

Dundee Futures Project News **1st October –31st December 2019**

More than just a Draught Excluder

In October 2019 Hillcrest kindly awarded Dundee Futures Project Gift Aid money to purchase new sewing machines for our 'Making a House a Home' group. In this group we have been making Wonder Bags; an insulated bag which will continue to cook food thereby saving time and money! We had, until then, used small machines which, although great for our initial groups, soon couldn't take the strain of being in constant use. Time for some sturdier machines! With the Gift Aid money we were able to buy 5 new Singer Sewing Machines as well as lots of lovely material and wadding.



We decided to try them out by running a short two week group making draught excluders - perfect for this cold weather and a relatively easy project to try out the machines.

Four people joined the group, none of whom had used a sewing machine since their school days, so this was a new experience for them as adults.

We took safety very seriously and read the safety instructions together and practiced on pieces of paper starting with straight lines and progressing onto to curves, heart shapes and complicated squiggles!

Then onto the material! The various activities of measuring, pinning, cutting and sewing prompted

conversations and memories of sewing as a child with grand parents and parents, skills learned at school, lost through time and remembered again in the group.

Usually, this was a noisy, chatty, full-of-laughter group, but there were moments of intense concentration, focus and absolute silence when you could literally hear a pin drop!

When we asked the group how they would describe their experience, the words they used were - therapeutic, fulfilling, enjoyable, relaxing, confident, accomplishment, so when the next Inclusive Cities Exhibition was being planned at Dundee V&A, we decided to include them as they represented so much more than just a Draught Excluder! Seeing them on display confirmed to our group participants that they had created objects of beauty and function!



Art Project- A model of the Hilltown



Following the success of our other Art Groups, we decided to begin another one in October 2019. From a blank piece of paper, covered in thoughts, ideas, sparks of imagination... came our Model of the Hilltown!

The group discovered a shared interest in the history of Dundee, and narrowed their focus to the Hilltown, where Dundee Futures Project has its base in The Learning Place.



They spent every Thursday afternoon, for four months taking photographs of the local area, researching old photos on the internet and sharing memories with each other. Each conversation added to the picture and the eventual finished model.

Group members collected everyday items which, when seen with a fresh pair of eyes, were transformed into lamp-posts, bins, railings, buildings. Language and words changed and developed as group members refined their design skills: proto-type, template, collage, scale!

There was a steady stream of light-bulb moments, often in the middle of the night, as they thought up new ways of building the model and the people who inhabit it. This was another positive experience; seeing the ideas coming together, working collaboratively, amazement at having something so beautiful and unique and once again being able to display it at the Inclusive Cities exhibition along side the Draught Excluders!

Designed and created by Beth, Jim, Tony, Trisha, Gill, Stewart, Garry, Gail, Samuel, Babs, George, Pam and Duncan with thanks to Claire and Amy for helping to make this happen!

Other Activities

During this Quarter, we continued to deliver our very popular 'Cooking on a Budget' groups. We delivered four 4-weeks groups, two of them in collaboration with Wellbeing Works, and covered topics such as 'How to reduce food waste', 'Understanding Food Labels' and 'Understanding the tricks Supermarkets play on us to make us spend more'!

All these exercises are designed to encourage the group participants to share their own experiences and knowledge and help them to think about the choices they make in a financially healthier way. We cook meals we hope they will be able to make again and very often try out new flavours and foods.

Eating together is an important part of the group as it gives them the opportunity to reflect on what they've learnt and to plan for next week. For many, this may be the only time they sit and eat with another person.

We continued to have two Job Clubs each week, each well attended. Much of the support we offer is focused on helping people to access their Universal Credit journals, adding entries and messages for their Work Coach, checking their payments and contacting DWP in the event of errors showing on their accounts and supporting people to add their Fit-note details onto their account. We have signposted to Remploy and continue to have a good relationship with them.

As mentioned above, we also continued to deliver our 'Making a House a Home' group, making a variety of useful household items, whilst discussing issues such as 'Energy saving tips' and 'What to do in the event of a home emergency'.

Our Dundee Adventures Group, who have been organising and planning trips out in and around Dundee, thanks to Hillcrest Futures Project Improvement funding, organised a guided tour around Verdant Works. Ten people came along to this event and for most this was their first visit. Some also had their own stories of family members who had worked in the mills.

We arranged a lunchtime visit to Main Street Café one Wednesday afternoon and as always, this was a well attended group, with twelve people coming along, again many of whom had not been before. We are aware of the positive benefits of having a wide, community based circle of support and hoped that having come along in a supportive way, and some would continue to meet up in small friendship groups. At least two such small groups have formed, with two individuals and three individuals meeting together independently of the project. They are establishing their own network of support.

We have recently 'discovered' the Hidden Cinema at the Steps Theatre and went with a group to see The Wizard of Oz, a nostalgic experience for the six people who went along. We hope to go to more screenings in the future!

Case Studies

David came with his mother after she had phoned on his behalf, having been given details of the project by his Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) work coach. Due to his profound hearing loss and speech impairment he had become isolated and lacked confidence communicating with people.

After telling him about the groups we have at the Dundee Futures Project, he decided to join the gardening group. After a couple of weeks he came to the Friday drop-in afternoon, a social setting which gave him more opportunity to practice communicating with others. Since then, he has joined our 'Making a House a Home' group, he helped out at Coldsides Funday, he is part of the Events Organising Group which meets to plan and arrange days out around Dundee and he is now volunteering in a charity shop.

From having nothing to do with his days, he now has something on every day and he feels that his speech and confidence have greatly improved as a result!



Karen was referred by DWP. She was very anxious but felt that it would be good for her to come along to small groups, one step at a time. She came to our 'Introduction to I.T.' group and felt that she had learnt some useful skills and that she would like to come to the Job Club to practice using her Universal Credit Journal. She then came along to the 'Cooking on a Budget' group and also really enjoyed the experience of being with other people in a safe setting.

She started to talk about personal issues which were contributing to her high stress levels; debt, arrears and gambling addiction. We supported her to make appointments with Welfare Rights to help her address her debt issues and Addaction to begin to address her gambling. We also supported her to rectify errors with her Universal Credit payments which were contributing to her rent arrears, and the relief that she was not going to be evicted was immense!

She comes in less frequently now that she has other support in place, but she knows that if any other issues arise, she just needs to drop by.