

End of Project Report Apr 2025 – Mar 2026

Feeling Connected - Derbyshire Voluntary Action

Pionnering ways to reduce isolation and loneliness.

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Feeling Connected has been commissioned by the Healthy NE Derbyshire Partnership to deliver Social Connectedness work. In addition UKSPF Inclusive Communities funds have helped expand and deepen the impact of the project.



1. Project Aims and Approach

Feeling Connected enables community-based volunteers to start and run initiatives that bring people together. These volunteers are individuals or small teams of neighbours. Their initiatives are 'informal' and un-constituted, without a bank account or structure. Our Development Staff provide the support that they need, at times and in ways that suit them, with the following elements:

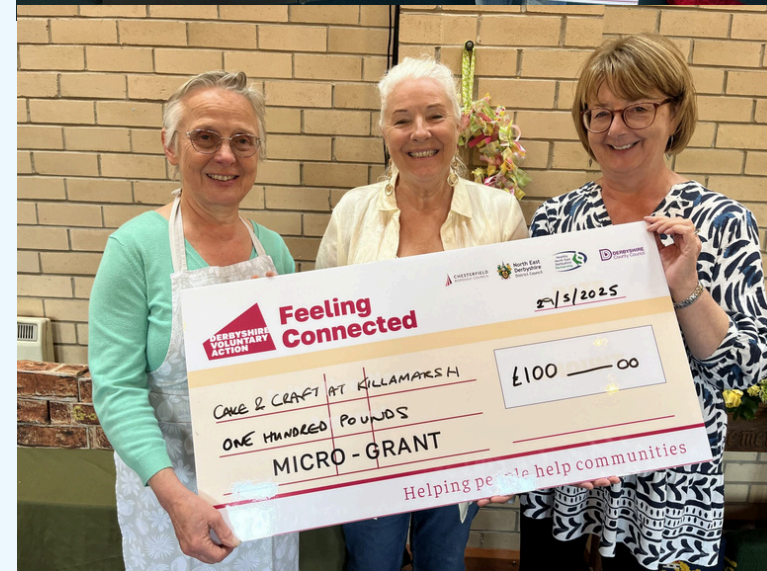
- Micro-grants of up-to £100
- Mentoring and advice,
- Tools and resources,
- Collective learning opportunities
- Networking opportunities



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2. Key Figures

47 micro-grants administered to initiatives. (Q1: 10, Q2: 2, Q3: 21, Q4: 14)

41 funded initiatives that are informal/un-constituted.

2714 Beneficiaries engaged by the initiatives. (Q1: 789, Q2: 70, Q3: 1315, Q4: 540)

265 Sessions delivered by funded initiatives. (Q1: 56, Q2: 18, Q3: 114, Q4: 77)

28 initiatives holding regular sessions/activities.

19 initiatives holding one-off events.

221 volunteers and helpers engaged. (Q1: 70, Q2: 27, Q3: 72, Q4: 52)

7 Workshops held for collective support for volunteer organisers.

11 Social Networking events for volunteer organisers.



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3. List of Funded Initiatives

Details of these initiatives can be found within the Quarterly monitoring Reports.

- Clay Cross Health Walk
- Christmas Street Carols , Dronfield
- Dronfield Town Under 7s Blacks
- Community Gift Giving Arkwright
- Carols in the Community at Arkwright
- Killamarsh Heritage Centre
- Pilsley Art Group
- Boredom Buster, Killamarsh
- William Levick Primary School 150 Year celebration community event
- Dronfield Girls Under 7 Football Group
- Calow Toddler Group
- Forever Active, Clay Cross
- Desserts, Drinks & Discuss "Childhood Memories". Killamarsh
- Dronfield Litter Pickers

- Kenning Park Community Forest School- Lets Talk Together
- Kenning Park Community Forest School
- Clay Cross Kurling Club
- North Wingfield Crafts
- Crooked Meeples, Dronfield
- Holmesfield Games and Craft Cafe
- Lost Art Group, Clay Cross
- 1st Grassmoor Rainbow Guides
- Thank You Dinner for Volunteers, Grassmoor
- Reaching Out - Easter Meal, Grassmoor
- Reaching Out – Hampers, Grassmoor
- Let's Talk Together, Danesmoor
- Post Wingerworth Walks Social
- Kindness Inclusion, Wingerworth
- Coal Aston Playgroup
- Neighbours Christmas Celebrations, Dronfield Woodhouse
- Chat-n-play, Shirland
- The Arts Space, Killamarsh

