



***Tackling Loneliness and Social Isolation:  
An Evaluation of the Chatty Café Scheme  
Services***

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## Contents

1. Introduction .....	3
1.1 Purpose of the report.....	3
1.2 Report overview .....	4
2. Key Findings.....	5
3. About the evaluation.....	7
4. Context: loneliness and social isolation in England .....	9
4.1 Levels of loneliness and social isolation .....	9
4.2 Who does this affect?.....	10
4.3 Addressing loneliness and social isolation .....	12
5. The Chatty Café Scheme services .....	14
5.1 Growth of Chatty Café Scheme services .....	14
5.2 Recognition .....	17
6. The impact of Chatty Café Scheme services .....	19
6.1 Chatter and Natter table beneficiaries .....	19
6.2 Friendship telephone service beneficiaries .....	28
6.3 Virtual Chatty Café (Zoom) session beneficiaries .....	40
7. Views from Chatter and Natter table venues .....	48
8. View from the volunteers .....	57
9. Views from the public .....	62
10. Discussion and recommendations.....	66
10.1 Theory of Change Outcomes.....	67
10.2 Key Successes.....	69
10.3 Issues for consideration and recommendations .....	71
11. References .....	75
<i>Appendix 1: Theory of Change Model .....</i>	<i>79</i>
<i>Appendix 2: Evaluation Methods .....</i>	<i>88</i>

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose of the report

The Chatty Café Scheme is designed to encourage conversation, and allow people to connect to reduce the feelings of loneliness or social isolation. Evidence suggests that loneliness and social isolation affects a large proportion of the UK population, with these experiences being exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic<sup>1</sup>.

*“At the Chatty Café Scheme, we believe that simply having a chat with someone can really brighten their day. As humans, we have a need to be with other people. Research tells us that being connected to others is important for both physical and mental health. Social connectedness has proven links to lowered rates of anxiety and depression. It is also known to increase feelings of belonging, purpose, happiness and wellbeing.”<sup>2</sup>*

The Chatty Café Scheme began as a way to connect people in places like cafés by having a designated table for people who were willing to talk to each other. This has grown to a network of Chatter & Natter tables across the country, but has also expanded to virtual Chatty Café sessions online (via Zoom), as well as a telephone friendship service. The human-centred approach that guides these activities, facilitated largely by volunteers, is taking place to try to reduce experiences of loneliness or social isolation, improve social mobility, and support people to create connections.

In order to understand the impact of the Chatty Café Scheme on the people it provides for (beneficiaries), a research project has been established. The project was formed of two key stages. Initial surveys have been used to gain insights into views from beneficiaries of the Chatty Café Scheme services, volunteers, venues that host Chatter & Natter tables, and the wider general public. This was followed by more in-depth research including interviews with those involved, and further surveys. This report explores the findings of the research.

## 1.2 Report overview

This document is the final report to feedback findings from the research project exploring the impact of the Chatty Café Scheme services. This incorporates findings from the first stage of the research which were explored in the interim report in 2022<sup>3</sup>, and the following stage of the research which took place in 2022-2023.

- The remainder of this report is structured as follows:
  - Section 2 presents key findings of the research.
  - Section 3 provides an overview of the evaluation.
  - Section 4 provides information on the context of loneliness and social isolation in England.
  - Section 5 provides an overview of the Chatty Café Scheme services.
  - Section 6 explores the impact of the different Chatty Café Scheme services, including the Chatter & Natter tables, friendship telephone service and the virtual Chatty Café (Zoom) sessions.
  - Section 7 explores the views from venues that host Chatter & Natter tables.
  - Section 8 explores the views from Chatty Café Scheme volunteers.
  - Section 9 explores views from the public.
  - Section 10 discusses the implication of these findings, and provides recommendations for potential ways for the Chatty Café Scheme to improve.

## 2. Key Findings

- The Chatty Café Scheme has rapidly expanded their services starting from just a few Chatter & Natter tables in 2019 to a network of nearly 600 venues by 2023 in addition to a telephone friendship service, and virtual chatty café sessions via Zoom.
- The Chatty Café Scheme services are valuable to the beneficiaries, as well as the volunteers involved, and for the host venues who recognise the potential to contribute to the local community.
- The Chatty Café Scheme provides different pathways for people to reduce the experience of loneliness and social isolation. Over 96% of beneficiaries using Chatter & Natter tables, the telephone friendship service and the virtual Chatty Café sessions said that interacting with Chatty Café Scheme services reduced the experience of loneliness and isolation. This demonstrates the potential for these services to help create connections, and improve the lives of people across the country.
- There are broader benefits of the Chatty Café Scheme services identified by beneficiaries including making people feel happier, improving mental health, creating new connections and friendships, as well as finding out about other groups and activities, through the simple act of having someone to chat to. These benefits are not limited to the beneficiaries but were echoed by the volunteers too. They recognised that their interaction with the Chatty Café Scheme had personal benefits, as well as being able to contribute to tackling the issues of social isolation and loneliness in their local communities.
- The Chatty Café Scheme is connecting people from different generations and communities, and now has different access channels, in-person, via telephone, and online enabling them to access different communities, depending on geographical locations and personal circumstances.
- There was widespread agreement from respondents across the research that the Chatty Café Scheme is effective at reducing individual experiences of loneliness and social isolation, and creating community connection in-person and virtually.
- While the Chatty Café Scheme has been successful at increasing its presence in venues and reaching people via telephone and online services, respondents highlighted some ways in which there is potential to improve its services. This includes continuing to expand its network of venues, and capacity for volunteers, but also in term of marketing and increasing visibility of its activities.

Figure 1: Key Findings Infographic



**96%**

of Chatter & Natter table users said it made them feel less lonely and socially isolated



**100%**

of the telephone friendship services beneficiaries said it made them feel less lonely and socially isolated



**97%**

of Virtual Chatty Café (Zoom) session beneficiaries said it made them feel less lonely and socially isolated



**85%**

of beneficiaries said the Chatty Café Scheme services helped them meet people they liked to chat to



**70%**

of beneficiaries said Chatty Café Scheme services helped them make new friendships



**80%**

of beneficiaries said Chatty Café Scheme Services improved their confidence

**98%**

of beneficiaries said they would be likely or very likely to recommend the Chatty Café Scheme services



**97%**

of volunteers said they would be likely or very likely to recommend the Chatty Café Scheme services



**92%**

of venues feel that Chatter & Natter tables are an important part of their venue



**98%**

of venues feel that Chatter & Natter tables are encouraging community spirit

### 3. About the evaluation

The investigation of Chatty Café Scheme services that took place to inform this interim report was carried out by the Centre for Business and Society, Coventry University between February 2022 and April 2023.

The research project seeks to understand how far the Chatty Café Scheme has managed to reach its objectives that were set out in a Theory of Change model that was devised for the organisation.

This theory of change model had nine core outcomes:

- **Outcome 1:** Evidence that participating in our services is reducing people's social isolation and in doing so improving their social, mental and physical health.
- **Outcome 2:** Evidence that we are reaching parts of England where social isolation is prevalent.
- **Outcome 3:** Evidence that participating in our services increases the beneficiaries' social mobility by joining other community groups.
- **Outcome 4:** Evidence that people of all demographics can access the Scheme.
- **Outcome 5:** Evidence of improved social confidence and interaction.
- **Outcome 6:** Evidence of improved mental health and wellbeing.
- **Outcome 7:** Evidence that having a Chatter & Natter table option in every café is becoming an expectation of the public.
- **Outcome 8:** Evidence that improving social isolation improves public health and reduces the demand and cost of public health services.
- **Outcome 9:** Evidence that the public are becoming more aware of social isolation.

The full Theory of Change model can be found in Appendix 1.

This research employed a mixed methods approach, gathering quantitative and qualitative data to build a rich narrative on the impact of the Chatty Café Scheme services on its beneficiaries, volunteers, and venues, as well as the views of those who have not yet accessed their services. These are used to understand what is working well in the Chatty Café Scheme, what impact this has on those involved, and provides recommendations of how to potentially improve the Chatty Café Scheme's service.

The research took place in two stages:

An initial survey of beneficiaries (Chatter & Natter tables, telephone friendship service and virtual Chatty Café), volunteers, venues as well as the public.

This was followed by in-depth interviews with the groups identified above, as well as Chatty Café Scheme staff and board members. A second survey of beneficiaries (Chatter & Natter tables, telephone friendship service and virtual Chatty Café), volunteers, venues as well as the public.

Further details on the research approach are included in Appendix 2.



## 4. Context: Loneliness and social isolation in England

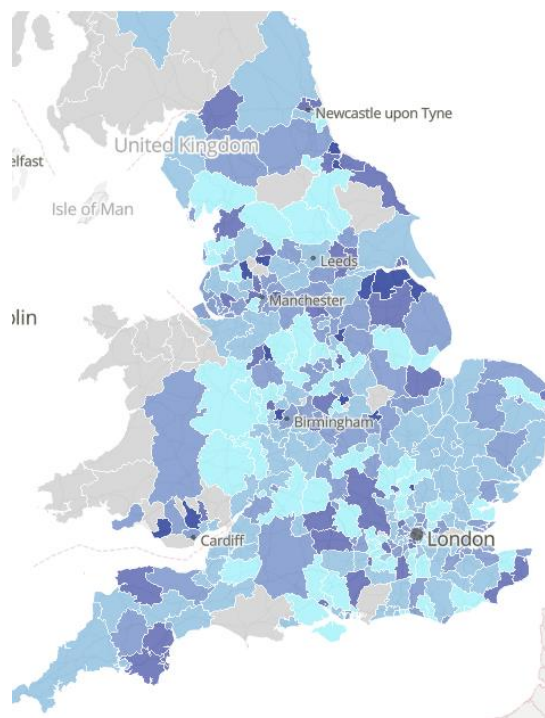
### 4.1 Levels of loneliness and social isolation

Loneliness and social isolation are experienced to varying degrees across England, and has been exacerbated by circumstances such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis<sup>4-7</sup>.

According to the Office for National Statistics, levels of loneliness in Great Britain have increased since spring 2020. From October 2020 to February 2021, results from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey indicated that the proportion of the adult population experiencing loneliness increased from 5% to 7.2% (around 3.7 million adults)<sup>8</sup>. Analysis by the Campaign to End Loneliness based on data provided by the ONS suggest this had declined slightly by December 2021 to 6.5% (3.4 million), but rose again to 7.3% (around 3.8 million adults) by August 2022. Other estimates suggest that the number of people who feel loneliness occasionally is closer to 45% of adults<sup>9</sup>. This equates to 25 million people. The UK government is currently working towards expanding the evidence base of loneliness in the UK<sup>10</sup>.

Figure 2 provides an overview of the variation in percentage of people who report feeling lonely 'often or always' from October 2020 to February 2021<sup>8</sup>.

**Figure 2: Experiences of loneliness in Great Britain, October 2020-February 2021**



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

There are differences in how loneliness and social isolation are measured, and this is partly why there are so many different figures related to these concepts, based on the types of measures used<sup>11</sup>. Whichever measurements are used, the issues of social and isolation affect a significant proportion of the population.

Loneliness is often discussed in conjunction with social isolation, and while they are often interlinked it is important to distinguish between the two. Social isolation is recognized as an objective state in terms of how much social contact an individual has, while loneliness is a subjective experience<sup>12</sup>.

### Definitions:

**Social isolation:** “The inadequate quality and quantity of social relations with other people at the different levels where human interaction takes place (individual, group, community and the larger social environment).”<sup>6</sup>

**Loneliness:** “An emotional perception that can be experienced by individuals regardless of the breadth of their social networks.”<sup>6</sup>

These are multifaceted and multicomponent concepts which are related, and while social isolation can lead to loneliness, and loneliness can lead to social isolation, it is also possible to experience both at the same time, and the experience of them can change over time<sup>13</sup>.

The subjective and personal nature can make tackling social isolation and loneliness more challenging. The complexity of tackling issues of loneliness and social isolation is recognised and is demonstrated by the wide range of organization types that are trying to address this<sup>14</sup>.

### 4.2 Who does this affect?

Anyone can experience social isolation and loneliness. While social isolation is more commonly considered to affect older people, it can occur at all stages of life.

Particular individuals or groups may be more vulnerable than others, depending on factors like physical and mental health, level of education, employment status, wealth, income, ethnicity, gender and age or life-stage<sup>15</sup>. In recent DCMS funded research findings indicated the groups most at risk of loneliness include: young people; those with poor mental wellbeing; people with a disability and/or long-standing health problems; people not living with a partner; gay, lesbian, or bisexual people and people who chose ‘other’ when asked about their sexual orientation; people on lower incomes; people who are out of work; those who have recently moved to their current address; women (who are at a greater risk of loneliness than men)<sup>10,16</sup>.

There is a large body of literature which explores the risk factors that tend to lead to loneliness and social isolation<sup>17</sup>. Evidence suggests that people who are more likely to experience loneliness include those who are widowed, those with poor health, long-term illness or disabilities<sup>18</sup>. Other sources highlight that those in rural areas often experience loneliness, demonstrating the importance of demographics and geography in the incidence of loneliness and social isolation<sup>19</sup>.

The Covid-19 pandemic and cost of living crisis have increased the risk of loneliness for many people, although many people were already experiencing loneliness to varying extents<sup>1</sup>. The Local Government Association summarised the range of risks factors for experiences of loneliness and social isolation, highlighting where the Covid-19 pandemic may have exacerbated existing, or created new risks, summarized in Table 1 below<sup>20</sup>.

**Table 1: Loneliness and social isolation risk factors**

Existing risk factors prior to Covid-19	Existing risk factors that might be exacerbated by Covid-19	New and emerging risk factors as a result of Covid-19
Age Location Living alone	Caring responsibilities Bereavement Poor physical and/or mental health Income Pregnancy and becoming a new parent Digital exclusion Transport connectivity Relationship breakdowns	Social distancing measures Shielding for the medically vulnerable Impact on learning for those studying Less contact with statutory services Potential short-, medium- and long-term effects of contracting Covid-19 Adjusting to the 'new normal'

Source: Adapted from Local Government Association, 2020<sup>20</sup>

Other important risk factors highlighted in other research can include being unemployed, low educational attainment, non-white ethnicity and living in urban area. It is acknowledged that much further research is needed to understand the interaction between these different factors, particularly for those that experience several of these risk factors<sup>1</sup>. While the UK may now be a country that lives with the existence of Covid-19 this does not mean these risks factors have reduced.

Factors that influence social isolation and loneliness operate at the individual level, the level of the community or local area and at the wider societal level<sup>15</sup>. Growing awareness of loneliness and social isolation also recognises the wide range of potential impacts this has on different aspects of mental and physical health. Research has shown that loneliness has the potential to increase risk of death by 26%<sup>21</sup>, lead to increased blood pressure, a greater risk of cognitive decline, and a

higher risk of disability<sup>22</sup>. More widely, loneliness has been linked to a substantially increased risk of depression, anxiety, bipolar disorders, psychosis and experiences of self-harm<sup>23,24</sup>. Further, there is evidence the relationship between loneliness and depression is bidirectional in that people reporting loneliness are more at risk of being depressed, and depressed people are more at risk of becoming lonely<sup>25</sup>.

There is also an economic impact of loneliness and social isolation. This could be as much as £32 billion each year (due to costs of public services required such as health care, and loss of productivity)<sup>26</sup>, with a study by the Co-op suggesting that loneliness costs UK employers around £2.5 billion a year<sup>27</sup>. These economic impacts are due to potential loss of productivity at work, lost working days caring for others suffering from the effects of loneliness, as well as increased costs of healthcare, not only in terms of mental health services, but in terms of increased risks associated with loneliness including depression, heart disease, stroke and dementia<sup>28</sup>. In an analysis conducted for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the Loneliness Monetisation Report found the collective wellbeing, health and productivity cost associated with severe loneliness to be approximately £9,900 for each afflicted person per year, with this reducing to £6,429 for mild loneliness per person per year<sup>28</sup>.

### 4.3 Addressing loneliness and social isolation

Given the scale of the issues of loneliness and social isolation in modern society, and the various social and economic impacts they create, it is unsurprising that there has been significant attention from policy makers. The Tackling Loneliness Action plan, established by the UK Government, seeks to reduce stigma around loneliness, drive a lasting shift to relationships and loneliness, and to improve the evidence base on loneliness<sup>14</sup>.

The UK government has three key strands of work on loneliness<sup>10,29</sup>. First, reducing the stigma of loneliness, including the Better Health: Every Mind Matters Loneliness Campaign designed to raise awareness of loneliness and develop the national conversation about the issue<sup>30</sup>. Second, establishing a network to tackle loneliness, the Tackling Loneliness Hub<sup>31</sup>, connecting a group of cross-sector organisations including charities and businesses to develop and share ideas about activities taking place to tackle loneliness and social isolation; in doing so providing support for the development of government policy. Third, establishing the evidence base on loneliness to explore in more detail the link between loneliness and mental wellbeing.

It is recognised that government cannot do this alone; loneliness is best addressed through partnerships and requires a whole-society approach involving the support and actions from a wide range of organisations from across the country<sup>32</sup>. A range of services provided by the public sector, private sector, third sector and community and voluntary services may have the potential to impact on social isolation, even if this is not their primary aim. Successful interventions to tackle social isolation reduce

the burden on health and social care services. As such they are typically cost-effective<sup>15</sup>.

Age UK refer a range of interventions that can help to reduce loneliness and isolation<sup>33</sup>:

- Information and signposting services (such as websites, directories or helplines)
- Support for individuals (such as befriending or mentoring)
- Group social interventions (such as social groups, arts, crafts and cultural activities)
- Health promotion interventions (such as walking groups)
- Wider community engagement (such as projects that encourage people to volunteer in their local community).

