

Social Isolation Task and Finish Group

Group Member:

Marion Hine <frcllrhine@gmail.com>

Elizabeth Woods <Elizabeth.Woods@eastsoffolk.gov.uk>

Stephen Burroughes <Stephen.Burroughes@eastsoffolk.gov.uk>

John Cross <gtglemhampc@gmail.com> <gtglemhampc@gmail.com>

Carol Poulter <Carol.Poulter@eastsoffolk.gov.uk>

Copy to:

Nicola Jenner <Nicola.Jenner@eastsoffolk.gov.uk>

Zoe Botten <Zoe.Botten@eastsoffolk.gov.uk>

RESUME OF THE PREVIOUS WORKSHOP - WHAT IS THE NEED?

(Plus items added from research subsequent to the meeting)

What is currently available?

Hour - Forget Me Not Club	Framlingham
Hour - Worry Tree Cafe	Framlingham
Hour - Tri-shaw Cycle Outings	Framlingham
Hour - Befriending	Framlingham
Hour - Transport (health)	Framlingham
Hour - Help at Home	Framlingham
Greener Fram	Framlingham
Mills Meadow Activities	Framlingham
Framlingham Inclusivity project	Framlingham
Businesses as hubs (pubs and cafes)	?
Project with BT/ESC - tech to support people in their homes	?
Café Connect	?
Monday Club	?
Female based social activities/clubs	Wickham Market
Good Neighbour schemes	Wickham Market
Befriending schemes	Wickham Market
Age Concern services - regional rather than local?	(now closed?)
"Good Day" telephone subscription service	
?what else did they do?	
Rural Coffee Caravan - chat, coffee & expert advice	Rural villages? How often?
- Website with noticeboard of activities and groups	
- c-a-f-e (Iso-Inspo-Info) - umbrella group / website	can be anywhere?
- Community Makes Us - Connection Coalition	Connecting groups together
Meet Up Mondays	can be anywhere? Now online
More Than a Shop	
Frontyard Pen Pals	Rural shops

Kindness Rocks Project
Chit Chat Britain
Together in Isolation - Postcard Project
Happiful - Home schooling without stress
Keep Moving Suffolk - Suffolk Steps
PACT - parent carer - coffee chat...

Where are the gaps & what solutions were identified?

- Support already existing initiatives
- Expand Rural Coffee Caravan with funding for more staff and volunteers
- Spare vehicle belonging to FAYAP that would make a great second Rural Coffee Caravan
- Information on more than websites - use noticeboards, face to face, village emails, shop, welcome packs, printed newsletters
- Health and Wellbeing information on Framlingham website
- Co-housing
- Encourage young people to volunteer
- Village Halls/Pubs as focal points

The issues we identified can be grouped into three headings:

- Lack of Mobility
- People are needed for support / interaction
- Communication and lack of connectivity

Issues not highlighted:

- Lack of activities & things to do
- Poverty - too expensive to get there, too expensive to pay weekly, monthly...

OVERALL CRITERIA FOR PROJECT PROPOSALS:

What can we do? How do we resolve the communication / isolation issues?

Some items below are stating the obvious, but it felt wrong to leave them out. There are probable other considerations I haven't thought about that need to be added.

1. Informal friendly approaches are key, whether in person or on paper/websites
2. Clear info, readily available, easy to find (without being directed to it by a service provider)
3. Include all the details up front - info on what you are accessing / letting yourself in for / costs / how often, how to get there etc.
4. It is not sufficient to say "all you have to do is ask for help"
5. Regular activity / service - so it becomes part of a weekly or daily routine and there are no gaps of connection. Once a month is possibly not sufficient to combat isolation?
6. Follow up? Keep trying to connect? Rejection at first might be a knee-jerk reaction

7. Training to offer better quality informal support - and also could provide opportunities for young people to develop experience and skills?
8. Bridging the gap between family and friendly support (which gradually becomes insufficient) and more formal statutory services (which is seen as too big a step to contemplate)
9. Knowing where to refer people locally for more specialist help (national organisations suggest they can do all sorts of stuff, and then its not available in the middle of Suffolk)
10. Understanding the steps that occur to many people which form a recognised path towards social isolation as they get older, and the difficulties people have to make positive decisions - this can be very simple decisions, such as asking your cleaner to come weekly instead of monthly, or arranging for regular transport to help get out and about.
11. Developing support and communication which ties in with recognisable stages of isolation so there are more easily accepted
12. Timescale - applicable now with Covid restrictions, but also future long term sustainability
13. Start small and make it grow
14. Applicable area wide, not just one town or village
15. Project with individual feedback built-in to develop community group membership feeling
16. Use experience of people who are doing similar things in different settings, but design our project with a distinctive local feel, so it feels like ours - ie what have people said worked best?
17. Tie in with existing services / providers to make use of what is there, to help expand a local project, and is familiar with local people using their services
18. Offer a variety of ways of taking part - different levels of interactivity, different skills and abilities, offering choice
19. Activities which help people to feel useful and contributing to society, not just recipients of support
20. Provide a means for direct communication from people / organisations with other helpful or essential information - making it easier to connect with people who might be in need.

