

Workshop 5 – Tackling loneliness: rural, urban and coastal issues

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North Yorkshire is a large county with often dispersed populations and a range of geographies. For many people, living in a rural setting can provide more meaningful contact with close neighbours than more anonymous urban settings where people less frequently know other people nearby.

However, larger settlements often have a greater range of facilities and support groups in place, as villages increasingly lose shops and other communal buildings and run the risk of becoming dormitory settlements.

Coastal communities attract those who have retired who often have no established social networks or family in the area, or those who are seeking seasonal employment and may form a transient population.



The Radio 4 / Welcome Collection work highlighted the top 5 reasons for loneliness as:

1. Nobody to talk too
2. Feeling disconnected
3. Feeling left out
4. Sadness
5. Not feeling understood

A recent Radio 4 campaign 'All in the Mind' found that a staggering 40% of 16 –24 year olds feel lonely.

In order to tackle the issues around young people and loneliness, youth clubs help with many of the identified issues by providing:

- Safe space
- sense of belonging
- create positive relationships
- help respond to difficulties
- referral to specialists

A useful context is to describe the differences between urban and rural provision:

Urban	Rural
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paid Staff – universal open access groups • A lot of specific target groups – uniformed, Theatre, Special needs. • A lot more high needs young people • More severe disruptive and challenging behaviour • Broad age range 11 - 16 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer Led • Younger age group – 11 - 13 • Less issue-based work

From an urban perspective it becomes easier to target an area that needs a youth club due to the volume of requests from residents, professionals and young people. Potential funding can be easier to access as there's often an issue with anti-social behaviour. All of these make opening a club in an urban setting 'easier'. Setting up clubs in rural communities can be much harder, with less evidence being available regarding the need as well as fewer resources and facilities. This means that the provision in rural areas can be sporadic, inconsistent and very infrequent. For example, some clubs only open once a month!

However, there are consistencies in terms of the challenges.

1. Staff and Volunteers

The most vital resource is someone to run the club. This is a challenge and depending on the locality will depend on:

- Training
- Support required
- Number of volunteers

2. Attendance

- Getting young people to attend
- Distance from the venue – taxi of mum and dad!
- having enough resources to keep things fun and interesting
- online gaming – e.g. 'Fortnight' issues

3. Community Space

Clearly finding a suitable venue to run a youth club is vital. The barriers faced when a venue is found include

- Cost – hire, insurance, resources.
- Resistance – Village hall committees, local residents.
- Capacity – Space, Staffing ratios

Although youth clubs are viewed as only being for the benefit of young people, the wider benefits to volunteers and local communities can be significant. Often there's a positive impact on loneliness as a result of:

- Enabling social action amongst young people, which can bring a community together.
- Volunteers getting to know the young people in their communities,
- Buildings being used and services sought (boost the local economy)
- Intergenerational relationships are built

Note the link back to the 5 reasons for loneliness highlighted by the Radio 4 work - all can be addressed in some way.

However, it's concerning that youth clubs don't exist in all localities, and without these places the impact of loneliness will begin much earlier and have greater influence on mental health, social skills and the wellbeing of young people.

Rural Urban Distinction

The Government's recent Loneliness strategy makes regular references to 'rural' – previously there has been no statistical evidence to support it. Looking at asset-based work, is there a rural/urban difference?

Men's Sheds

Common aim in all areas - bringing men together to build social connections. The following table sets out the more likely mechanisms in each area for advertising and delivering a project, but both can surprise you! No comments on coastal Shed set up as we have only supported delivery in rural and urban settings.

URBAN (HOW)	RURAL (HOW)
Social media Storage containers and extensions People – building Business support/in kind Specialised content	Leaflets/word of mouth Proper sheds/churches/halls Building people Small grants More generic content
Health and Social Care referrals Cockpit crew	

What are the positives and negatives of rural/urban/coastal delivery?

Some examples given:

	RURAL	URBAN	COASTAL
+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community hubs, hall and churches Knowing your neighbour Limited variety of activities Easier start-up phase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of faith community Broadband – speed of Diversity (gives options, ideas, choice) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of place/belonging Scenery/chances to chat More volunteers Wisdom of age
-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everybody knows you Getting out of the area (transport) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't always know neighbours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fewer service options - radius

Participant Ideas

– How to tackle loneliness

- Understanding the things that make people's eyes dance
- Sharing physical assets in communities – understand what the assets are
- Donate Books
- Influence Planning – to create community interaction
- Ensure individuals are empowered, so that they can engage

– Actions to carry forward/replicate

- Asset-based approach to support (Living Well model)
- Mental Health support in rural areas – find out what ‘the buzz’ is!
- Get/encourage young people into volunteering (they’re an asset, but it can also be a benefit to them personally)
- Re-focus buildings for alternative use
- Find ‘the one’ active individual that will make things happen