- Easter Wonderland, Grassmoor
- Arts and Crafts, Clay Cross
- Lego Connection, Clay Cross
- Dronfield Barn Stained Glass Group
- Travellers Chit Chat & Craft, Killamarsh
- Cake and Craft at Killamarsh
- Eckington Kurling Group
- Grassmoor Meet and Greet Christmas Meal
- Mini Marsh Toddler & Baby Group, Killamarsh
- Natterjacks Social Communication Group, Dronfield
- Residents and Members Stonebroom



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4. Impact on Beneficiaries

In Q4 we surveyed 126 individual attendees of Initiatives we fund, below are their reflections.

What were your hopes for attending this activity?

34% said 'To share a skill or passion.'

56% said 'To try something new.'

33% said 'To develop confidence.'

84% said 'To meet people.'

67% said 'To be part of a community.'

33% said 'To feel better about my physical health.'

49% said 'To feel better about my mental health.'

How has attending this activity been positive?

64% said 'I've tried new things.'

37% said 'I've grown in confidence.'

74% said 'My social circle has grown.'

52% said 'I now know more people that I can ask for help or advice from.'

69% said 'I feel more included and part of a community.'

29% said 'I'm more active in daily life (for example walking or stretching).'

32% said 'I feel better about my physical health.'

46% said 'I feel better about my mental health.'

37% said 'I would like to join other activities.'

48% said 'I feel less lonely.'

How many times have you attended this activity, roughly?

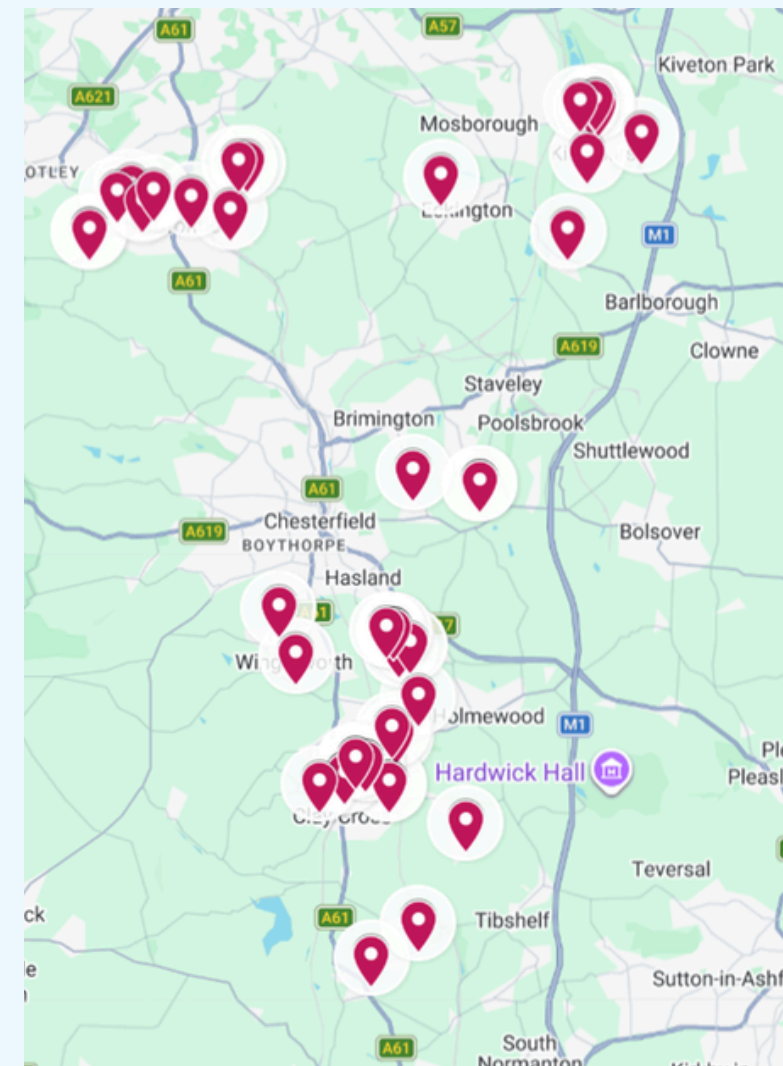
18% said '1 - 4 times.'