PROJECT IDEAS:

A) Expand Rural Coffee Caravan

Use the spare vehicle belonging to FAYAP to make a great second Rural Coffee Caravan, with funding for staff, and support for volunteers (training, mentoring...) to go round areas regularly, not already visited.

B) Inter Village / Town Community Info Sharing

It is very difficult to find out what interesting groups and activities are available, when they are taking place, and where. Notice boards are a great help, but you have to be going past them regularly to keep up, and they can get very cluttered. Also they often have very limited space.

Framlingham has proposed extending their website to include a lot more community info (which other councils do already).

A website might not be easily accessible by some older people, but would be by any of their family, carers, or more computer literate friends, so a “one stop shop” of local info would be very useful and save time searching.

This need is probably applicable area wide, for all rural villages. What is developed for one place could be used for all.

The Rural Coffee Caravan, c-a-f-e, and Community Makes Us initiatives all have the seeds for a great website presence of community activities. This could be extended to include statutory services as well. This could be a comprehensive co-ordinated local area website - if it's not there it doesn't exist!

Once it is set up it could be run at quite low cost, but would need a website manager to act as moderator and keep it up to date. Individual trusted members could post items directly onto the site. Larger organisation could pay towards the maintenance of site.

C) Busy Boxes

There are endless different versions of this idea, from expensive activity gift boxes, to charitable donated boxes made for support during the pandemic - Boredom Boxes, Busy Bags, Helping Hampers, Befriending Boxes, Borrow boxes...

Many people have said that this is the one thing that kept them going through the loneliness of lockdown. That, and people chatting on the telephone regularly.

It's a tried and tested idea, which could be expanded in new ways, and is applicable as an area wide service operating locally.

What would make it different would be to build in a feedback mechanism in the kind of activities included which would develop a sense of community - make or do things which you let others know of in the return box, and receive info about the efforts and achievements of others receiving the box locally. It could include quizzes and competitions etc.

Later, when the Covid virus is under control, groups of people receiving boxes can meet up to cement the sense of community belonging.

Activities could also be specially developed to help people feel useful, eg. making contributions for fundraising. People are already doing things like this in special situations which we could learn from - such as the FineCell needlework in Hollesley Prison, and some interesting activities must be taking place in Care Homes and at Activity Centres.

The boxes can contain a range of different things which require different levels of skills and abilities. Some items can be free donations, some bought in specially, and some printed - such as newsletters. Big companies can donate too.

Boxes could vary - with small weekly ones which require little effort to put together, plus a monthly bumper one. People could even indicate preferences from a menu list of items - if the local organisation and admin allows.

It could start small and grow over time by fundraising to make it sustainable.

The CPA scheme could fund it for three years to set it up and get it off the ground.

D) Home Sharing

Home sharing might solve some people's social isolation issues & offer affordable rental options?

People living on their own often say "when it comes to it" I will get somebody to come and live here as a companion, and for that bit of extra safety. But actually this is very difficult to achieve if a family member can't move in.

Can we set up a local vetted tenant finders service?

There are national organisations such as Home Share UK at: <https://homeshareuk.org/> that help people set this up. The closest is in Cambridge. Perhaps a local organisation can piggyback on their serves?

This would have the great benefit of keeping people in their own homes for as long as possible.

It would not a substitute for Social/Personal Care, but alongside it, and so tenants wouldn't be expected to do care as such.

Limitations: It would be restricted to people who have suitable homes with sufficient spare rooms. And people looking for accommodation willing to give that little extra.

E) U3A - University of the 3rd Age

The University of the Third Age (U3A) in East Suffolk is a thriving cooperative offering educational, recreational and social activities for its members, who are in their 'third age' - the time after they have finished working full-time or raising a family and have the time and opportunity to pursue their interests or try something new.

Also a large group in Halesworth and District.

Monthly programme of talks are located in the **Kesgrave, Felixstowe, Woodbridge, Saxmundham**

Expand into our area - Wickham Market and Framlingham?

With more than 2,200 members, U3A in East Suffolk offers a lively speaker programme (27 talks in the 2019-20 session), and more than 170 interest groups and short courses. All of this can be enjoyed for a modest annual subscription. U3A in East Suffolk is organised as a self-help cooperative, and is Registered Charity. Also links with University of Suffolk with access to their library and other facilities.

"You care - We care" - is new initiative partnering with Suffolk Family Carers to help those who start to find it difficult to continue participating.

F) Storytelling / Reading / Tech Project

Hearing and reading are particular issues which deteriorate as people get older and can be a big cause for withdrawing from social groups and disengaging from community news.

Research and develop a project to specifically address this, at the same time as learning simple tech skills on a tablet device or smart phone which are invaluable for people who find themselves alone for a large part of time. Fund the acquisition of tablets for community use.