

CASE STUDY FROM A VENUES PERSPECTIVE, WHY I OFFER MY VENUE AS A PLACE TO HOST A CHATTER & NATTER TABLE

By Danielle Hudson, Owner of Fountain Cottage Café, Bellingham, Hexham NE48 2DE.

In May 2023, a local lady called Cathy Smith came to my café and asked if I'd consider letting her use my cafe as a place to set up a Chatter & Natter table. I hadn't heard of the idea before, but Cathy said she'd come across the tables at other cafes and felt it was something really needed in Bellingham.

Bellingham (where my café is located) is a village in Northumberland, its a great spot for walkers as we have fabulous scenery, but it is quite rural and there aren't many amenities for local people to access. Cathy felt Bellingham really needed to offer more for local people, in the form of something like a community type session that could help people connect. I fully agreed, especially as I know lots of my customers live alone and I'm sure come into my cafe to chat. I sometimes feel guilty that I am busy working and can't spend more time chatting to them. I was therefore very happy to offer a table in my café for this purpose.

Cathy is a retired district nurse and explained how she had seen firsthand, the damaging effects of loneliness on many of the people she treated in her career. Cathy felt quite passionately about setting up a Chatter & Natter table and working closely with the [local doctors](#), so they can possibly refer people to the table who were perhaps struggling with loneliness and social isolation. By offering the table in the village, many attendees can visit on-foot and its easily for them to pop in.

In July 2023, Cathy set up and hosted the first Chatter & Natter table and it's been steadily growing ever since. They tend to have a core group of 6 regular attendees and additional people come and go. In August 2023, a second volunteer came on board, called Jane, who supports Cathy to host the table. This works well as it means if one of the volunteers is away or unwell, there is always someone to host the table.

I have the Chatter & Natter poster up in the café all week, so people know we offer the table every Tuesday from 10:30am - 12pm. What I love the most is seeing the return visitors and hearing the laughter and constant chatter in my café. I think the idea is amazing and hope it carries on as long as possible. The volunteers are key to its success as they are very friendly and put lots of effort into promoting the sessions.

We've had great press articles in local newsletters, including in [Hexham Courant Times](#) and others.

I'm pleased my venue has disabled facilities, and we make sure the table is in a place that is very easy to get to, as some attendees struggle to walk, and we want the table to be accessible to everyone.



Cathy Smith (right), Jane Morton (left), Chatty Cafe volunteers and Danielle Hudson (front) owner of The Fountain Cafe in Bellingham.