One of the key challenges in tackling loneliness and social isolation is identifying those affected, because not everyone who is lonely is socially isolated, and loneliness is a subjective concept. There is also a strong stigma attached to loneliness which may prevent some people from asking for help<sup>32</sup>.

Learning from specific interventions already in place in local areas can be used to inform work in other local areas to reduce social isolation. Although the context of social isolation across local areas may differ, a recurrent theme is the importance of involving communities in the design of interventions and the way they are managed and implemented<sup>15,33</sup>. A further issue for many is how to access the interventions. Research has suggested that social prescribing may be a relevant tool for introducing loneliness and social isolation interventions<sup>34</sup>. Social prescribing is a way clinical services can connect individuals with activities, groups or services in their local community to support their wellbeing<sup>35</sup>.

Research has already highlighted how creating human connections is important for wellbeing and maintaining good mental health<sup>36</sup>, and how moments of connection can be important for mitigating depression and anxiety in particular<sup>37</sup>. The Covid-19 pandemic has changed people's lives, and for some people has meant periods of increased isolation, as work and leisure patterns have altered. On top of existing experiences of loneliness and social isolation, this means that finding opportunities to create more connections and engage in conversation with others has become even more important, and that simply talking with others has the potential to improve daily well-being<sup>37</sup>.

This research explores the activities of the Chatty Café Scheme in the UK to address the experiences of loneliness and social isolation, as a strategy to create more human connections in-person, via telephone and online.

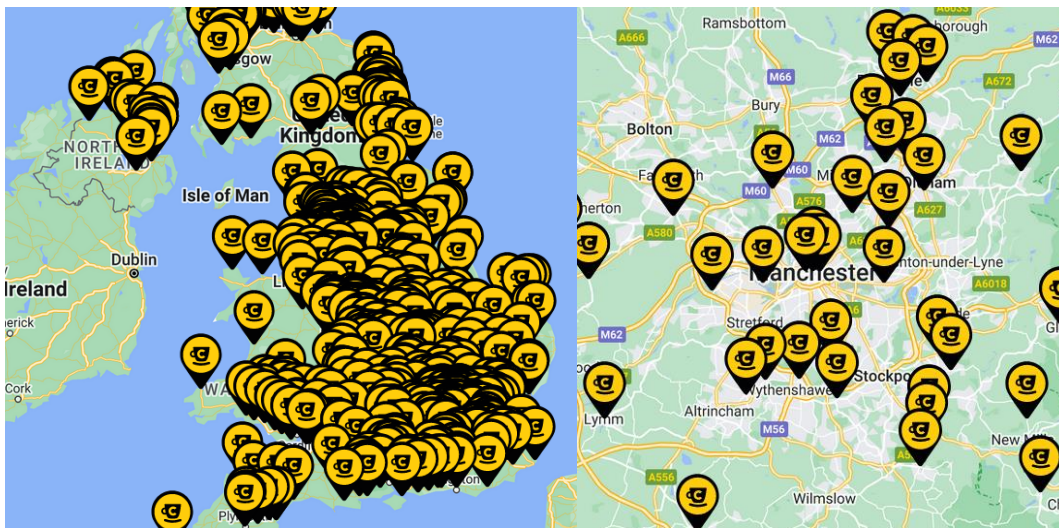
## 5. The Chatty Café Scheme services

This section provides an overview of the Chatty Café Scheme and its services, and why they are an important component of the landscape for tackling social isolation and loneliness.

### 5.1 Growth of Chatty Café Scheme services

The Chatty Café Scheme was established in 2017 as a way to try and encourage conversations between people in spaces, such as cafés. This involved having a sign on designated tables as Chatter & Natter tables for people to sit at if they are willing to have conversations with other people. What began as a Chatter & Natter table in Oldham in 2017 has expanded to a network of over nearly 600 venues across the country<sup>2</sup>.

**Figure 3: Snapshots of map showing location of Chatter & Natter tables**



Source: Chatty Café<sup>38</sup>

Chatter & Natter tables are hosted in venues that sign up to the Chatty Café Scheme, which can be found in a range of venues including cafés and coffee shops but also other place such as libraries, garden centres and co-working spaces for example. These venues will usually place a Chatty Café sign on the designated table/s to indicate which area should be used to chat, but also to inform people about the Scheme. Venues may choose to have a specific table which is used consistently while others may place them on different tables at different times or days of the week. To try and support the use of these Chatter & Natter table, some venues will also have a volunteer who will visit the Chatter & Natter table at specific times, so those people who feel more comfortable attending a Chatter & Natter table knowing they will not be alone can do so.

*“A Chatter & Natter table brings people together and everyone is invited. If you’re on your own, in a couple, with a friend, if you’re a carer (why not sit there with the*

person you care for), mums and babies, dads and babies, grandparents and babies, young people, older people and anyone in between”<sup>39</sup>.

**Figure 4: Chatter & Natter tables**



The Chatty Café Scheme expanded their services further after the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic adapting to the changing environment where the venues that had been used for Chatter & Natter tables were required to close due to a series of lockdowns in the UK in 2020. Recognising a continued need, and for some people an enhanced need, for connections the Chatty Café Scheme established two additional services.

Virtual Chatty Café sessions were set up online via Zoom which run for around 30 minutes at several points during the week for anyone 18 or over. Beneficiaries can join from anywhere in the country and can receive the Zoom link after contacting the Chatty Café Scheme.

**Figure 5: Zoom Chatty Café**



A Chatter & Natter telephone friendship service was also established where those in need would be assigned a telephone volunteer to talk once a week. The phone calls take place once a week for a 12-week time period, although this can be extended if there is a clear need for the beneficiary. Beneficiaries access this service by being referred by Social Prescribers. This service is only available in certain areas of the UK (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Areas where the telephone friendship service has been in operation**

Year	Areas covered
2020	Glasgow, Oldham, Manchester, Wolverhampton, Kent and Norfolk
2021	Kent, Oldham, Wolverhampton, Norfolk, Manchester
2022	Kent, Oldham, Wolverhampton, Norfolk
2023	Kent, Oldham, Norfolk

Source: Data provided by the Chatty Café Scheme

Since it was established, the Chatty Café Scheme has grown from one Chatter & Natter table to a network of nearly 600 venues including local councils and national brands by 2023, with hundreds of these in Costa Coffee stores<sup>2</sup>. It has grown to include a wide network of nearly 300 volunteers (see Table 3).

**Table 3: Chatty Café services 2017-2022**

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023*
<b>Chatter &amp; Natter venues</b>	17	90	750	1,261	950	766	596
<b>Volunteers</b>				55	179	410	293
<b>Telephone befriending matches</b>				96	221	272	352
<b>Regular attendees per week at virtual chatty sessions</b>				9	22	49	35

\* Data only represents up to April 2023.

Source: Data provided by the Chatty Café Scheme

The number of Chatter & Natter tables grew significantly between 2019 and 2020, although experienced a decline by 2021 due to the pandemic and subsequent closure of venues due to lockdowns. By 2022 the number of Chatter & Natter Table venues had recovered and slightly exceeded pre-pandemic levels. Carrying out an audit of all venues in 2023 led to a decline in Chatter & Natter Venues where the table was considered not to be working or the venue had shut. The Chatty Café Scheme is working to secure quality venues, with an average of five new venues signing up each week. Meanwhile, other services established during the pandemic, and the number of beneficiaries for the services has grown significantly since they were established. The number of volunteers has grown 645% between 2020 and 2022, suggesting there are a lot of people who are eager to support others to reduce loneliness and social isolation, and to create more human connections. The



volunteer figures were significantly higher in 2022 due to the high-profile ITV campaign in 2021. The campaign launched at the end of 2022 led to less volunteers than in the previous year.

## 5.2 Recognition

The Chatty Café Scheme has gained attention from well-known brands such as Costa Coffee who have been keen to partner with the organisation to have Chatter & Natter tables in their venues. Importantly the Chatty Café Scheme has achieved recognition from politicians<sup>39,40</sup> that the Scheme has the potential to make a positive impact in different areas. It became a community interest company in 2019, and joined the UK government’s Tackling Loneliness Network in 2020. This network was established to inform government strategy to tackle loneliness and social isolation which had been exacerbated by the pandemic.

In 2021 and 2022 the Chatty Café Scheme was involved with ITV’s Good Morning Britain ‘1 million minutes’ initiative which was designed to encourage its viewers to pledge to volunteer their time to organisations that are working towards tackling issues around loneliness<sup>41</sup>. There has been a strong positive response to these initiatives leading to greater visibility for the organisations, being showcased alongside other such as Alzheimer’s Society, Grief Encounter and Sands, among others. This has led to a strong pipeline of volunteers to support the delivery of services and raised awareness of the Scheme more generally.

Figure 6: Chatter & Natter Table sign



In recognition of the efforts of the Chatty Café Scheme to tackle loneliness and social isolation, it has received several awards. In 2019 it won the Innovating for Ageing competition<sup>42</sup>. In 2020, the founder, Alexandra Hoskyn, won a Points of Light Award from the Prime Minister, as well as an OBE for services to Tackling loneliness in the 2021 Queen's Birthday Honours list<sup>43,44</sup>.

## 6. The Impact of Chatty Café Scheme Services

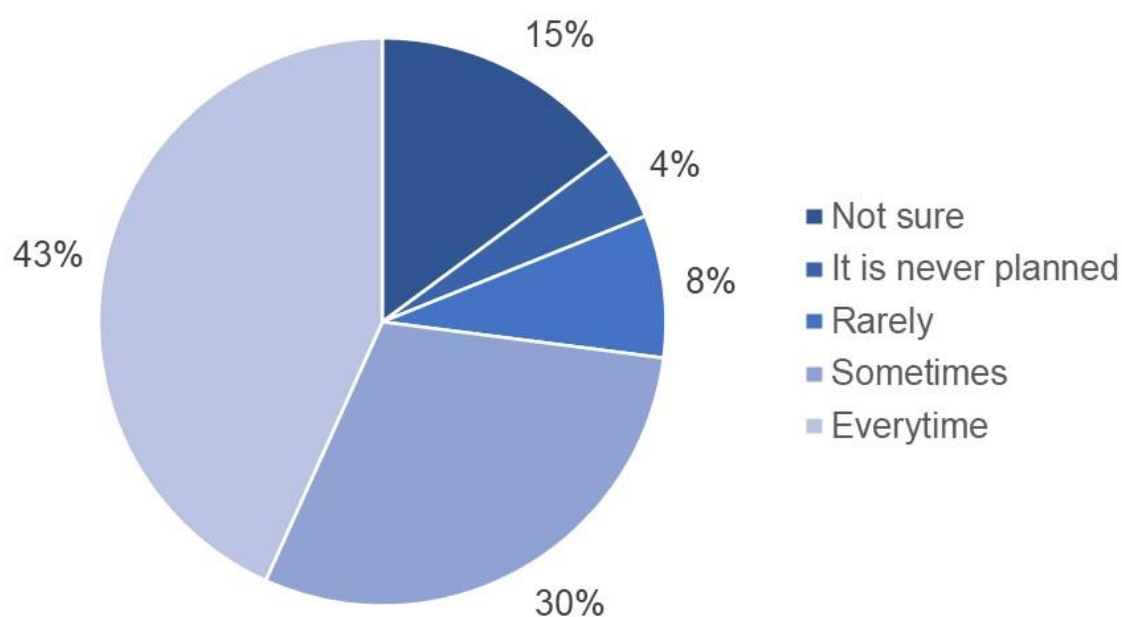
This section reviews the impact of the Chatter Café Scheme services for beneficiaries of the Chatter & Natter tables, telephone friendship service and the virtual Chatty Café (Zoom) sessions.

### 6.1 Chatter & Natter table beneficiaries

Chatter & Natter tables are available across the UK in various locations. While these initially started in cafés and coffee shops, there is now a greater variety of locations where these can be found including sports clubs, universities, church rooms, museums and community rooms. Evidence from the survey highlights that people benefit from sitting at a Chatter & Natter table, which was consistent with the experiences discussed in interviews.

Sitting at designated Chatter & Natter tables is a planned activity for some, whereas for others it is serendipitous. From those who sat at a Chatter & Natter Table, 43% said they did this every time they visited a café, and a further 30% said they did this sometimes (Figure 7).

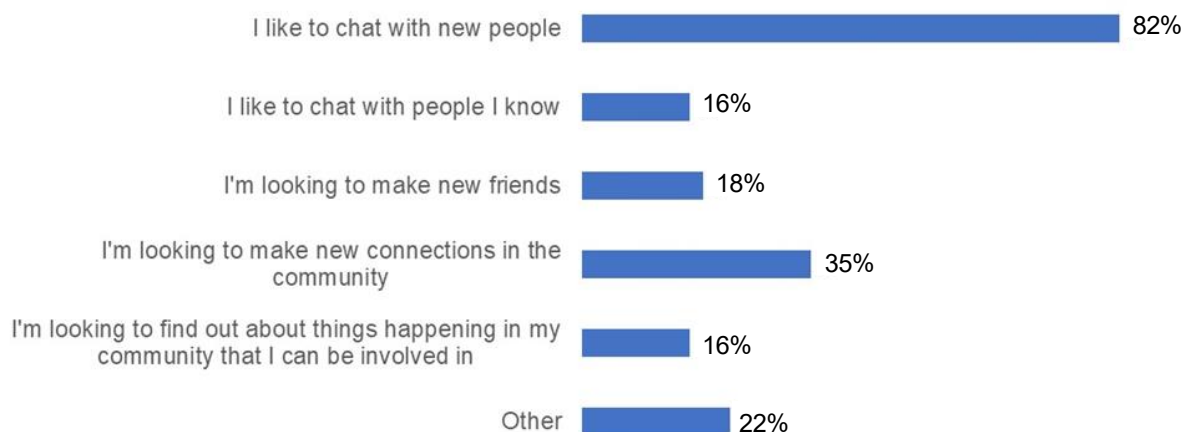
**Figure 7: Frequency of visits to Chatter & Natter tables**



This in part may be affected by the way that Chatter & Natter tables are used in venues. For some they may have a Chatter & Natter table just allocated in the venue, indicated with the signs placed there. For other venues there may be a designated time slot for the Chatter & Natter table and there may be an associated table volunteer host who would sit at the table, and promote the Chatter & Natter table in the local area.

Respondents were asked to indicate reasons for sitting at a Chatter & Natter table. The most common response was that they liked to chat with new people (Figure 8).

**Figure 8: Reasons for sitting at a Chatter & Natter table**



The interviews revealed that for many beneficiaries there was a mix of reasons behind attendance at one of the tables.

*“I’ve lived on my own for a bit now, I really needed to get out and meet some new people. I used to love meeting new people but I’ve got out of the habit of it really, but I love to talk and hear about other people’s lives so this just made sense for me to give this a try.”*

*“I’ve just moved to the area, so I don’t really know many people, apart from the lady at the supermarket who now recognises me. I wouldn’t say I felt lonely all the time, but it can get to you a bit when you move to a new place, so I thought I’d try this out to see if I can at least have a few more people to acknowledge when I’m out in town.”*

*“I wanted to try and do something that was connected to other people in the area I live in, be part of a community. I feel a bit disconnected at times and I thought this would be a good idea to meet other local people and such.”*

Other reasons suggested by survey respondents included points relating to passing the time, about liking to talk in general, about having company for those that live alone, about having something different to do in the day, and it being part of a routine.

The presence of a table volunteer in some Chatter & Natter table venues was welcomed by beneficiaries. Many commented how this reduced anxiety about visiting a table and not having anyone else to talk to, or feeling awkward sitting at the table alone.

*“Once I realised that there would be a volunteer there I was less nervous about it. I knew there would be someone there, so I wouldn’t be sitting there waiting.”*

*“The volunteer on the table is a great idea. I know I’ll get there and can get straight into conversation after I’ve got my tea.”*

*“I’ve known about the Scheme for a while but I wasn’t sure about going to sit on my own so once I’d seen the post about there being someone who was kind of organising a particular time to get there that’s when I decided I was actually going to go.”*

*“It’s better than sitting on my own. I just like to chat about the news, about the weather, and so on.”*

*“It’s a way for me to feel a bit more connected to the people around here. Otherwise I’d be just sitting here on my own reading the paper and there’s nothing positive in there.”*

*“Coffee shops are social places. You don’t see tables with just one seat at them do you? They’re designed for people to talk. It’s great that there’s this opportunity to talk to other people, if you want to. Obviously you don’t have to. I like talking to people, it keeps me grounded, so I sit at the Chatter table.”*

Respondents from the survey identified a range of positive benefits for Chatter & Natter table users:

- **89%** felt it helped them meet people they liked to chat to.
- **88%** said it made them feel happier.
- **89%** felt it brightened their day.
- **68%** felt it helped them meet people with similar experiences.
- **78%** of people who used Chatter & Natter tables felt it helped them make new friends.
- **77%** said it made them feel more confident in talking to others.
- **72%** said it made them feel more confident to join other groups in the future.

Importantly, beneficiaries felt it gave them an opportunity to just talk to someone, and this made them feel happier.

