

# Case Study



## Project

Groups in Boots

## Organisation

Stepping Out

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## About the Organisation

Stepping Out is a voluntary community organisation in East Lothian offering a range of services and programmes to those with mental health issues. Stepping Out started in 1993 offers a range of programmes from Spanish classes, pottery and reflexology to DJ-ing.

## Project overview

Groups in Boots offers a walking activity programme for young people with mental health issues in East Lothian. The project supervises fortnightly walks around the local area and an annual walk along the West Highland Way.

The main aim of the project is to provide a "mainstream" physical activity for young people with mental health issues in East Lothian and eventually give participants the confidence and social skills to join "mainstream" walking groups.

## What has it achieved?

The project has achieved what it set out to do – although it has not engaged with the numbers it hoped. The project has engaged with 13 young people over the first two years. It has been difficult to target young people within the age range and it depends on the referrals from local health authorities to Stepping Out.

Some of the participants have moved on to other things rather than staying in the group and becoming peer leaders. One example is of a young woman who has cerebral palsy. When she first came to the group she was suffering from a depressive illness and she was not in employment, education or training. The project not only has introduced her to a healthier lifestyle but gave her confidence to apply for a further education course. She now attends college full-time and has ambitions for a career in youth and community work. She also continues to walk as an active leisure activity.

## How did the project get people involved?

Young people are recruited from Stepping Out service users and referrals from other local health professionals and hospitals.

Participants choose where they will go walking. The group discuss this together and come to a consensus. This is important as people with mental health issues are often not given a choice – decisions are taken away from them. This project aims to help them to decide for themselves and give them back the power to choose.

## What was innovative and what worked well?

An integral part of the project is the individual diaries that participants fill in at the end of each activity day. The project will use the diaries to measure the impact on confidence and self esteem as well as increased physical activity.

The participants have complex issues to deal with around their health. These issues can be barriers to their participation in the project. Just getting out of the house and arriving at the meeting point can be a challenge to those who have complex mental health issues. The project provides transport and equipment to participants to help them take part.

The social aspect of the activities is important to the service users. After walks the group often go for something to eat.

## The future....

The project will not continue in its current form after the funding stops. However, the day walks will continue as part of the Stepping Out project and there will be opportunities for service users to take part in activities delivered by the local Outdoor Education service.