5% said '5 - 8 times.'

5% said '9 - 16 times.'

72% said 'more than 16 times.'

5. Map of Funded Initiatives.



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6. Reflections on Project Delivery

Key strengths of the project or approach:

- We support an abundance of small initiatives, which creates a compound impact across the district.
- Support for 'informal' initiatives, (those without constitutions or bank accounts).
- Holistic support, including one-to-one and collective sessions, and networking.
- Network approach,

Challenges you experienced and how these were managed:

- Many grant recipients just can't attend the collective sessions or socials, due to busy lives. Therefore they miss out on those elements, and require more one-to-one attention, which is a strain on our resources.

What you might adapt or change in the future if delivering a similar project:

- We'd deliver more collective events online, to increase attendance, and put out efforts into making them as good as 'in-person' sessions.

Other outcomes/ outputs achieved that were not captured through the standard monitoring forms:

- Impact on individuals. We've captured this in the survey included in this report.
- The strength of the 'Network' that includes volunteer organisers, local stakeholders and community members, all engaged with the question of how to reduce isolation in our communities.



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7. Quotes from Beneficiaries

We asked beneficiaries of our funded initiatives, 'What is most important to you about attending this activity?' Their quotes have been grouped into the following themes.

1. Reducing loneliness and isolation

"Socialising makes me feel less lonely and more confident."

"It gets me out of the house so I'm not just looking at the same 4 walls and only talking to the dog."

"Meeting with a community when I don't see many people day-to-day."

"This group gets me out the house and the company is really good."

"It gets me out of the home. I'm not thinking about stuff. It's my time."

2. Sense of community and belonging

"Feeling part of a community"

"The community, sense of belonging."

"I really feel like I belong."

"Feel a part of a community."

"We have members with learning disabilities, mental and physical disabilities, stroke victims and dementia sufferers. When they are in the class, they are all equal, help each other and are one big extended family."

"I like talking to people and being part of a group"

"The community feel - actually being part of something."

3. Friendships and social connections

"Making new friends."

"Meeting a gang of mates."

"I've met new people and made friends and we meet outside of the group."

"This has become my best activity due to the people that I have met and become friends with, meeting for lunch etc."

"The friendships, although casual, have become very important to me."

"Friendship formed with other mums, grandparents and helpers."

"Regular friendships and play opportunities for both myself and my two children."



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4. Mental health and emotional wellbeing:

“It is good for mental health.”

“When you’re out and chatting, the pain seems a little less.”

“My MH feels better after I’ve been”

“Doing something that helps with my anxiety and depression.”

“Gaining confidence after my husband’s death to go out and not be afraid.”

5. Routine, structure, and something to look forward to:

“I look forward to going every week”

“Looking forward to going every week and having a game and chatting to everyone.”

“Regular, weekly, reliable activity that my son and I both enjoy”

“Helps to form a routine which also really helps.”

6. Confidence and personal development

“Gaining confidence after my husband’s death to go out and not be afraid.”

“Building my confidence to help me in everyday life.”

“Trying something new.”

“Learned something new.”

“Sense of achievement.”

“Being proud of the things I make.”

7. Inclusion, accessibility, and feeling accepted

“I don’t feel judged for how I am whereas at other places I feel judged.”

“Company with people who understand and do not judge.”

“Everybody is welcome and accepted.”

“I am neurodiverse and it has been nice to find a nerdy community that is accepting of everyone.”

“Suitable comfortable venue for wheelchair user.”

“I felt I’m in a very safe environment to achieve this”

8. Physical health and activity

“Physical exercise and social interaction.”

“Keeping active. Socialising. Having fun.”

“Getting exercise and socialising with other people.”

“Keeps me active”

“I feel more active.”

“Enjoying the kurling. Meeting people. Good exercise.”

9. Volunteering, contribution, and purpose

“I volunteer at the class. I get enormous fulfilment and satisfaction seeing all our members joining in, working together and having fun.”

“To make a difference.”

“Keeping in touch with others’ lives so I can find ways to give back.”

“I like to make people feel welcome. I like looking after people.”

“Supporting my partner in running the group”