*“It’s great. I never know who I’m going to talk to really, but that doesn’t matter. Sometimes the same people pop up, sometimes they’re different. It doesn’t matter. We can chat about all sorts. We usually start with the weather and go from there.”*

*“It definitely makes me feel happier. I used to come here and sit on my own. I’d talk to the staff and they were always very nice but they need to work. Now I sit at the table and usually there are people who are already there or join me later... There’s not been a time since where I’ve had to sit on my own.”*

A core objective for the Chatty Café Scheme activities is to reduce loneliness and social isolation, and through Chatter & Natter tables they have demonstrated success:

- **96%** of survey respondents said being involved in the Chatty Café Scheme made them feel less lonely.
- **95%** of survey respondents said being involved in the Chatty Café Scheme made them feel less isolated.

This was reinforced in the interview; when discussing feelings of loneliness many beneficiaries recognised the Chatter & Natter table as an important part of personal strategies to deal with loneliness.

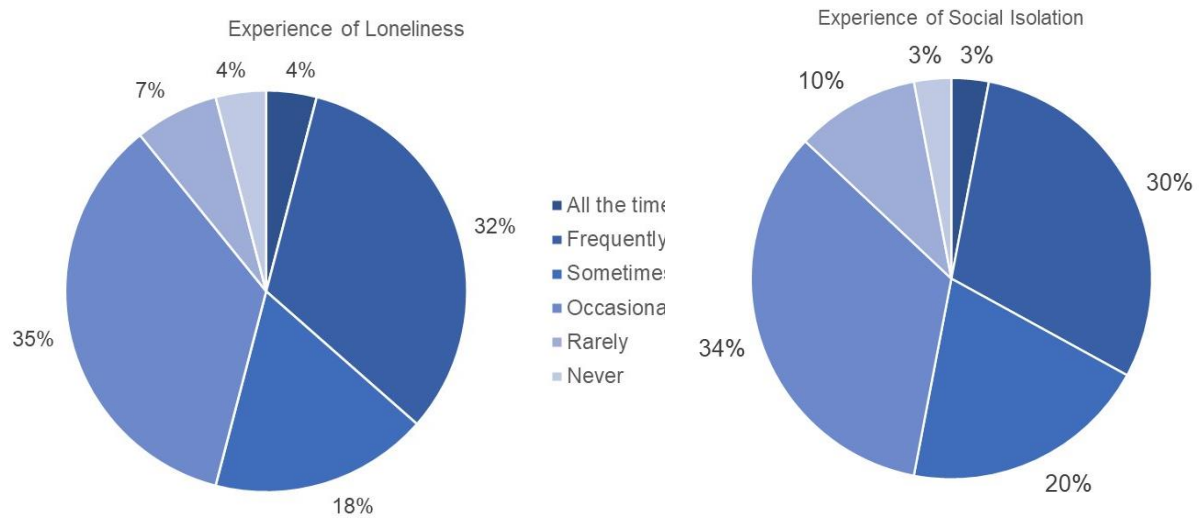
*“I live on my own, have done now for the last five years. My children live far away so can’t visit that often, although they do keep in touch regularly, we WhatsApp all the time. But I don’t see a lot of people. I come into town a couple of times a week to get some bits and it’s a real bonus if I can sit and get to talk to some people too.”*

But it isn’t just elderly or those that live alone that are experiencing loneliness and social isolation.

*“I’ve had to move loads for work over the years. Every time I start somewhere new I need to start again, make new networks, learn about the place. It can be really lonely to start with. Since moving here, the Chatter & Natter table has been great for that. I’ve met all sorts of people. Some who know the place really well, other who are newcomers like me.”*

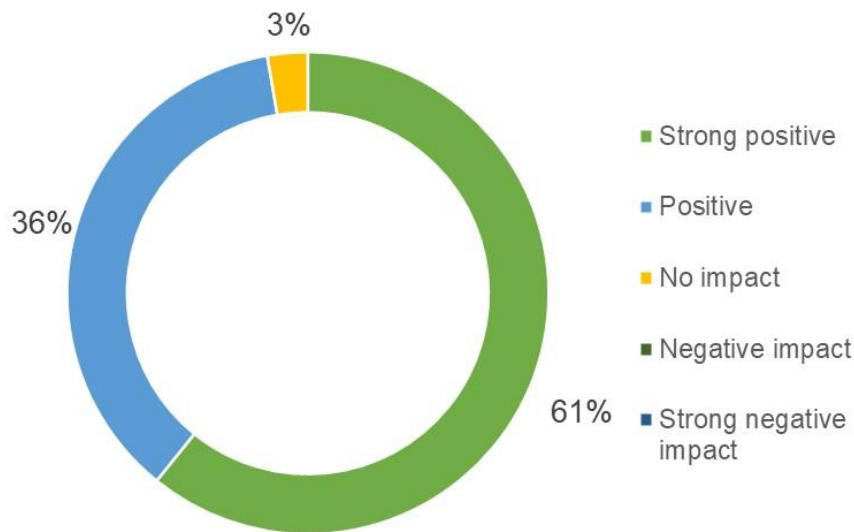
Only 8% of Chatter & Natter Table users identified that they never felt lonely or isolated, with the remaining respondents feeling lonely or isolated to varying degrees. A significant majority of respondents felt lonely or isolated to some degree, with 24% and 21% suggesting they felt lonely and isolated frequently (Figure 9).

**Figure 9: Experience of loneliness and social isolation for Chatter & Natter table users**



Only 41% of Chatter & Natter users felt they were in good mental health. When asked about the impact of interacting with the Chatty Café Scheme on their mental health, 97% of respondents felt it had a positive impact (61% felt it had a strong positive impact (Figure 10).

*“It’s not that I’m really lonely, but there are just moments you know when you feel everyone else has stuff going on around you but not really involving you. Lots of my friends have their own lives too, so we don’t always get together like we used to when we were younger. We don’t have the time, or the money. I like talking about what’s happening in the world, always have done, so this [the Chatter & Natter table] is perfect for someone like me. I get to have a chat, and it does help a bit if I’m feeling lonely too.”*

**Figure 10: Impact of Chatter & Natter tables on mental health**

*“Just a few minutes with a warm drink and some friendly people will do anyone a world of good.”*

*“Sitting at the [Chatter & Natter] table compared to sitting on my own definitely has a positive impact. It kind of sets the tone for the rest of the day for me. If I’ve talked with a few people and had some real life contact that kind of sets me up in a more positive mood than if I just sit in the corner staring at my phone while the drink cools down.”*

**76%** of survey respondents said that being involved in the Chatty Café Scheme improved their social, physical and mental health, and therefore were less likely to go to the doctors or access mental health services.

**100%** of Chatter & Natter users from the surveys suggested that they were likely to interact with the Chatty Café Scheme again:

- **65%** of survey respondents said they were very likely to interact with Chatty Café Scheme services in the future.
- **35%** of survey respondents said they were likely to interact with the Chatty Café Scheme services in the future.



*“This is an important part of my routine now when I’m in town. I have to sit down for a bit and this just fits in perfect. I get to chat with some kind souls, have a drink and then carry on.”*

*“As long as they keep having the sign there I’ll keep going. It’s helped me feel part of living around here, like I used to when I worked. I’d missed that connection.”*

**100%** of Chatter & Natter table users from the survey suggested they would recommend the Chatty Café Scheme:

- **91%** of Chatter & Natter table users from the surveys said they very likely to recommend Chatty Café Scheme.
- **9%** of Chatter & Natter table users from the surveys said they were likely to recommend the Chatty Café Scheme.

Chatter & Natter table users made a range of suggestions about how the Chatty Café services could be improved. Comments tended to focus on:

- increased availability of Chatter & Natter table venues

*“I just think there needs to be more of them so I’m not limited to just this one place in town if I want to sit at one of them. There are better cakes in some of the other places.”*

- increased variation in venue

*“I think having them in cafes is great. But it’s nice to have a bit of variation in life. What about having them in outdoor spaces too, or more leisure focused things like at the swimming pool.”*

- increased visibility and advertising

*“There’s only the sign on the table and I think a little poster over by the toilet. We need like big posters and probably something in the local newspaper about it. I know there’s all that online stuff but some of us still like the physical stuff to read and find out about things.”*

- increased resources at the table

*“If they’re trying to support connections in the community, why not have some information about other ways to meet people in the community... leaflets or some kind of directory.”*

Figure 11: Views from Chatter & Natter table beneficiaries



You will never feel lonely at one of our Chatty Café Tables!



*"It took a lot for me to actually go to café. I was a bit nervous about sitting on my own. But when I got there, there was a friendly place, and that was it. I now go every week and would encourage anyone who was feeling a bit down, or lonely, or actually no, you don't have to be lonely to come, if you want to chat, want to be part of something, then I'd say go."*

*"The Chatty Café table has really brought people together. We've worked out that a lot of us have crossed paths over time but never actually talked to each other. Now we've made that connection it's just the beginning."*



*"It might only be an hour or so in the week. But it's a delight. A good cup of coffee and a chat about anything and everything. It takes you away from everything, just for a little bit."*

*"It's helped me break through that boundary of being stuck at home. I have somewhere to go, and every week is different, different conversations, different people. Same cake though!"*



## 6.2 Friendship telephone service beneficiaries

The Covid-19 pandemic meant that in 2020 due to a series of lockdowns, venues such as cafés became closed, removing the possibility for people to use Chatter & Natter tables. Recognising that many people, and potentially more people, were going to experience loneliness and social isolation at home, the Chatty Café Scheme expanded their services to offer a weekly friendship telephone service with volunteers, and virtual Chatty Café sessions via Zoom (explored in section 6.3). The Chatty Café Scheme established relationships with social prescribers in several areas of the UK and has continued to deliver these services since (see Table 2). In 2022 referrals were accepted from social prescribers in Kent, Oldham, Norfolk and Wolverhampton.

As these beneficiaries are referred to the Chatty Café Scheme they are somewhat distinct from the beneficiaries using the tables as the individuals referred have been identified as people who are experiencing social isolation or loneliness and would benefit from the Chatty Café services. Some of these beneficiaries have a range of other physical and mental health issues.

The majority of telephone beneficiaries identified the main reason that they needed the phone calls was that they would benefit from having someone to chat to. For some beneficiaries this was framed in terms of having someone not connected to their daily lives to chat to, while others framed it in terms of having a consistent contact that they could rely on to have a conversation.

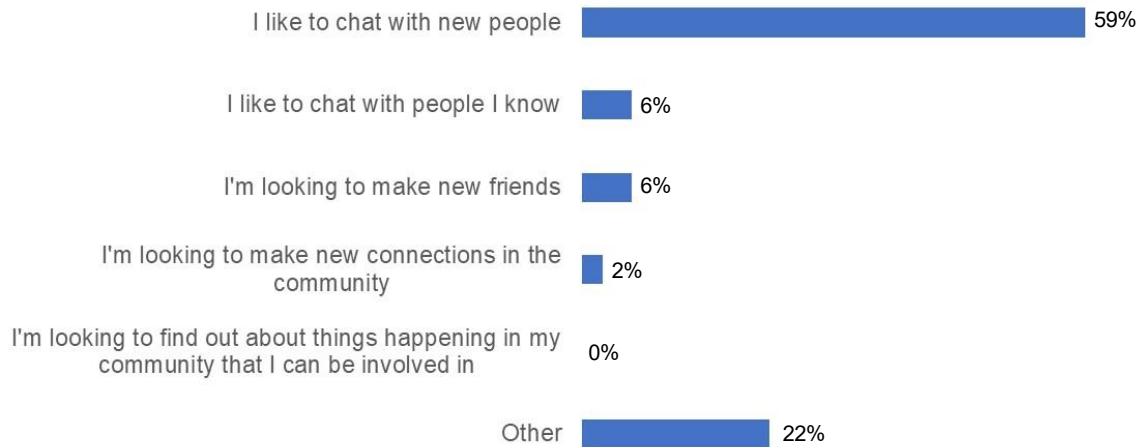
The most common response in the survey was that telephone beneficiaries was ‘I like to chat with new people’ at 59%. However, this somewhat masks the more complex reasons behind this about why they like to chat to new people, and for many of the respondents highlights that they had been referred and didn’t initially know really what it was about.

*“I was referred for this... I’ve got a few issues but it was felt that this kind of thing could be what I needed. To have a reliable opportunity to chat, a bit of company, and consistency really.”*

*“I’ve been having the calls to have that contact point that is just for me. Someone I can talk through the week with, and sometimes just chat about the weather, but that gives me a bit of stability.”*

The most prominent reason for needing the phone calls was that respondents liked to chat to new people, with 91% indicating this was the case (Figure 12).

**Figure 12: Reasons for using the telephone friendship service**



There were a range of positive benefits identified for the majority of telephone service beneficiaries:

- **71%** felt it helped them meet people they like to chat to.
- **64%** of respondents felt it had helped them make new friendships.
- **45%** felt it helped them meet people with similar experiences.
- **95%** felt it brightened their day.
- **93%** felt it made them feel happier.

*“The weekly calls gave me something to look forward to, gave me confidence to make positive changes in my lifestyle, and introduced me to a wonderful person that I now feel privileged to be able to call a friend. One phone call a week may not seem like much but it can make such a difference, it certainly did for me and I hope it does for others who also feel lonely and isolated.”*

*“It’s been wonderful to have these calls. They definitely make me feel better. It’s just that moment when you realise somebody does care enough to check in on you and how you feel. There’s no expectations of me, just an opportunity to talk.”*

There were some respondents identified that the telephone calls have provided some inspiration to connect with other communities and groups too.

*"I found out about ways to look for local groups. I ended up going to a local colouring in for adults session in the library which I wouldn't have ever thought of before."*

*"The volunteer I speak to is a very nice man and we have some lovely conversations each week. It has been lovely to have someone to talk to and I now feel more engaged with life. I have also joined my local leisure centre and have started accessing a local lunch club. I feel more upbeat and positive than previously."*

For one beneficiary it was a starting point which led to the desire to engage in voluntary work themselves:

*"My volunteer is absolutely lovely. She is such a good listener and gives me the opportunity to open up about my feelings which has really helped the grieving process for me. It is so helpful to speak to someone from outside the family who can remain impartial. I have started to go out more and I am enjoying meeting up with friends again. I am also planning to take on some voluntary work myself. I hope the phone calls can continue - the Chatty Cafe has been a lifesaver and I am eternally grateful!"*

Although for many beneficiaries they were not necessarily looking to expand their networks but just to have an opportunity to talk that was consistent in their life.

*"It's just something I look forward to. Even if we change the time or day we have the call I know it's coming and if I get up to bits and pieces in the week then I have the opportunity to talk through them...like my shopping trip. It might sound simple but it helps me process things that happen to me during the week."*

*"It's helped me so much. There are some days I don't really talk to anyone at all. Perhaps the lady in the market if I'm out to get my shopping. It's been a great things for me... I look forward to the call, we talk about all sorts, but it's just that opportunity to talk with someone else... something that I miss from having a full house really."*

As seen with the Chatter & Natter tables the impact on experiences of loneliness and social isolation was positive for telephone service beneficiaries too:

- **100%** said being involved in the Chatty Café Scheme made them feel less lonely (78% selected the option to say that they felt lonely).
- **100%** said being involved in the Chatty Café Scheme made them feel less isolated (60% selected the option to say that they felt isolated from their friends).

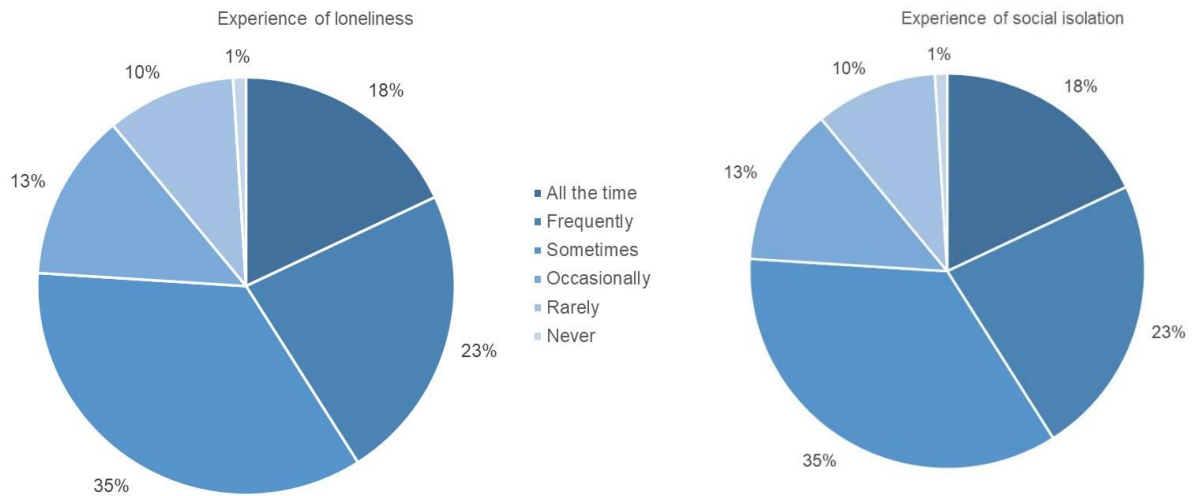
There was a clear response from beneficiaries of the telephone service that there was a positive impact on how it made them feel in terms of being lonely and isolated.

*“The loneliness goes in waves you know. But I have the call and that really helps just give me that nudge that I’m managing things, and actually it’s a reminder that there are people out there. It’s not just me here in the world.”*

*“Oh it’s definitely helped me. It’s helped just having someone to talk through things without any judgement about me being anxious about stuff. Just talking about everyday things like the weather or whatever ridiculous things are happening in the news. It gives me that opportunity to feel connected to the world like I would if I had gone down the pub when I was younger. Yes, it only talking with one person, but it’s the same idea.”*

Respondents were asked how often they felt lonely. Compared to the Chatter & Natter Tables, there was a higher proportion who felt lonely all the time and on a more regular basis, with 18% of respondents identifying they felt like this all the time (Figure 13). Given the telephone beneficiaries are referred due to experience of social isolation or loneliness, this is not surprising.

