

# Silver Saplings Adventures for Older People: a qualitative review and evaluation of intended positive interventional change and wellbeing effects for participants of the programme: lay summary document.

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a qualitative review and evaluation of intended positive interventional change and wellbeing effects for participants of the programme

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## - Lay Summary Document -



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**Background:** The Silver Saplings Adventures programme, part of the Wild Things environmental education charity, aims to enhance wellbeing among older individuals in North East Scotland through nature-based interventions. The programme offers regular outdoor trips to foster community engagement, social connections, and environmental learning. While similar initiatives have shown positive effects on wellbeing, there's limited evidence for older adults.

**Methodology:** A qualitative evaluation of the SSA programme was conducted by researchers at Robert Gordon University. 17 participants were recruited from the third programme cycle by course facilitators, and interviewed by the RGU research team using semi-structured interviews. Data analysis followed by applying a framework for analysing themes in the data.

## Findings:

1. **Wellbeing Improvement:** Participants who took part in the SSA programme perceived wellbeing holistically, focusing on physical, social, and mental aspects. The SSA programme received positive feedback from participants, exceeding expectations, and contributing to various dimensions of participant wellbeing.
2. **Wellbeing Effects:** For participants, SSA activities improved physical mobility, facilitated social connections, and enhanced mental, emotional, and psychological wellbeing. Participants appreciated the care, support, and opportunities provided by the programme.
3. **Broader Ramifications:** The programme not only improved participant perceived individual wellbeing but also fostered community engagement, social ties, and social cohesion. It encouraged lifelong learning, nature immersion, and the development of new social bonds among older adults; participants of the SSA programme sampled for this research.

**Conclusions and Recommendations:** The findings align with existing literature on greenspace interventions and wellbeing in older adults. For participants sampled, the SSA programme counteracted the decline in social ties typically observed with age, offering new opportunities for knowledge, forming of connections, and self-development. Recommendations include the continuation and expansion of similar nature-based initiatives to promote wellbeing and social cohesion among older populations. Overall, the Silver Saplings Adventures programme emerged as a positive intervention for enhancing wellbeing and fostering community connections among older individuals in North East Scotland.

**Wider Project Implications:** Although the SSA programme was designed for a particular group, findings suggest benefits may be observed across other programmes within the larger Wild Things project, if these initiatives comprise similar design. However, to investigate and examine this, further investigation is required. Future research should explore other Wild Things programmes to deepen overall understandings of programme design, goals and possible benefits and ascertain if any present affects are constructed by similar or different mechanisms in participant samples more diverse than the older adults sample examined for the SSA programme.