt the legacy of the Connects2Project will be long lasting though and I hope this letter of celebration goes some way to further ensuring the whole team at the Annexe is aware of the incredible impact you have on vulnerable individuals, as well as your entire community. Keep doing what you do so well and I hope to be able to support you in any, and all, future endeavours that you take on the behalf of the people of Partick.

Kindest regards Sandra White MSP"











There's a lot of lonely older people out there so places like Annexe Communities really help improve your mental and physical health.

- Rena Lynch, 75







"I was looking for something, didn't know what.
People do love you.
You can do anything you want to do in here.
I learned to think differently.
That's me,
I'm happy as
Larry"