**Figure 13: Experience of loneliness and social isolation for telephone friendship service beneficiaries**



In terms of how this activity affected their confidence in engaging with others:

- **80%** felt it made them more confident in talking to others.
- **72%** felt it made them more confident to join other groups in the future.

Beneficiaries highlighted how the calls provided them with the opportunity for human connection, but also boosted their confidence in talking with others.

*“You kinda get used to it you know. Not talking a lot. Having the calls reminded me that it sometimes it’s nice to talk with another human you know.”*

*“Definitely the calls have given me some confidence. When you’re feeling down it absorbs you a bit, and chatting about things with [volunteer] made me realise that I can do this. I now stay for the drinks after the church service and talk with some of the other ladies. I used to just go home because that’s what I was used to doing.”*

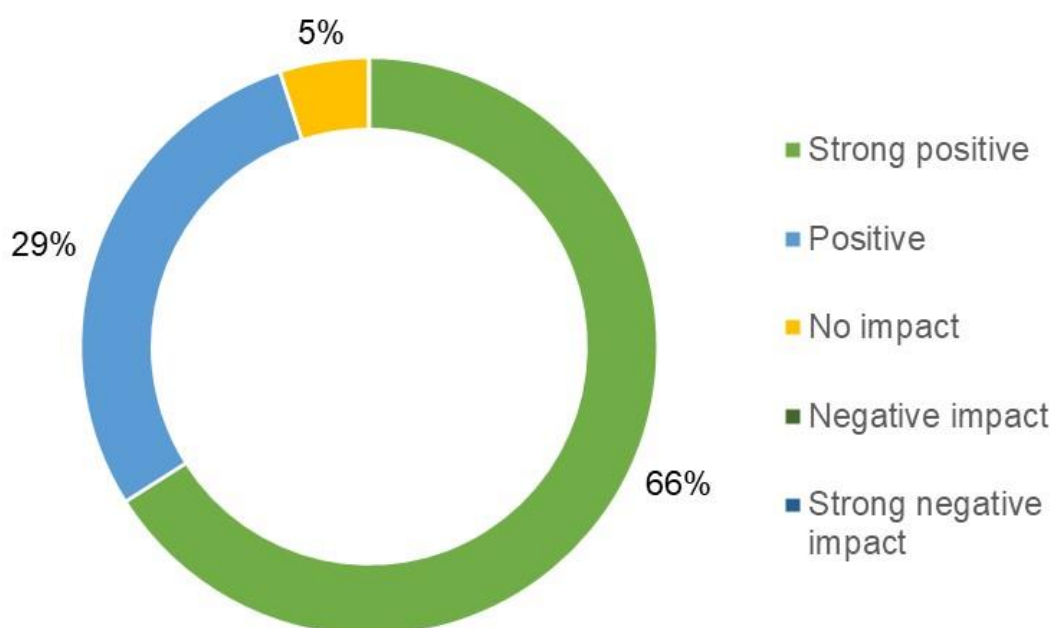


*“My chats with [volunteer] have helped me to rebuild my confidence and communication skills and I have started to feel more positive as a result. I always look forward to my weekly chat and have also started going out more frequently - recently I have been meeting up with some friends which means I am feeling much better overall. I find the service provided by Chatty Café really beneficial. I feel happy for the first time in quite a while.”*

*“I have been feeling more positive in recent weeks and the phone calls have helped me to feel this way. It's lovely to be able to talk about personal things that I wouldn't always like to share with my family. It's quite liberating and my volunteer is a really nice man. I'm starting to go out and about more now so things are improving for me overall.”*

Only 28% of telephone friendship service beneficiaries felt they were in good mental health. When asked about the impact of interacting with the Chatty Café Scheme on their mental health, 95% of respondents felt it had a positive impact (Figure 14).

**Figure 14: Impact of telephone friendship service on beneficiaries**



*“It’s really helped. I have that call and it takes me right away from everything, and sets me back onto that positive mindset. I can get quite down but usually [volunteer] lets me talk through things and then we talk about the cricket and its out my system and we talk about the win, and that makes me happy. ...just that opportunity to talk is what’s been great.”*

*“It’s been so important for me. I have the opportunity to just talk, but without feeling like I’m at some kind of assessment or appointment. Just a person having a chat with another. Mentally this has been really helpful because I spend a lot of my time being assessed and not just being understood as a regular person wanting to talk with others like everyone else.”*

*“I’ve actually reduced my anxiety medicine since having the calls. I think before. And [volunteer] is such a great listener, there’s no pressure.”*

**72%** of respondents indicated that being involved in the Chatty Café Scheme has improved their social, physical and mental health, and therefore people were less likely to go to the doctor’s or access other mental health services.

For many of the telephone beneficiaries the phone calls were part of the medical and mental health services they were accessing, but there was still recognition that they didn’t need to ask for more during the period of the phone calls.

*“I’ve got so many problems but it’s the loneliness that was like the final straw. Then I was matched with [volunteer] and it’s been like a light went on. Because it never felt like I was being treated differently. It’s just a chat, like I would have had when I was at work with a colleague or at the café.”*

*“My phone conversations with my volunteer are very helpful and positive, I struggle with depression and anxiety and PTSD and find many things stressful. Talking things through each week helps to keep me calm.”*

The majority of beneficiaries from the telephone service were likely to interact with Chatty Café services in the future:

- **79%** said they were very likely to interact with the Chatty Café Scheme services in the future.
- **18%** said they were likely to interact with the Chatty Café Scheme services in the future.
- **3%** they were very unlikely to interact with the Chatty Café Scheme services in the future.

There was recognition from the telephone beneficiaries in the interviews that the calls were of limited duration, so some were not sure if they would interact with the Scheme again because of that reason. Some were keen to explore other options such as the tables, but for many this wasn't an option because of mobility or transport issues, or issues of anxiety which meant the telephone service was the most suitable for their needs.

*"I think the table thing is great for people who need it, but it's just not for me. It would be too draining to get to the place and then have to go through the uncertainty of who I was going to talk to!"*

*"My mobility isn't likely to change and I'm not sure I could cope with chatting in a group like that. I like having just the one person to talk to."*

*"I have multiple health conditions including COPD, vascular dementia, anxiety and depression and find it very difficult to access the community and engage meaningfully with other people. I can be challenging to communicate with due to my complex needs and I am very grateful to my volunteer who is very kind and always listens to me. I look forward to the social interaction every week."*

The majority of telephone beneficiaries (95%) were likely to recommend Chatty Café Scheme services.

One respondent who said they were unlikely to recommend the Chatty Café Scheme services made the following comment:

*"I found the call being anonymous very uncomfortable as one way. Also be better for someone more suited to my age group."*

There were also some comments from volunteers about beneficiaries they had been matched with where the calls did not carry on after a couple of weeks. Reasons for this were varied. Some volunteers thought the beneficiary didn't really want the phone calls, but felt they had to do it because they had been referred, while others thought this wasn't perhaps the best method for them.

*“The lad had a pretty active life, work, family, friends so to speak. He acknowledged that he suffered with depression a bit, but that his way to work it out was to play games. I couldn’t really relate with him on this, and in the end he said he didn’t need the calls anymore. He was happy with his gaming friends. He said thanks and appreciated the call but said he’d rather not keep going with it.”*

*“I think the lady had a lot of issues but also a really busy life. She had responsibilities and she would never make time for the calls. And she said outright that she didn’t want to do it, it wasn’t personal, it just wasn’t going to help her.”*

When considering improvements that could be made in the interviews telephone beneficiaries focused on the way that they were matched with volunteers, and also the limit for conversations. A few beneficiaries commented they would have liked to have been more involved with the matching process so that they could try and have a volunteer with similar interests.

*“You get given someone. It would be nice if we could say I’d like to talk to someone you know who likes gardening or something like that. It would give me the confidence to know that we might be able to start with that.”*

*“I understand why they have to limit the weeks but it’s hard. You feel like you’ve made a friend and then you know it’s going to have to stop. It kind of makes you feel what’s the point. [volunteer] is just going to disappear in a few weeks. If I’m going to make a connection with someone it’s a bit unnatural to then cut them off... but some more flexibility perhaps, the option to keep in touch if both people wanted to. I’m not sure, but something so you don’t feel like you’re going to lose a friend at the end.”*

Few comments were made by telephone service beneficiaries about how the Chatty Café Scheme could improve their services, although the following suggestions were made in the survey:

- More availability for telephone call time slots, and the option for longer or more frequent calls:

*“Definitely need the option to have the calls more frequently. It’s a long time between calls. I suppose gives me lots to talk about when I get there, but really I could do with more regular calls.”*

*“I think I need it more really. I need a more regular outlet and the opportunity to be able to talk more frequently I think would be really good, for me anyway.”*

- Offer more advice on where to look for help for issues with loneliness/social isolation as well as other issues such as anxiety, depression:

*“She was great to chat to, but didn’t really offer any advice about things. I could do with someone who can give more guidance about these things, perhaps other services I can try, or help I can get.”*

- More resources for local activities to complement the phone calls:

*“It would be good if we had someone who was local to me, then they’d know about other ways for me get out a bit, ways for me to try and get out of the house. It’s a bit difficult when you’re at opposite ends of the country.”*

- Adverts to make it clear the telephone service is only available in some areas of the country. It’s not clear that it’s limited unlike the tables which are nationwide:

*“I kept seeing things on the website for these calls but it’s not clear you can’t get it everywhere. Why have a service and advertise it if it’s only in a couple of places?”*

Figure 15: Views from the telephone friendship service beneficiaries



*"I look forward to the calls so much. The calls are my outlet, someone to talk to and get things off my chest."*

*"The phone calls every week have made me feel less lonely and it lifts my spirits ...It's good to have something to look forward to and someone who I can share my thoughts and feelings with. ... Some days I feel so lonely and having a weekly chat can make such a difference to my day."*



Chatter & Natter Weekly Calls



*"I am enjoying my chats very much. I still feel anxious and depressed at times and often experience confusion and have conflicting emotions about how I feel about my life but the phone calls help me to discuss my emotions in more depth. It is good to feel listened to and to know I will have a chat on a regular basis."*

*"It is really good to have someone to chat to whilst I have been recuperating from my stroke. It has been a lonely time for me and being stuck in bed means I can't do much, so these phone calls mean a lot to me. It makes me feel less lonely and he makes me smile and laugh-I don't feel so alone when we chat."*





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### Chatter & Natter Weekly Calls



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### 6.3 Virtual Chatty Café (Zoom) session beneficiaries

The virtual Chatty Café sessions held on Zoom were established in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic. The creation of these online sessions allowed people to still communicate with others at a time when physical contact was restricted and there were lockdown periods when venues were closed, or were limited by social distancing regulations. These sessions are held for 30 minutes, several times a week and led by one of the Chatty Café Scheme staff. The sessions have been popular and continued after physical restrictions and social distancing was lifted as it was felt this provided an alternative for people to access the Chatty Café Scheme services who may not be able to access the Chatter & Natter tables in venues.

The survey revealed the most prominent reason for needing the virtual Chatty Café sessions was that respondents liked to chat to new people, with 75% indicating this was the case. There were also some who suggested they liked to chat with people they knew (14%), while others were looking to make new friends (22%) or new connections in the community (27%) or find out about new things they could be involved in (25%).

*“It gives me someone to talk to during the day. Knowing I have that session is something to look forward to.”*

*“To have someone to talk to. Not bothered about the topic.”*

Interviews revealed that reasons for engagement in the online sessions, rather than physical ones were often more complex, with many citing issues of ability to fit the session in their schedules, physical restrictions on accessing cafés, or issues of anxiety which made talking with people easier online.

*“I work full time, online, so I don’t have time to go out during the day to go to one of the tables. This really works for me because I can just use my break and join the call.”*

*“I suffer with a lot of anxiety issues, alongside a few health issues too. I don’t think I’d ever have the confidence to go to one of the coffee shops. But this has been a lifesaver. I can just log on, and if I’m having a bad day I don’t have to use the camera, if I’m having a better one then I can.”*



A repeated comment was about the ease of access, with no financial or physical barrier to access the service:

*“It’s just so easy, as long as you’ve got a phone or a computer, which let’s face it, everyone has these days, because that’s how the world works. I don’t have to go and pay for a tea somewhere I just make it beforehand and then rock up at the right time.”*

*“With all the cost increases I don’t think I could afford a coffee each week, when you add it to the bus fare, so this is perfect for me.”*

Some respondents highlighted they had joined other communities as a result of attending virtual Chatty Café sessions, demonstrating the potential for Chatty Café to facilitate wider connections for its beneficiaries. Some of the groups joined by participants included other online groups such as Facebook groups, WhatsApp groups or forums.

- **57%** felt that it helped them make new friendships.
- **95%** agreed it helped them meet people they liked to chat to.
- **71%** felt it helped them meet people with similar experiences
- **98%** felt it had brightened their day.
- **95%** felt it made them feel happier.
- **83%** felt it made them more confident in talking to others.
- **76%** felt it made them more confident to join other groups in the future.

*“I found out about a bunch of Facebook groups that I didn’t know about. I know it’s more online stuff, but I’ve ended up having all sorts of conversations with people all over the place because of that.”*

*“I love talking about the soaps [TV shows] and someone mentioned a group where people just do that, so I joined, and that’s great.”*

As seen with the Chatter & Natter tables, and weekly telephone friendship calls, the impact on experiences of loneliness and social isolation was positive for the virtual Chatty Café sessions too:

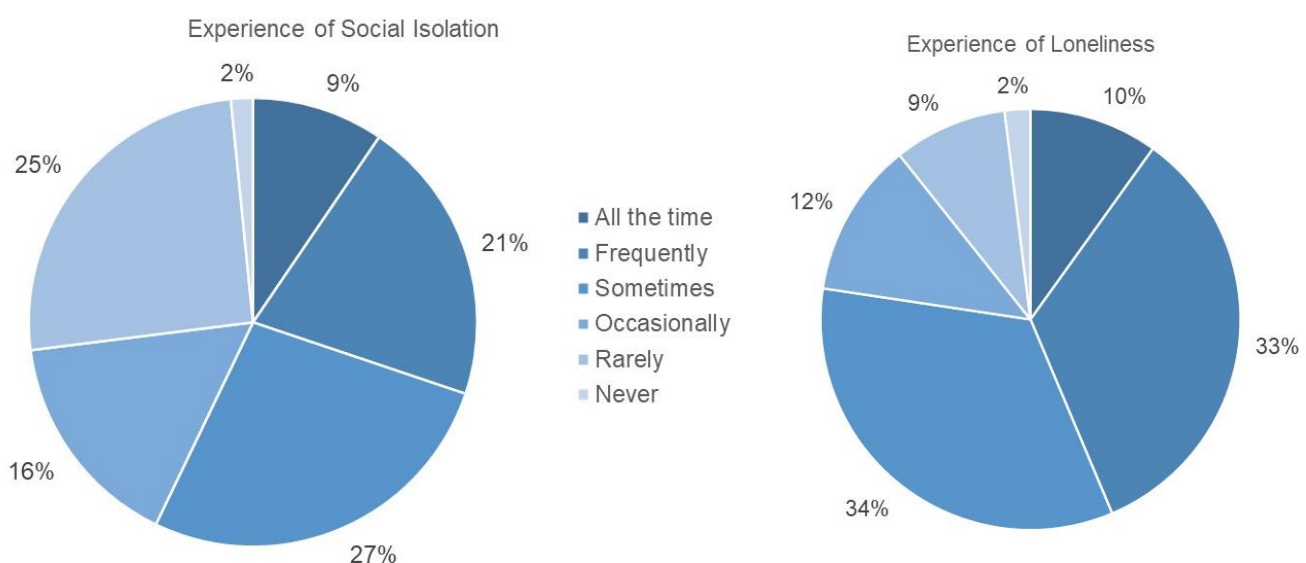
- **97%** said being involved in the Chatty Café Scheme made them feel less lonely (77% selected the option to say that they felt lonely).
- **98%** said being involved in the Chatty Café Scheme made them feel less isolated (64% selected the option to say that they felt isolated from their friends).

*“The Zoom calls are amazing. I don’t know what I’d do without them. I struggle with so many things and I totally forget about them while I’m in the call. There are all sorts of people there too. I’d never meet a group like that in real life. It just wouldn’t happen.”*

*“It’s amazing that I can just pick up the phone and have a chat with a bunch of people. I live on my own, and it’s helped me feel like I’m not always on my own you know.”*

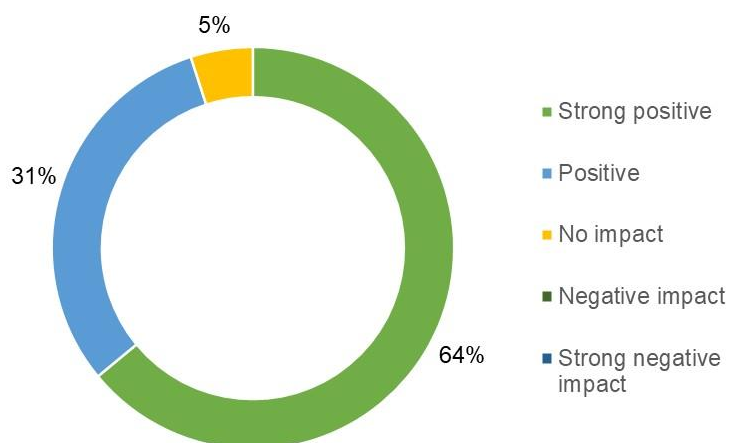
Respondents were asked how often they felt lonely. Compared to the Chatter & Natter tables, there was a higher proportion who felt lonely all the time and on a more regular basis (Figure 16).

**Figure 16: Experience of loneliness and social isolation for virtual Chatty Café beneficiaries**



Only 36% of Chatty Café (Zoom session) beneficiaries felt they were in good mental health. When asked about the impact of interacting with the Chatty Café Scheme on their mental health, 95% of respondents felt it had a positive impact (Figure 17):

**Figure 17: Impact of Chatty Café Zoom sessions on the mental health of beneficiaries**



*“Sometimes it’s the best part of my week. It makes me feel normal. Just a chat with a few people and all sorts, it really takes you away from it all for a bit.”*

*“I’m really grateful for these sessions. Whenever I go on one of the calls it just makes the rest of the afternoon so much easier. I’ve talked with a few people and usually I’ve laughed at some point, and that just provides the lighter tone for the afternoon.”*

**81%** felt that being involved in the Chatty Café Scheme has improved their social, physical and mental health and therefore were less likely to go to the doctors’ or access other mental health services.

This was supported by some of the interviews with Zoom participants:

*“Well I don’t feel lonely because I’ve always got people to talk to now. I guess if I didn’t have that I could get more depressed again which could lead me to have to go to the doctor to try and get some help.”*

*“I used to be a Mental Health First aider myself. I trained after recovering from all sorts, I know there are places you can go to call to get support or to try and make changes if you need them, but really this is all I need these days. It’s a bit like a reset button for my week.”*

**97%** of beneficiaries from the virtual Chatty Café (Zoom) sessions were likely to interact with Chatty Café services in the future.

- **68%** said they were very likely to interact with the Chatty Café Scheme in the future.
- **29%** said they were likely to interact with the Chatty Café Scheme in the future.
- **2%** said they were neither likely or unlikely to interact with the Chatty Café Scheme in the future.
- **1%** said they were very unlikely to interact with the Chatty Café Scheme in the future.

*“As long as they keep the calls going then I’ll be there.”*

*“I’d like to keep attending every week if I can. Sometimes the time doesn’t work for me. But if I don’t have anything else on then I definitely intend to be back.”*

**98%** of virtual Chatty Café beneficiaries would recommend Chatty Café Scheme services.

- **72%** said they would be very likely to recommend Chatty Café services in the future.
- **26%** said they would be likely to recommend Chatty Café services in the future.

*“I’ve already recommended it to quite a few people. Whenever I do catch up with friends or family which to be honest isn’t very often I usually tell them about it because it’s been so important for me.”*

*“It’s so helpful and you can see it’s helping other people too. You get a screen full of smiles sometimes and that has got to be good for the soul so I would definitely recommend it to people who just want to feel that connection to other people in the world.”*

There were some suggestions for how the Chatty Café Scheme could improve the online Chatty Café (Zoom) service, including:

- Increased availability for Zoom sessions, and the possibility of an all-day drop-in service, although it was recognised that an all-day session would require a lot of time from a volunteer or staff member.

*“It would be great it was a bit more often, and on different times, particularly the evening when the loneliness can set in, particularly when it’s dark.”*

- Providing more information about other Chatty Café Scheme services (such as the Chatter & Natter table), and about how to volunteer.

*“It would be great to hear more about ways to volunteer with the Chatty Café Scheme. When I’ve built up the confidence I want to do it.”*

- A way to connect with people outside of the session if people were interested. There were mentions of the potential for an online discussion board for those that are involved in the Zoom sessions to connect when not in the session.

*“We only get a few minutes talking to people in these calls, but sometimes you might want to carry on the conversation...or let other people get involved. If there could be some kind of website where we could keep in touch that would be great.”*

- There was also a suggestion around the framing of the Chatty Café Scheme services to be focused around belonging rather than loneliness.

*“Well this sounds nitpicky after praising the Scheme to the skies, but for the purposes of potential service users I would use language that stresses fun and belonging, rather than the notion of interacting with other lonely people which might not sound so fun. I appreciate for funding purposes there has to be a strong focus on reducing loneliness and psychosomatic illness though. But thanks for creating a great resource perfect for people like myself living with a mental health diagnosis and also social anxiety.”*

Figure 18: Views from Zoom session beneficiaries

**Join us for the Zoom Chatty Cafe**

*"The joy of technology. The Zoom sessions have been so important for me. A community of people that I can meet through my phone."*

*"It's an important part of my routine. I get myself ready with a cup of tea and a sandwich. I might not be able to go to a café but I can make it feel like one at home."*

**Who fancies a chat on zoom?**

*"The Zoom sessions are for anyone and that's what I love about it. I've now talked to people from all walks of life. This is so different from people I might talk to usually."*

*"There's no expectation with it. You just join and chat to who's there. You can participate as much as you like, or just be there and smile. I've smiled a lot more since joining the Zoom sessions".*

The Chatty Café Scheme logo is visible in the bottom right corner of the bottom-right panel.

*"I can just log in, it's no hassle. I don't have to worry about transport, or having to get ready. Sometimes it's too draining for me to get out so this is spot on."*



*"It might only be a short time, but it's a little bright spot in the day. It's always interesting hearing from different people. I would never have got to talk to people from that many places any other way."*

*"The Chatty Café has really helped with my confidence. It's given me practice at talking to people I don't know and makes me feel like there are always people out there, it's not only me here."*



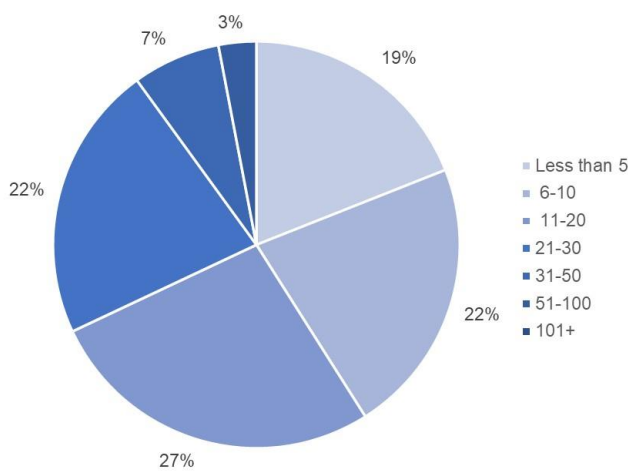
*The Chatty Café sessions have been a life saver. I've been stuck at home a lot I wanted to meet new people but I suffer with really bad anxiety, but these sessions I can just join and there isn't time for me to get worked up about going, because I just log on."*

## 7. Views from Chatter & Natter table venues

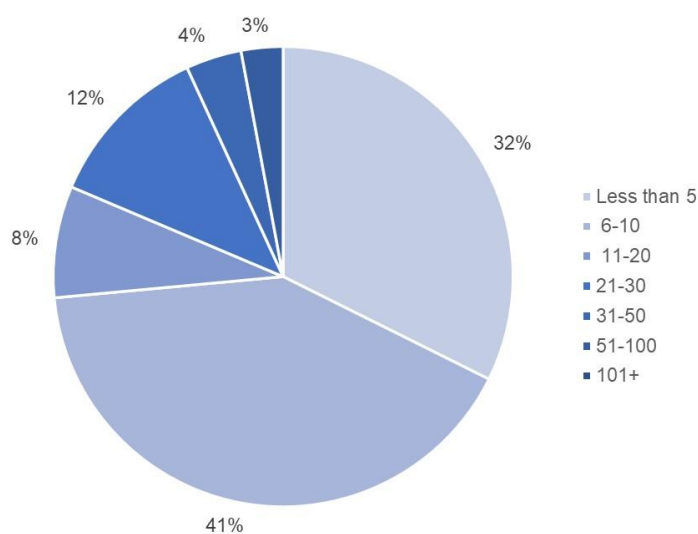
Venues that host the Chatter & Natter tables are a vital part of the Chatty Café Scheme. While this research aims to understand the impact of the services on the beneficiaries, it was felt to be important to understand how the venues view their participation and any suggestions they may have for improvements in the future.

The patterns for the number of people who sit at the Chatter & Natter table share some similarities between weekdays and the weekend (Figures 19 and 20).

**Figure 19: The estimated number of people sitting at a Chatter & Natter table during a weekday**



**Figure 20: The estimated number of people sitting at a Chatter & Natter table during the weekend**



There is some variation in the use of Chatter & Natter tables between the weekend and during the week, although the capacity for the number of people to sit at these



tables depends on their size, the overall size of the venue and the footfall of the venue more generally. While these are broad generalisations, it is useful to note that for most venues there are a significant amount of people using the Chatter & Natter tables. These are however, based on estimates and it is likely there are significant fluctuations across the days of the week, but also times of day. The research has highlighted that different venues engage with the Chatty Café Scheme in different ways. Some opt for a designated table used all the time, others have time slots, and some have a table host (which may be a member of staff or a volunteer).

Venues were also asked about how often they allocated a Chatter & Natter table, recognising that it might not be feasible for all venues to allocate a table at all times.

64% of venues allocated a Chatter & Natter table every day. Reasons for this centred around people knowing that this was always an option and that they wanted to always allow space for chatting. Venues commented that they felt it was important to always have a table available for consistency.

*“We put the sign on the table in the corner that’s by the window so if people were thinking of coming they could see if people were already sitting there. If we moved it around or had it at the back they might be put off if they didn’t know people were there.”*

*“If people are going to use it, it would discourage them if we just had it there sometimes and not others.”*

Those venues that didn’t allocate it every day provided reasons such as not being open every day, and others that they only provided the table during working hours.

*“After 3-ish we get really busy and we need the space. We noticed sometimes people would sit at the table and put the sign down or move it to another table as they just wanted to sit with their group. It’s difficult, we kind of want to keep it as the Chatter & Natter table but we don’t want to put other customers off either... So we just decided to put it out from 10-ish until around 2 which seems to work.”*

*“We actually don’t have the Chatter and Natter sign out on a weekend as this is one of our busiest days and we actually need the turnover of customers on the tables to make ends meet. We also have a no laptop policy at the weekend too.”*

There are some venues that will have a dedicated table most of the time, they may just put the sign there and not necessarily actively promote the Scheme or set up particular times for it to be used. Conversely, there are other venues that will actively promote the use of Chatter & Natter tables at particular times. This is designed to encourage people as they know the people are likely to be sitting at the table at this time.

Figure 21: Chatter & Natter table adverts



The Imperial Arms Bistro accessed via the garden of the Imperial Arms Pub is now a Chatty Café on Tuesdays and Thursdays from Midday till 3pm.

It is hosted by volunteers and is somewhere to come and make new friends or just have some friendly company.

Tea and Coffee will be provided free of charge and if you wanted to eat, there will be options of sandwiches and a meal deal of £12.95 for a main and a drink.

This is open to anyone of all ages

**Where:** The Imperial Arms Bistro (accessed via the garden of the Imperial Arms Pub), 1 Old Hill, Chislehurst BR7 5LZ

**When:** Tuesdays and Thursdays from Midday - 3pm



Having a chat can brighten someone's day  
[www.thechattycafescheme.co.uk](http://www.thechattycafescheme.co.uk)

## CHATTY TUESDAY

**WE HAVE A CHATTER & NATTER TABLE...**

**Tuesday Afternoons 3-5pm**

**Look for the table with the yellow sign, take a seat, stay 5 minutes or longer**

The Chatty Cafe Scheme: Join a Chatter & Natter table! We believe having a chat can brighten your day and someone else's. A Chatter & Natter table creates a space for people of all ages, and walks of life to sit & talk to each other. Stay for 5 minutes or longer.

**'Our mission is to encourage human interaction and conversation with the aim of connecting communities'**



For these venues there was a feeling from the staff that this was the most effective way for the Scheme to be successful.

The venues with a specified time for a Chatty Café session often had an associated Chatty Café volunteer host who would be at the venue for the duration of the session. These volunteers have been instrumental in the success of some Chatter & Natter table venues. The volunteer will usually be involved in advertising the Scheme and encouraging people to attend, through social media and local networks, as suggested in the 12-week plan provided by the Chatty Café Scheme.

Venues were very positive about the role of the volunteer host for encouraging people to visit the Chatter & Natter table.

*"[The volunteer] has really driven this to what it is today. We get so many people coming because he posts on Facebook about the table times, engaging people on there so they might come along. But there are now little flyers in lots of the local businesses to get as many people to know about it as possible...It's really created a community here and that's all down to [the volunteer]."*

*"Because people can see someone sitting there I think that encourages them to join in. They don't have to be the person sitting there on their own."*

Many venues were very keen to have a volunteer host for their venue as they felt it would make the Scheme more successful.

*"If we could get someone to publicise a particular time and kind of run that table that would be great... We don't have time... And hopefully they'd get something from doing that too."*

*"Having a volunteer to get more people to visit [the venue] to be part of the Chatty Café Scheme, that would be amazing. We see people sometimes sit at the table, but if you were a lonely person you probably wouldn't just wander into a café if no one was sitting there, it might make you feel worse... If there's a friendly face already there, people might come in."*

There was also a benefit for venues if people were attending and the session was popular.

*"It's become quite popular which means we do get a fair few more people during that couple of hours than we would have in the past. It was definitely not our motive to do this but it's been good for us too... It's always good to see people filling up the place you know, and it helps us too at a time when every penny really makes a difference."*

*"Really it's provided us with something different that some of the other places don't have yet. We didn't sign up to benefit from doing this, we wanted to do something positive for the community, but we have noticed a bit of an increase in people during those times we have the Chatty table."*

Profit was not the motivator for any of the venues that were interviewed, instead it was a motivation to do something positive for the community. There were even some venues that tried to get funding from local councils to be able to provide some free refreshments for people, or provided a discount by choice for those attending the Chatty Café session. It was recognised that there may need to be incentives to encourage people to make the decision to visit a Chatter & Natter table, particularly at a time when there is a cost-of-living crisis.

Cafés and coffee shops are often seen as social hubs in society, as places to meet and gather for those with common interests. Some venues host a range of different groups or activities with the Chatty Café Scheme being one of these. This very much depends on the venue location, local customer base and motivations of the venue management. For around 20% of the venues that responded to the survey the Chatty Café Scheme is the only community group that takes place in the venue. But for many venues this was one of several activities or groups taking place. Other common community activities included: creative community groups, health community groups, music community groups and social community groups. Many of the venues advertised different community activities.

*“We have a few different groups that use our spaces. There’s a reading group that come in on Thursday afternoons. We didn’t set that up, they asked if was OK. And now we advertise it on a board alongside other local adverts for other activities in the area.”*

*“Some of the groups that come in aren’t formal or anything but we know that the local allotment gardeners have meet-ups here, usually mid-week, but they set that up, we just realised it was happening.”*

Furthermore, many of venues identified that they regularly saw customers from the Chatter & Natter tables at other community groups. It was felt that being involved in the Chatty Café Scheme had led them to other things.

*“We know that there’s now a few of the regulars that have joined a local group at the community centre that organises game afternoons and so on. I think a few of them also got together and went on one of those coach trips.”*

*“Some of the people that met on the table now seem to be around for other things too. There’s a craft group up at the library, and some of them pop in for a drink and chat beforehand now, and they found out about that through the table conversations.”*

Nearly all venues thought all cafés/coffee shops should have a Chatter & Natter table. This was felt to be important to *‘encourage people to talk to each other’* and to ensure that *‘people know there is an option anywhere they go’* as well as issues related to raising visibility of the Scheme: *‘so it makes it more widely available and more known for others to be comfortable to actually go and sit at one’*.

There were respondents that recognised not all venues would be suitable, but also that the customer base of the venue would also be an important factor on how whether a venue should host a Chatter & Natter table:

*“I think it depends on the environment and atmosphere. Also, it works better when you have a few core customers who are happy to chat. We run coffee morning and friendship cafés so Chatter & Natter signs help visitors feel welcome to join and chat.”*

*“It’s fine for us we have the space, I don’t think we’d ever max out fitting people who wanted to come to the Chatty table, but there are some places where you’d really struggle for space and some places aren’t your sit and chat type of coffee shops really.”*

The majority of venues felt that Chatter & Natter tables were important and were having an important impact on the people in their local community:

- **92%** of venues feel that Chatter & Natter tables are an important part of their venue.
- **98%** of venues feel that Chatter & Natter tables are encouraging community spirit.
- **98%** of venues feel that Chatter & Natter tables are reducing loneliness and social isolation.

*“It must be doing something right because people keep coming back.”*

*“It’s clearly brought people together, not always the same people, but there is clearly a group that now see themselves as the Chatter & Natter group... That probably wouldn’t have existed without Chatty Café.”*

Venues were asked if the public expect to be able to find a Chatty Café venue in every large town or village across England. The response was quite mixed. 62% of venues felt that this was an expectation while around 24% did not, and 14% weren’t sure.

There were venues that highlighted that despite the growth in the Scheme and a raised profile from advertising and participation in the One Million Minutes ITV campaign, many people just don't know about it so that expectation wouldn't be there. It was felt that for this to become an expectation there needs to have a much more prominent presence in the public sphere.

*"People need to know about it first I guess. It's a great idea. But there are still loads of people that don't know about it."*

*"I think if you asked people that knew about the Scheme they would say definitely they should be everywhere and not just in towns and villages, have them everywhere."*

It was also acknowledged that not all venues are suitable, and that the expectation should probably go beyond just cafés.

*"I think people realise you can't have these everywhere. Like there's no room to do it effectively in [name of venue], it's just too small...But you could also have them in different bigger places. It would be a nice idea to have them anywhere and everywhere."*

*"Coffee shops are definitely good places for the Scheme if there is enough space but there are loads of places where this could work... Anywhere where people would naturally get together, libraries, community centres, church rooms, and I bet some kids at schools and universities might benefit too."*

Venues were asked if there was anything else the Chatty Café Scheme could do to support their business in relation to the Chatter & Natter tables. While the majority of responses did not feel there was anything else needed, some businesses made suggestions relating to resources for advertising and access to information about the Scheme and provision of more resources for ideas to engage people with the table and Scheme in different ways. Many venues were also very keen to investigate the possibility of getting a volunteer host for their venue.

*“After the initial bits and pieces, it would be good to have updated materials every now and again.”*

*“I’d definitely like to explore the idea of a volunteer host. It might mean we can make a bit more of an impact and be a bit less ad hoc with how it’s used... Although I suppose that’s part of the beauty of it, you never know if there’s going to be someone there that could have a natter with.”*

Some respondents identified the need for provision of additional information/content that could be used on social media, and additional advertising material more generally. This linked to one response which highlighted there needed to be more public awareness of the Scheme as it ‘*seems a bit in the shadows*’.

In the initial survey venues highlighted a more customer-friendly website would be more useful, although this was not highlighted as an issue in the second round of surveys. There have been several updates and changes to the website which mean there is a very accessible map of venues, for example.

Venues were often keen to be able to signpost information for people that needed related to support services in the local community, but also other social opportunities in the local area.

*“I’m not sure if this is something they could do, but some sort of ideas or activities board online for venues which other local places could post links to things we could then give to our host to use with people, or we could stick up on the wall.”*

*“I think if people are coming here because they are lonely and have other health issues, then maybe we could have some kind of information for things locally that they could consider other support services and so on.”*

Venues recognised that this would be difficult to coordinate at a national level and was potentially something that volunteer hosts might be able to do, essentially become local knowledge hubs.

Some venues, particularly those that were new to the Scheme were keen to learn more about how successful venues run their Chatter & Natter tables. The Chatty Café Scheme have already been trying to address this as they have run information sessions for venues and volunteer hosts online via Zoom where volunteer hosts

share their experiences and discuss with participant venues how they could run the Chatter & Natter tables.

One venue suggested that it could be useful to '*encourage businesses to see how other places are doing it successfully and invite them to see it in action*'. This was echoed by other venues who were keen to think a bit more about how the Scheme could really have an impact on their local community.



## 8. View from the volunteers

Volunteers are a fundamental part of the Chatty Café Scheme, as telephone volunteers to call people for weekly chats and as table hosts at Chatter & Natter table venues.

There were a variety of ways people found out about the Chatty Café Scheme including advertising, in particular through social media, as well as through friends and through TV coverage on ITV's Good Morning Britain as part of the One Million Minutes campaign. There were also some volunteers who reported they were previously beneficiaries (Chatter & Natter tables, Zoom sessions and friendship calls) of the Chatty Café Scheme and felt they could become volunteers as a result of that experience.

*“Chatty Café really helped me, and I realised I have the time then maybe I can support some other people too.”*

*“It’s about paying it back. People need other people. And it was being part of the Chatty Café Scheme that it can be really the simple thing of just talking to people about everyday things that can help. Now I get to talk to people, which hopefully helps them, but also helps me too.”*

The majority of volunteers had been involved in the Chatty Café Scheme for a relatively short period of time between 1-6 months (43%) and some (10%) less than one month. It will be important to consider the longer-term impact on volunteers once the services have been running for a longer period of time.

All volunteers who engaged with Chatty Café Scheme services prior to volunteering agreed that being involved in Chatty Café services brightened their day, made them feel happier and less isolated.

The motivations for becoming a volunteer with the Chatty Café Scheme included:

- Enjoying talking with people
- Enjoying helping people
- Wanting to feel more connected with the local community.
- Wanting to use their time to do something positive.
- To contribute to society
- To support their own wellbeing

When asked how volunteering makes them feel, some responses included:

*“It’s great for me as I get to feel like I’m doing something positive with my day. I tend to have my call in the morning so on those days I already feel like it’s a great start.”*

*“It makes me feel like I’m helping someone even for a friendly chat.”*

*“It’s gives me that sense that I’m still contributing to society. I used to work in healthcare. Caring for people is what I’ve always done. And now I don’t work, this is just a different way for me to show that I care. But that makes me feel like I’m useful too... I get a lot of satisfaction from that.”*

*“It’s fantastic. It’s so nice to be able to connect with other people and try and make a difference to them.”*

Reflecting on their experiences with the Chatty Café Scheme many volunteers recognised the impact it had on their own lives as well as recognising the potential to support others:

- **70%** felt it helped them meet people they like to chat to.
- **18%** felt it helped them meet people with similar experiences
- **88%** felt it brightened their day.
- **92%** felt it made them happier.
- **54%** felt it made them more confident.

*“With one of the people I called we found a really shared love for gardening so we would always start our chats about how our seeds were getting on and things like that. But this was great for me as in my family I’m the only one that’s really into it... And that shared love for the gardening allowed us to then talk about other things. I also got great tips for dealing with slugs!”*

*“I do volunteer work because it makes me happier. I live alone these days, but I have great networks through my voluntary activities. It’s these things that motivate me these days.”*

*“What I like about it is that I can end up talking to people who are in totally different places, physically and figuratively. I’ve had a few people to call now and they’ve all been totally different with different needs. And that’s an exciting challenge for me.”*

The Chatty Café Scheme volunteers are an important part of how the Scheme operates and while it is good that the Scheme has attracted new volunteers over recent years, it is important that some volunteers remain with the Scheme over time, in order to keep their skills within the Scheme. The majority of volunteers were keen to continue their activities and would recommend the Scheme to others.

- **88%** of volunteers said they were likely to very likely to continue as a Chatty Café Scheme volunteer.
- **97%** of volunteers said they would be likely or very likely to recommend the Chatty Café Scheme services.

When asked why they were likely to continue volunteering, responses focused on the potential to support people, to contribute to local communities, and society more generally.

*“I think it’s nice to give back to society a bit of friendship and support.”*

*“Not only am I helping them weekly I also enjoy the time spent talking and the sense of helping and making a difference.”*

*“It’s now part of my life and what I do. I look forward to the phone calls as part of my life and I want to try and keep chatting with people if it helps.”*

*“I’ve spent a career trying to help people in the NHS, it’s just in my nature, now I’ve got more time it just makes sense for me to try and do it this way and I don’t even need to leave the house to do it.”*

In terms of actions the Chatty Café Scheme could do take to improve things for telephone volunteers there were several comments related to the 12-week limit for phone calls, the support for volunteers and the matching process.

There was a mixture of responses from volunteers about the 12-week (but extendable) limit for phone calls. Volunteers recognised the need for there to be some sort of limit but felt that for some beneficiaries 12 weeks just wasn't enough. Comments echoed the feeling from telephone beneficiaries that it felt odd to cut off communication with someone you had been building up a rapport with over a couple of months. Even when this was extended slightly, some volunteers felt that this limit was not necessarily helpful for the beneficiary.

*"Whilst I understand why it's in place, there are people I've spoken to who have really struggled to come to terms with the 12 weeks coming to an end and being uncertain if they'll be able to continue. Removing something that has helped them doesn't always feel appropriate."*

*"It feels counterintuitive that we set this Scheme up to provide friendship calls and then have to say that's it. I think it's hard for some people to just cut off that connection you've made."*

There was also a mixed response from telephone volunteers about the level of support they received as a volunteer. Many of the volunteers they felt that there was good support when taking on the role of telephone volunteer with training provided by the Chatty Café Scheme around safeguarding etc. But there were some, often new to volunteering entirely, who expressed they would have liked more communication to support them in the early stages, either from a volunteer manager or the Chatty Café Scheme staff:

*"I would have liked more initial guidance during my first few months – more check-ins, and guidance on procedures for ending the phone calls after 12 weeks."*

*"I'm new to this and after all the initial bits I felt a bit on my own with it. It would have been nice for the first month or so to have a regular meeting with someone to feedback on what I was doing, just to check I'm doing this all OK."*

This however was a minority view. Most volunteers expressed how supported they felt, and importantly that they knew who to contact if they did have any queries, and that these queries usually had a quick response.

*"The support has been great. Every time I've had a query it's been answered super quick, which is reassuring."*

*"I know people to contact if I need some information about what to do or how to go about things. The lady that I've emailed has always been so helpful."*

Some volunteers wanted to have more involvement with the matching process. While recognising that the Scheme is designed for anyone to be able to have a chat some felt that for beneficiaries that had additional needs, or particular mental health issues that being paired with a more experienced volunteer might be helpful.

*“I have a lot of experience from my career in working with people who have various different needs and I’m happy to have people who are perhaps a bit more challenging to get engaged in conversation initially. Others might not, and it might put them off if they a challenge like that as their first person to call... Perhaps they could gather more data about volunteer experience and used that to their own benefit.”*

There were no clear suggestions from volunteer table hosts about actions the Chatty Café Scheme could make to improve its services. There were general comments about raising the profile of the Chatty Café Scheme so more people knew about it. Table volunteers were very complimentary about the information and support they received from the Chatty Café Scheme and recognised that there had been efforts to try and facilitate knowledge sharing between more experienced table hosts. For example, webpages and online Zoom webinars<sup>45</sup> with information and opportunities to interact with more experienced table host volunteers to understand how to make a Chatter & Natter table more successful. The 12-week plan document was mentioned as a key document to support volunteers plan how to raise awareness and build the popularity of the Chatter & Natter table.

Figure 22: 12 Week Plan document for Table Volunteers



## 9. Views from the public

While this research sought to gain insights into the impact of the Chatty Café Scheme services on those already involved, it was felt important to gauge the views from the wider public about its potential. In particular, it was thought to be useful to understand views from people who were perhaps not aware of the Scheme, or those who felt they didn't want to use such services.

From the respondents who had previously had no contact with the Chatty Café Scheme services, 78% had heard of it while 22% had not.

**Figure 23: Social media advert for Chatter & Natter venues**

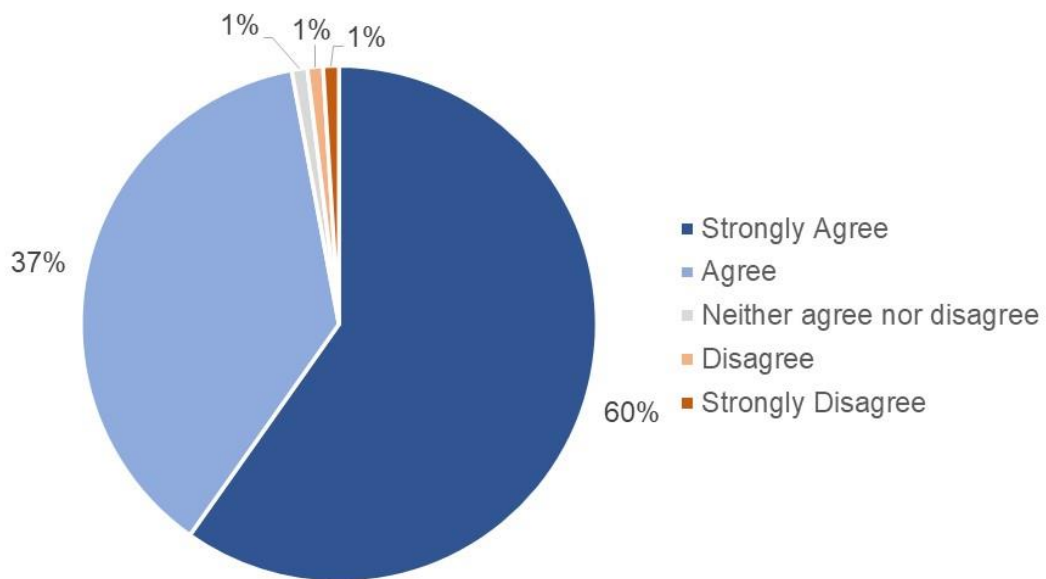
**HOW TO FIND A CHATTY CAFE VENUE**

- 1. VISIT OUR WEBSITE**  
Visit our website and from the drop down menu choose 'find a venue'
- 2. ENTER YOUR LOCATION**  
The page will then bring up closest venues to you!
- 3. THEN TURN UP!**  
Check times when your chosen Venue is hosting a table, and just turn up!

The Chatty Café Scheme logo is located at the bottom left of the advertisement.

**97%** of respondents felt that the Chatty Café Scheme was a good idea to help people feel less lonely.

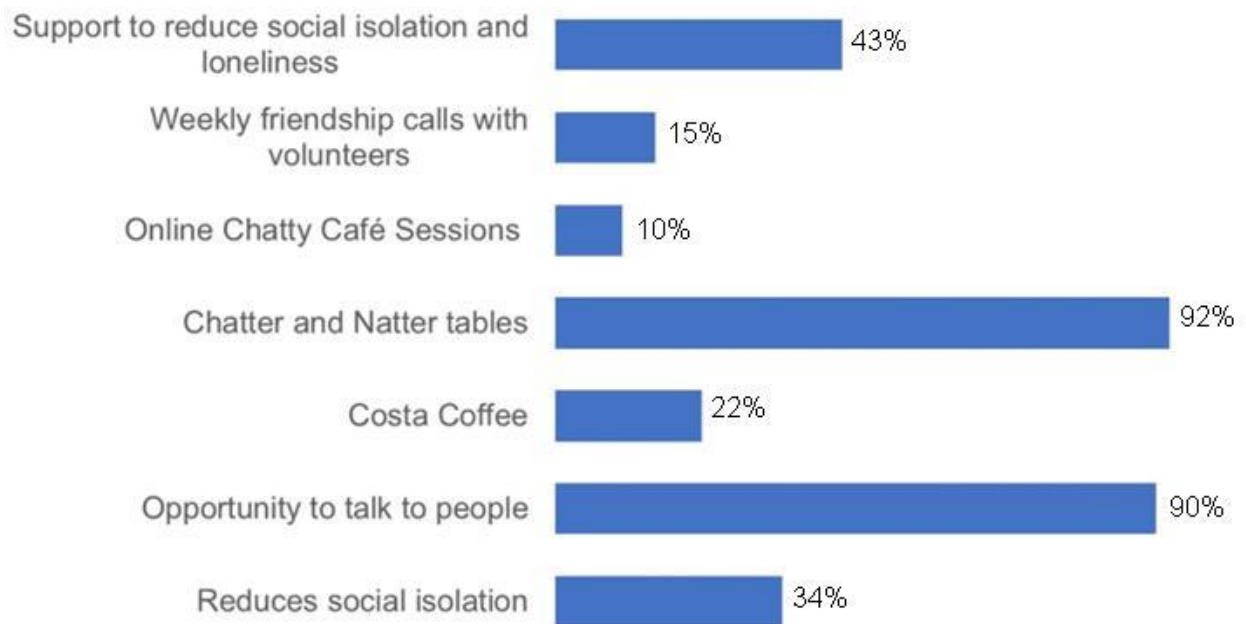
**Figure 24: Public views on if the Chatty Café Scheme was a good idea to help people feel less lonely**



The main method for people finding out about the Chatty Café Scheme was via social media (51%), although many people selected signs in a café/coffee shop (21%) and wider advertising (15%), while others were made aware through friends (5%).

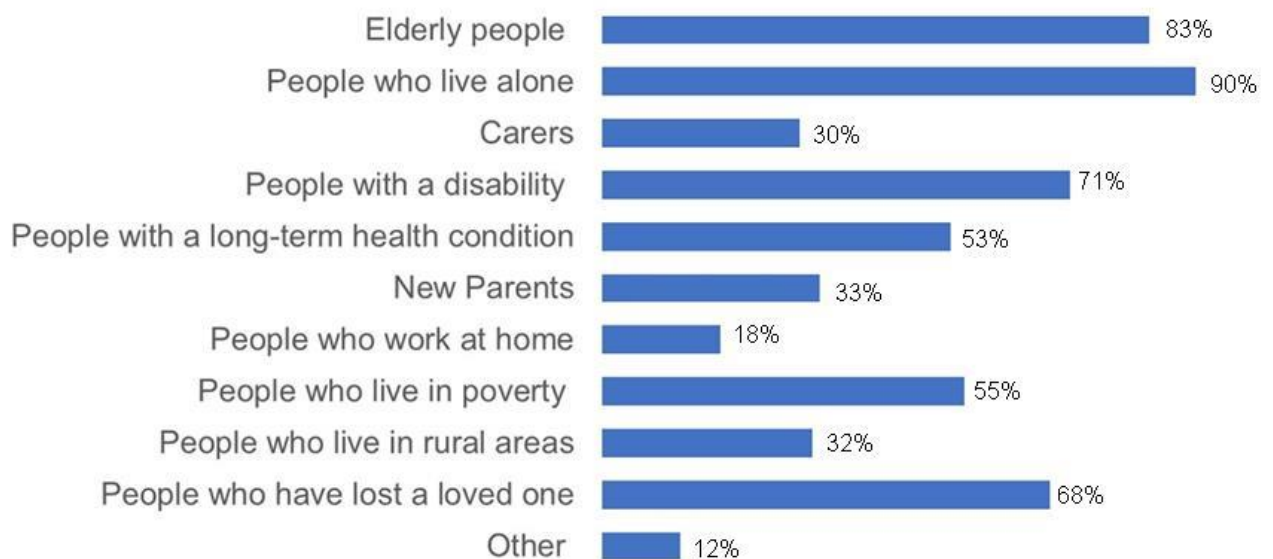
Respondents were asked what they associated with the Chatty Café Scheme (see Figure 25). While the majority of respondents associated it with the opportunity to talk to people (90%) and Chatter & Natter tables (92%), very few associated it with some of the other services such as the virtual sessions online and the telephone friendship service, suggesting these services have less visibility.

**Figure 25: Features associated with the Chatty Café Scheme according to the public**



Respondents were asked to identify which groups of people would be most likely to feel lonely/socially isolated (see Figure 26). There was a general consensus that a variety of groups of people are likely to be affected, but some groups were identified more frequently than others, including those that live alone (chosen by 90% of respondents) and elderly people (chosen by 83% of respondents).

**Figure 26: Public views on who is likely to experience loneliness/social isolation**





Respondents also highlighted that people who had just moved to a new location may feel lonely or socially isolated, as well as refugees.

Most respondents significantly underestimated the extent of loneliness in the UK. Earlier in this report it was highlighted how there are distinctions between loneliness and social isolation. 75% of respondents felt they would not be able to distinguish between social isolation and loneliness.

- **97%** of respondents felt that a table to chat at in a café would help them to feel less lonely, with 54% indicating that this would help a lot.
- **81%** of respondents felt that all cafés/coffee shops should have a Chatter & Natter table.

Reasons for this focused on allowing more people to access them and not having to worry about the location, leading to wider reach. Others provided more simple reasons that it was simply 'good to talk'.

*"It would encourage more social cohesion. A wider choice would lessen anxiety. Different facilities would ensure wider audience."*

*"It means people know they've got plenty of options."*

*"I think if you want people to really notice the Scheme then it needs to be national, have that presence everywhere."*

*"It's already pretty big when you look at all the tables, loneliness is everywhere so really you're going to have to have these services everywhere."*

From those who selected no (19%), reasons tended to focus on the type and size of venue, and that not all places might be suitable:

*"In very busy cafés, it would block a table for this purpose which a) café owners might want to free up for other people and b) which somebody else might want to use without the associated 'chatting' element."*

*"One table of people talking loudly in a quiet café can ruin the ambience. While I support the idea of Chatter & Natter, having one in every café is a one-size-fits-all that ignores those who go to cafés for solitary peace and quiet."*



It was clear in discussions with those that have had involvement with the Chatty Café Scheme that it has had a positive impact on their lives. Whilst there were reflections on how the Chatty Café Scheme might be improved there was widespread agreement that the Chatty Café Scheme services were a good idea and has a positive impact on those involved.

### 10.1 Theory of Change Outcomes

As outlined at the beginning of this report, the Chatty Café Scheme developed a Theory of Change model to guide their activities and as a tool to check their progress. Table 4 below revisits the Theory of Change outcomes to summarise progress to date.

**Table 4: Reviewing Theory of Change Outcomes**

Outcome	Relevant Findings
<b>Outcome 1: Evidence that participating in our services is reducing people's social isolation and in doing so improving their social, mental and physical health.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beneficiaries from the different Chatty Café Scheme services identified that participating in the Scheme reduced experiences of loneliness and social isolation.</li> <li>• Chatter &amp; Natter tables: 96% felt it reduced loneliness; 95% felt it reduced social isolation</li> <li>• Telephone service: 100% felt it reduced loneliness; 100% felt it reduced social isolation.</li> <li>• Zoom sessions: 97% felt it reduced loneliness; 98% felt it reduced loneliness.</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome 2: Evidence that we are reaching parts of England where social isolation is prevalent.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a network of nearly 600 Chatter &amp; Natter tables across the country which has expanded significantly.</li> <li>• The telephone service is currently available in Kent, Oldham and Norfolk, but has the potential to be anywhere where a social prescribing contract can be established.</li> <li>• The Zoom sessions are available to anyone over the age of 18 regardless of geographical location.</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome 3: Evidence that attending participant in our services increases the beneficiaries' social mobility by joining other community groups?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was evidence that participating in Chatty Café service did provide the opportunity for some beneficiaries to join other community groups.</li> <li>• For Chatter &amp; Natter table beneficiaries there were often opportunities to become linked to other community groups, sometimes based in the same venue, but more often in the wider local community.</li> <li>• For telephone service beneficiaries there was some evidence that the calls improved personal confidence, which meant beneficiaries were more likely to attempt being involved in other activities that might not have been considered previously.</li> </ul>

	<p>However, the evidence suggests it increased awareness of other potential communities rather than facilitated engaging in them. But the nature of the conversations with both beneficiary and volunteer being based in different locations this is to be expected.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For Zoom session beneficiaries, there was evidence of improved confidence for beneficiaries that they may consider joining other community activities. These sessions improved awareness of other online interest groups (forums, Facebook groups etc) where people could also engage with others.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Outcome 4: Evidence that people of all demographics can access the Scheme.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The research suggests that the geographical coverage and varied nature of the services means that there is the potential for all demographics to access the Scheme in some format.</li> <li>• Discussions with venues, evidence from interviews and the survey suggests that older age groups 50+ have typically been the majority of beneficiaries at the tables, but this varies significantly by venue and if there are Chatter &amp; Natter tables designated at particular times.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Outcome 5: Evidence of improved social confidence and interaction.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the survey many of beneficiaries identified that engaging with Chatty Café Scheme services has improved their confidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ For Chatter &amp; Natter tables this was 77%</li> <li>○ For Telephone service this was 80%</li> <li>○ For Zoom sessions this was 83%</li> </ul> </li> <li>• This was reinforced through interviews with beneficiaries.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Outcome 6: Evidence of improved mental health and wellbeing.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence from the survey and interviews noted that beneficiaries from all services identified that involvement in the Chatty Café Scheme had a positive impact on their mental health: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 97% of Chatter &amp; Natter table beneficiaries</li> <li>• 95% of friendship telephone call beneficiaries</li> <li>• 95% of virtual Chatty Café beneficiaries.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• This was supported in the interviews where beneficiaries explained how the services supported their mental health and wellbeing to varying extents.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Outcome 7: Evidence that having a Chatter &amp; Natter table option in every café is becoming an expectation of the public.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While the majority of the public felt the Chatty Café Scheme was a good idea it was identified that not all cafés are suitable venues for Chatter &amp; Natter tables, if the venue is not large enough.</li> <li>• There was some evidence from interviews that knowledge and awareness of the Scheme is not yet as widespread as would be needed for it to become a public expectation. Although it was acknowledged</li> </ul>

	that this is changing, in part due to high profile television media involvement which showcased the work of the Chatty Café Scheme, and activity on social media.
<b>Outcome 8: Evidence that improving social isolation improves public health and reduces the demand and cost of public health services.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respondents from the surveys said that being involved in the Chatty Café Scheme improved their social, physical and mental health and therefore were less likely to go to the doctors' or access mental health services. This was 76% for Chatter &amp; Natter table users, 72% for friendship telephone service beneficiaries, and 81% of virtual Chatty café beneficiaries.</li> <li>• Interviews confirmed that for some beneficiary engagement in the Chatty Café Scheme was part of their own personal coping strategies for dealing with issues of loneliness and social isolation.</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome 9: Evidence that the public are becoming more aware of social isolation.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Findings suggested that the public were aware of the issue of social isolation, but underestimated its extent, and could not distinguish between the experiences of loneliness and social isolation.</li> <li>• There was some confusion from volunteers about what social isolation means, and why people might need to access services such as the Chatty Café Scheme.</li> </ul>

## 10.2 Key Successes

The Chatty Café Scheme has worked to achieve many elements of the Theory of Change model it set out to work towards. There is clear evidence to demonstrate it has a positive impact on the lives of its beneficiaries.

There are successful elements that have been identified throughout the research:

- Increase in the number of Chatter & Natter table venues. The Covid-19 pandemic slowed down the growth of the Chatter & Natter table network, however growth has since returned and there is now a network of nearly 600. This not only means more people can potentially access one of the tables, but increases the potential for greater visibility across the country.
- Diversification of services means that beneficiaries with different needs and capabilities can access the services. The telephone and Zoom sessions allow people who may not be able to participate in the table sessions to access benefits.
- Chatty Café Scheme services offer access to people to talk to in various forms which allows beneficiaries who may suffer from physical restrictions in access, or issues of anxiety about new social situations to find a method of communication that is suitable for them.

- A key strength of the Chatty Café Scheme is its relatively simple concept of talking to someone to improve wellbeing. There are low barriers to access. There are parts of the Scheme that are available to anyone over the age of 18, anywhere in the country.
- The scale of volunteer network has provided the necessary resource to expand the telephone services to reach over 350 telephone beneficiaries by mid-2023, as well as support the Chatter & Natter tables as volunteer hosts.
- There are clear benefits for volunteers as well as beneficiaries, with volunteers citing their satisfaction and improved wellbeing from being involved in the Scheme.
- The profile of the organisation has been raised in part through involvement in TV campaigns such as One Million Minutes. It has also successfully expanded its social media activity which helps raise the visibility of its activities on different platforms including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The Chatty Scheme has made effective use of social media to raise the profile of the organisation, providing information about the different services, how to interact with the Scheme, attract new volunteers, and showcase venues that are part of the Scheme.
- Volunteer table hosts have been an important factor in the success for many Chatter & Natter table venues. Their dedication to raising awareness of the Scheme in local communities has led to the development of many communities of people being connected as well as the formation of new friendships.

Figure 28: Social media posts from the Chatty Café Scheme



### 10.3 Issues for consideration and recommendations

There has already been significant growth with the Chatty Café Scheme over the few years since its creation. The results of this evaluation have identified a series of challenges and issues for consideration for the Chatty Café Scheme in order to ensure sustainability of its operations and to maximise its impact on society.

- Availability and access:
  - **Chatter & Natter tables:**  
The Chatty Café Scheme has increased its network of Chatter & Natter Tables significantly and introduced a telephone friendship service and Zoom sessions which has allowed many more people to access their services through different formats. However, findings from the survey suggested that a more extensive network of Chatter & Natter tables was needed to ensure that people across the country could access them. A related point was that a broader range of venue types could be considered, although this is already taking place.
  - **Telephone friendship service:**  
Findings suggested there was demand for increased availability for telephone calls, although capacity for this is determined by the

contracts in place for referrals from social prescribers, and availability of volunteers.

Both beneficiaries and volunteers highlighted the need to extend the limit on the length of time that phone calls can take place in some cases. It was felt that for a friendship service to have a limit was potentially creating issues for beneficiaries when the phone calls ended. While the need for a limit is recognised it was felt that it may be useful to have greater flexibility on a case-by-case basis.

- **Online Chatty Café (Zoom) sessions:**

Findings suggested there was a demand for more frequent, and longer, online Chatty Café (Zoom) sessions so there was greater flexibility to fit around other life commitments/appointments etc.

A further suggestion from beneficiaries was around how they connect with other beneficiaries outside of the time they are in the Chatty Café sessions/phone calls/tables. There was a suggestion that it might be useful to have some kind of online discussion forum where those who meet through the services could then communicate on related issues, or at least connect with each other so the conversation could then carry on.

- **Volunteers:**

- Many of the Chatty Café Scheme activities are fundamentally reliant on the availability of volunteers. It is vital that more volunteers are retained as it requires significant resource to onboard volunteers and provide support for them to deliver the services. It is important that the role and expectations of the volunteer are made very clear at the point of application.
- Many volunteers expressed the desire to communicate with other volunteers, to share best practice, experiences and to create their own sense of belonging as part of the Chatty Café Scheme. It was felt that this could create a community in itself and this could support the wellbeing of volunteers. Suggestions usually centred around the creation of some type of online forum where volunteers could communicate, pool knowledge and share skills, tips, information sources that may be useful in their role.
- While most volunteers were extremely complementary about the initial training and support received, it was felt by many that it could be useful to provide different levels of support for volunteers depending on the needs of the beneficiary they were being matched with and the experience of the volunteer. For experienced volunteers, who perhaps already had a background in health and social care, being a telephone volunteer was not considered challenging, but for volunteers with less experience there were suggestions that there should be greater



support and training options available, so they felt they had the suitable skills to be able to support beneficiaries with specific needs. This could potentially reduce volunteer attrition.

- Marketing:
  - Beneficiaries, volunteers and the public highlighted that there could be improvements around the level, frequency and focus of communications from the Chatty Café Scheme, mainly in terms of marketing their services. It was felt that the Chatty Café Scheme had already significantly improved their online social media presence, but that wider advertising in society was needed to raise awareness of the Scheme and its activities.
  - In particular it was felt that the Chatty Café Scheme should promote the benefits of the Scheme more widely to attract more volunteers and beneficiaries.
  - There is conflicting evidence from the research about how to address the issue of stigma that is often associated with loneliness and social isolation. There were some respondents who felt that the Chatty Café Scheme should be trying to highlight how through its activities it is reducing the stigma of these issues, that they are widely experienced and as a result should not stop anyone accessing the services. However, there were also respondents who suggested that the focus on loneliness and social isolation may deter some people from becoming involved. This is a wider societal issue about how loneliness and social isolation are perceived.
- Capacity:
  - Given the limited number of staff within the Chatty Café Scheme, consideration will be needed to envisage how to continue to scale up operations. Onboarding of volunteers, venues as well as management of the Scheme's different activities is labour intensive and is likely to reach a point where it would become challenging to manage all areas of activities effectively. The Chatty Café Scheme is already exploring the use of technology to streamline some processes within the organisation but there should be a consideration of expansion plans and the associated labour that would be required to do so, and how this could be funded.
- Partnership and sponsorship:
  - A key issue for the Chatty Café Scheme will be to ensure the financial sustainability of the organisation so that it can continue to operate its services. While it has been involved in some corporate partnerships, it

- could be beneficial to explore more routes for corporate sponsorship as well as links with city councils and organisations in different local areas.
- Respondents in the research were often surprised there were not more big brands backing the activities of the Chatty Café Scheme. While the loneliness and social isolation are nationwide issues, their extent and how they are experienced is likely to differ across the country depending on local geographies and demographics. Respondents often highlighted that there could be more potential to link with city councils in order to showcase the potential for the Chatty Café Scheme services and highlight where they could be most beneficial.
- Long term impact:
  - This report has presented views of the Chatty Café Scheme at a point when the services are becoming more well known and are increasing as a result. Given that there may be many new beneficiaries, venues and volunteers to the Chatty Café Scheme it may be beneficial to consider a longer-term piece of research which explores the longer-term impact of its services.

This report presents the findings from the research project which sought to understand the impact of the Chatty Café Scheme. Results indicate the Chatty Café Scheme makes a significant impact on people's lives through its different services: the Chatter & Natter tables, the telephone friendship service and the online Zoom sessions. In a society where there are millions of people experiencing loneliness on a daily basis, the Chatty Café Scheme provides pathways for people to connect with others, to give people the opportunity to talk and ultimately the potential to reduce the experience of loneliness and or social isolation.

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## Appendix 1: Theory of Change Model

Please find below full details of our theory of change model which demonstrates how our services directly contribute to the following funding priorities:

- *Improve the places and spaces that matter to communities.*
- *Bring people together & build strong relationships in and across communities.*
- *Enable more people to fulfil their potential by working to address issues at the earliest possible stage.*

Activities	Assumptions	Outcomes	Impact
<p>Continue to sign up new venues to the Chatty Café Scheme using the internet and Chatty Café website, including parts of England where social isolation is prevalent.</p> <p>Continue to receive referrals for one-to-one weekly calls for beneficiaries in Oldham, Wolverhampton, Maidstone and Norfolk.</p> <p>Conduct research to analyse the impact of attending Chatter &amp; Natter tables/receiving a weekly call/joining virtual Chatty Cafés, on the beneficiaries' feelings of social isolation and their social, mental and physical health.</p> <p>Set up a monthly snapshot data collection to measure the impact of the</p>	<p>Improve the places and spaces that matter to communities</p> <p>Assumption 1: Participating in our services reduces the beneficiaries feeling of social isolation/loneliness and improves their health.</p> <p>Assumption 2: That an area with a chatty café improves social isolation in that area.</p> <p>Assumption 3: That joining other community groups is linked to building confidence, self-esteem and social skills gained by participating in our services.</p>	<p>Outcome 1: Evidence that participating in our services is reducing people's social isolation and in doing so improving their social, mental and physical health.</p> <p>Outcome 2: Evidence that we are reaching parts of England where social isolation is prevalent.</p> <p>Outcome 3: Evidence that participating in our services increases the beneficiaries' social mobility by joining other community groups.</p>	<p>To reduce social isolation in England.</p>

<p><i>Scheme going forward year on year. A set day each month (15th) to collect research data across users and a sample of beneficiaries that participate in our services that day. Use of technology to collect research data and analysis. e.g. google form survey with links easily accessible on our webpage and social media platforms followed by analysis using excel. Survey links on website. Beneficiaries can complete form phones, iPads, laptops.</i></p> <p><i>Use of the Chatty Café Scheme volunteers to organise other community group outings or signpost to other community groups.</i></p> <p><i>Evidence key outcomes using the monthly snapshot surveys to ensure that we continue to have a human centred approach, continued Scheme improvement and develop the use of technology to enhance the Scheme delivery.</i></p>		<p><i>Outcome 4: Evidence that people of all demographics can access the .</i></p>	
<p><i>Continue to develop the use of social media and the website to encourage regular participation in our services.</i></p> <p><i>Strengthen and further develop the use of Chatty Café Scheme volunteers to encourage regular participation and</i></p>	<p><i>Bring people together &amp; build strong relationships in and across communities</i></p>		
	<p><i>Assumption 5: Regularly participating in our services improves social confidence.</i></p> <p><i>Assumption 6: Improved social</i></p>	<p><i>Outcome 5: Evidence improved social confidence and self-esteem.</i></p>	



<p><i>improve the beneficiaries' social skills.</i></p>	<p><i>confidence and interactions improves mental health and wellbeing.</i></p>	<p><i>Outcome 6: Evidence improved mental health and wellbeing.</i></p>	
<p><i>Continue to sign up new venues to the Chatty Café Scheme using the new and improved website.</i></p> <p><i>Continue to use technology to promote the Chatty Café Scheme across the nation. e.g., social media platforms such as Facebook, twitter, Instagram and the radio.</i></p> <p><i>Conduct a pilot study into the impact of improving social isolation on public health in two communities (Oldham and Wolverhampton) that have fully endorsed the Chatty Café Scheme.</i></p> <p><i>Introduce the Chatty Café Scheme into school canteens to educate the youth about social isolation and hope to reduce social isolation in schools and create awareness at an earlier age.</i></p> <p><i>Continue to develop the social media pages and website to encourage daily</i></p>	<p><i>Enable more people to fulfil their potential by working to address issues at the earliest possible stage</i></p> <p><i>Assumption 7: That if the number of cafes joining the Chatty Café Scheme is increasing that it is due to public demand and expectation to have Chatter &amp; Natter tables in their community venues.</i></p> <p><i>Assumption 8: Participating in our services improves social isolation and improved social isolation improves the social, mental and physical health of the beneficiaries. This reduces the cost to the NHS and improves public health.</i></p> <p><i>Assumption 9: The use of our services and the interaction with the Chatty Café Scheme website, Facebook, twitter and Instagram accounts means the public are becoming more aware of social isolation.</i></p>	<p><i>Outcome 7: Evidence that having a Chatter &amp; Natter table option in every café is becoming the expectation of the public.</i></p> <p><i>Outcome 8: Evidence that improving social isolation improves public health and reduces the demand and cost of public health services.</i></p> <p><i>Outcome 9: Evidence that the public are</i></p>	

<i>interaction and increase the number of followers and frequency and length of the interaction to improve public awareness of social isolation.</i>		<i>becoming more aware of social isolation.</i>	
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*The impact we expect to create:*

<b>OUTCOMES</b>	<b>OUTCOME INDICATORS</b> <i>What outcome indicators / data will you use to see if your activities have an impact?</i>	<b>METHODS</b> - <i>what method will you use to collect data? (e.g. survey, interview, focus group, analytics, etc.)</i>	<b>WHO</b> - <i>which stakeholders will you collect this data from? (e.g. end-users, service providers, etc.)</i>	<b>WHEN</b> - <i>at which point will you be collecting this data</i>	<b>HOW</b> <i>will this information / data help you and your solution?</i>	<b>TARGETS IN AUGUST 2022</b> - <i>What targets are you aiming for?</i>	<b>TARGETS IN AUGUST 2023</b> - <i>What targets are you aiming for?</i>
<i>Outcome 1: Evidence that participating in our services is reducing people's social isolation and in doing so improving their social, mental and physical health.</i>	<i>% of beneficiaries who report an improvement in isolation.</i>  <i>% of beneficiaries who report an improvement in social, mental and physical health.</i>	<i>- analytics/survey</i>  <i>- focus groups</i>	<i>- beneficiaries (attendants at the Chatter &amp; Natter table/attendants on virtual Chatty Café sessions/those receiving a weekly call)</i>	<i>- monthly snapshot 15th day of each month</i>	<i>-beneficiaries' opinions and feedback on the scheme will enable chatty café staff and volunteers to further develop and improve the scheme to encourage regular participation and engagement. This should hopefully improve social isolation and improve the health of the beneficiaries.</i>	<i>50% of beneficiaries report an improvement in social isolation.</i>  <i>50% of beneficiaries report an improvement in social, mental and physical health.</i>	<i>80% of beneficiaries report an improvement in social isolation.</i>  <i>80% of beneficiaries report an improvement in social, mental and physical health.</i>

<p><i>Outcome 2: Evidence that we are reaching parts of England where social isolation is prevalent.</i></p>	<p><i># of venues in socially isolated places.</i></p>	<p><i>- identify areas in England where social isolation is prevalent.</i></p> <p><i>-rural communities</i></p> <p><i>(where poverty exists)</i></p> <p><i>-use sign up data to identify the number of venues in areas where social isolation is prevalent.</i></p>	<p><i>-users (venue owner/manager)</i></p>	<p><i>- monthly snapshot 15th day of each month</i></p>	<p><i>-data will help us to see if our current system in place to encourage cafés to sign up is working in areas of England where social isolation is prevalent and if improvements are needed to encourage venues in these areas. E.g. Chatty Café staff/volunteers visiting areas in person or emailing/telephoning directly those cafés/venues in these areas of social isolation.</i></p>	<p><i>75 venues</i></p>	<p><i>150 venues</i></p> <p><i>or 10% of venues</i></p>
<p><i>Outcome 3: Evidence that attending participating in our services increases the beneficiaries' social mobility by joining other community groups.</i></p>	<p><i>If beneficiaries have joined other community groups after having participated in our services.</i></p>	<p><i>- analytics/survey</i></p> <p><i>- focus groups</i></p>	<p><i>- beneficiaries (attendants at the Chatter &amp; Natter table/attendants on virtual Chatty Café sessions/those receiving a weekly call)</i></p>	<p><i>- monthly snapshot 15th day of each month</i></p>	<p><i>-Joining more community groups should improve social isolation.</i></p> <p><i>-Identifying which community groups will help to establish the impact on personal social, mental and physical health as well as the impact the Chatty Café Scheme is having on public</i></p>	<p><i>25% of beneficiaries have joined at least one other community group.</i></p>	<p><i>50% of beneficiaries have joined at least one other community group.</i></p>

					health England. (PHE)		
<i>Outcome 4: Evidence that people of all demographics can access the Scheme</i>	<i>If a representative demographic of England is able to access the Chatty Café Scheme using technology.</i>	<i>- analytics/survey  - focus groups</i>	<i>Beneficiaries (attendants at the Chatter &amp; Natter table/attendants on virtual Chatty Café sessions/those receiving a weekly call)</i>	<i>- monthly snapshot 15th day of each month</i>	<i>This will help us to ensure that the technology used to access the Chatty Café Scheme is suitable for all demographics.</i>	<i>The demographic population identified as being more likely to become socially isolated are represented in the beneficiaries of the Chatty Café Scheme.</i>	<i>The demographic population identified as being more likely to become socially isolated are represented in the beneficiaries of the Chatty Café Scheme.</i>
<i>Outcome 5: Evidence improved social confidence and interaction.</i>	<i>% of beneficiaries who report an improvement in social confidence and interaction.</i>	<i>- analytics/survey  - focus groups</i>	<i>- beneficiaries (attendants at the Chatter &amp; Natter table/attendants on virtual Chatty Café sessions/those receiving a weekly call)</i>	<i>- monthly snapshot 15th day of each month</i>	<i>This data will identify if the Chatter &amp; Natter tables/calls/virtual sessions, do improve social confidence and interaction and therefore improve social isolation. If beneficiaries become more confident socially as individuals this should spread throughout all aspects of their life to reduce social isolation.</i>	<i>75% of beneficiaries who regularly attend Chatter &amp; Natter tables/attendants on virtual Chatty Café sessions/those receiving a weekly call) report an improvement in social confidence and interaction.</i>	<i>100% of beneficiaries who regularly attend Chatter &amp; Natter tables/attendants on virtual Chatty Café sessions/those receiving a weekly call) report an improvement in social confidence and interaction.</i>
<i>Outcome 6: Evidence improved mental health</i>	<i>% of beneficiaries who report an improvement in</i>	<i>- analytics/survey  - focus groups</i>	<i>- beneficiaries (attendants at the Chatter &amp; Natter table/attendants on virtual Chatty Café</i>	<i>- monthly snapshot 15th day of each month</i>	<i>This data will identify if the Chatter &amp; Natter tables/calls/virtual sessions do improve</i>	<i>75% of beneficiaries report an improvement in</i>	<i>100% of beneficiaries report an improvement in</i>

<i>and wellbeing.</i>	<i>mental health and wellbeing.</i>		<i>sessions/those receiving a weekly call)</i>		<i>mental health and wellbeing. This should improve the quality of life and contribute to reducing social isolation. There are also implications for reducing the demand for mental health services which would be beneficial to Public Health England (PHE).</i>	<i>social confidence and interaction.</i>	<i>social confidence and interaction.</i>
<i>Outcome 7: Evidence that having a Chatter &amp; Natter table option in every café is becoming the expectation of the public.</i>	<i>Sample the public in an area of England every 6 months that has been randomly selected to ascertain if they know about the Chatty Café Scheme and if they expect to see a Chatter &amp; Natter table in cafés/venues they visit.</i>	<i>- analytics/survey</i>	<i>-the general public</i>	<i>-biannual survey (June/November) of a randomly selected town in England.  - Face to face survey collected on the street to engage with the general public.</i>	<i>The data will allow us to understand if the Chatty Café Scheme is having an impact on the general public. It will allow us to determine if the public is aware of social isolation and if Chatter &amp; Natter tables are becoming the expected norm to tackle social isolation across England.</i>	<i>15% of the general public have heard of social isolation, the Chatty Café Scheme and expect Chatter &amp; Natter tables to be available within a community to tackle social isolation.</i>	<i>40% of the general public have heard of social isolation, the Chatty Café Scheme and expect Chatter &amp; Natter tables to be available within a community to tackle social isolation.</i>

<p><i>Outcome 8: Evidence that improving social isolation improves public health and reduces the demand and cost of public health services.</i></p>	<p><i>Secondary research which identifies the links between social isolation and its impact on both personal and public health.</i></p> <p><i>Possible pilot study in two areas in Birmingham where the Chatty Café Scheme has been rolled out across both areas by the Mayor to tackle social isolation. The study could measure the impact of the Chatty Cafe Scheme on beneficiaries accessing public health services.</i></p>	<p><i>-secondary research</i></p> <p><i>- survey/analytics</i></p>	<p><i>-beneficiaries</i></p> <p><i>-GPs</i></p> <p><i>-Mental health professionals/services</i></p> <p><i>-social prescribing services</i></p>	<p><i>-Contact services in April 2022 to start collecting self or GP referral data for social isolation.</i></p> <p><i>Survey October 2022 to see if the Chatty Café Scheme has had any impact in the area.</i></p> <p><i>Also questions on the monthly snapshot about reducing GP visits and accessing mental health services.</i></p> <p><i>Monthly snapshot survey 15th of the month.</i></p>	<p><i>To analyse if the Chatty Café Scheme has decreased social isolation and as a result has reduced the number of people being referred to mental health and social prescribing services.</i></p>	<p><i>Pilot study data will not be available at this time.</i></p> <p><i>Secondary research should demonstrate links between social isolation and its impact on public health services.</i></p> <p><i>25% of beneficiaries report that attending the Chatter&amp; Natter tables/virtual group sessions/receiving weekly calls has prevented them from accessing public health services since their health has improved.</i></p>	<p><i>A reduction in the demand to access public health services as a result of social isolation.</i></p> <p><i>50% of beneficiaries report that participating in our services has prevented them from accessing public health services since their health has improved.</i></p>
<p><i>Outcome 9: Evidence that the public are becoming more aware of social isolation.</i></p>	<p><i># followers on twitter, Facebook and Instagram.</i></p>	<p><i>-Social media platforms Facebook, Instagram and twitter.</i></p>	<p><i>-the general public</i></p> <p><i>-social media users</i></p>	<p><i>End of each calendar month and calculate year totals from the data.</i></p>	<p><i>This will help us to know if the technological approaches and social platforms we are currently using</i></p>	<p><i>5,000 followers on social media platforms</i></p>	<p><i>50,000 followers on social media</i></p> <p><i>150 sign ups/ month</i></p>

	<p>#interactions on the Chatty Café website.</p> <p># new sign ups to the Scheme. Compare year on year.</p> <p># of referrals for one-to-one calls</p> <p>The yearly income from Chatty Café Membership.</p> <p># sales of Chatty Café merchandise.</p> <p>% public aware of social isolation from the biannual survey.</p>	<p>- Website number of hits data.</p> <p>-New sign-up data</p> <p>-Sales data</p> <p>-</p> <p>Survey/analytics</p> <p>-Referrals from social prescribers</p>	<p>-users (café /venue however &amp; managers)</p> <p>-beneficiaries</p> <p>-social prescribers</p>	<p>Retail chains provide impact reports annually.</p> <p>Biannual Awareness survey (June/November)</p> <p>General public survey to research awareness of social isolations.</p>	<p>are appropriate for our beneficiaries, users and the general public to access.</p> <p>The data will also indicate if we need to promote and advertise the Scheme more.</p> <p>Sales of merchandise and income streams from the cafe membership will enable the Chatty Café Scheme to employ staff to continue to run the Scheme.</p> <p>This data indicates if awareness of social isolation is increasing and hopefully with education and awareness social isolation will reduce in England.</p>	<p>80 new cafe sign ups per month</p> <p>33% costa stores to have a Chatter &amp; Natter table</p> <p>10% Sainsbury's stores with cafes signed up</p> <p>5 Waterstones bookstores to have a Chatter &amp; Natter table</p> <p>Sign up Waitrose for a full roll out.</p> <p>Sales of merchandise have begun.</p> <p>15% of the general public have heard of social isolation, the Chatty Café Scheme and expect Chatter &amp; Natter tables to be available within a community to tackle social isolation.</p>	<p>50% costa stores signed up</p> <p>25% Sainsbury's stores with cafes signed up.</p> <p>10 Waterstones bookstores to have a Chatter &amp; Natter table</p> <p>50% Waitrose store to have a Chatter &amp; Natter table.</p> <p>Regular sales</p> <p>40% of the general public have heard of social isolation, the Chatty Café Scheme and expect Chatter &amp; Natter tables to be available within a community to tackle social isolation.</p>
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## *Appendix 2: Evaluation Methods*

This evaluation was carried out by the Centre for Business in Society at Coventry University between February 2022 and May 2023. It included two stages of research:

An initial survey of beneficiaries of the Chatty Café Scheme services (Chatter & Natter tables, friendship telephone service and virtual sessions (via Zoom), volunteers, venues that host Chatter & Natter tables, as well as the public.

In this survey questions were targeted to each group. Questions for beneficiaries and volunteers explored their motivations for, and experiences of, interacting with the Chatty Café Scheme services, as well as the impact of this interaction. For venues questions focused on the impact of hosting a Chatter & Natter table in their venue. All respondents were asked about ways the Chatty Café Scheme could improve their services. The survey was open for 5 weeks from February to March 2022. Public participants were recruited through social media.

This initial survey had 274 responses in total. This was comprised of:

- Chatter & Natter table users: 25
- Weekly friendship call beneficiaries: 23
- Virtual Chatty Café beneficiaries: 21
- Volunteers 46
- Public: 127
- Venues: 32

The interim report published in May 2022 included the findings from this survey. The interim report is available at: <https://thechattycafescheme.co.uk/2022/06/09/tackling-loneliness-and-social-isolation-the-chatty-cafe-scheme-interim-report-may-2022/>

The second stage of research involved in-depth interviews with individuals in the categories identified previously, as well as staff and board members of the Chatty Café Scheme.

There were 102 interviews conducted in total. This was comprised of:

- Chatty Café Scheme staff and board members: 4
- Chatter & Natter table users: 25
- Weekly friendship call beneficiaries: 17
- Virtual Chatty Café (Zoom) beneficiaries: 19
- Volunteers: 21
- Venues: 16

A further round of surveys was conducted to capture a second snapshot of views on the Chatty Café Scheme, intending to gauge responses to any developments since the initial survey was launched. The survey was open for 6 weeks from March to April 2023.



This second survey had 493 responses in total. This was comprised of:

- Chatter & Natter table users: 49
- Weekly friendship call beneficiaries: 63
- Virtual Chatty Café beneficiaries: 42
- Volunteers: 128
- Public: 147
- Venues: 64

This final report includes data from all stages of the research.

## **The Centre for Business in Society**

*Through understanding the impact of organisations' activities, behaviours and policies, our research seeks to promote responsibility and to change behaviours for the benefit of economies and societies.*

*The Centre for Business in Society (CBiS) is the main research hub for dedicated research staff and funded research projects in the Faculty of Business and Law at Coventry University. It is also home to half of the Faculty's PhD community and its DBA programme. CBiS is a vibrant and collegiate research community, occupying dedicated space in the Faculty's postgraduate and research building.*

*Our research teams are (a) examining sustainable production and ethical consumption, which underpin the new circular economy; (b) searching for durable and inclusive economic growth and development models, which promote new partnerships between state, economy and society; (c) exploring at the national, organisational and individual level the economic and social impacts of the financial crisis and post-financialisation, with a focus on responsible personal finance and debt; and (d) addressing the implications of the digital era and big data for business and society, notably regarding the strategy, use, privacy and security of data in organisations and society.*

*CBiS's funding comes from a variety of sources, including research councils, the EU, national and local government bodies and corporate collaborators. These include Arts Council England, AHRC, Barrow Cadbury, the British Council, DEFRA, EPSRC, ESPON, EU H2020, ESRC, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the LEP, Network Rail, the Money Advice Service, Oak Foundation and Unipart.*

*Further information is available at:*

*<http://www.coventry.ac.uk/research/areas-of-research/business-in-society/>,*

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