

Getting Social again

A Community Case Study - November 2021

“We now know that social isolation is a serious threat to health, and negatively affects us emotionally, mentally and physically”

Age UK

Jo Bakesef-Duncan (Inclusion Matters Community Coach) has been engaging with many individuals over the last year - supporting them with their concerns.

Subsequently, a common theme emerged. Many individuals were becoming eager to take the first steps of socialising with others, especially after a period of isolation during the pandemic.

After further conversations with several people Jo supports - via the Inclusion Matters Service - 6 ladies expressed a strong desire to meet up for Coffee & Cake, good conversation, and the chance to meet new friends

Those First Tentative Steps

Jo identified a safe location for the first Social meetup, The Liskeard Hive. It was especially important to reduce the anxiety of our clients. Being able to meet in a safe environment that was still comfortable & friendly was key. Thankfully, The Liskeard Hive offered Jo the opportunity to book the garden space attached to the café, which we could have sole use of for a small gathering.

The first meetup didn't quite go as we expected. Initially, three ladies accepted. However, on the day, two ladies were unable to attend, one due to ill health and the other saying she was 'too scared' - **stating that she would prefer to meet on a one to one basis until her fears were alleviated.**

The meeting still went ahead with Sally, who was a participant in the Step Into Wellness programme. Sadly, her husband passed away last August, and since then her confidence has

plummeted. **She shared that she has been worrying about weight gain and said that she hardly goes outside her front door.** At the end of the hour, Sally said that she thoroughly enjoyed doing something different and would love to try this again. This was the first step for Sally - we were very proud that she had the confidence to drive herself and attend.

Meeting Face to Face

At the second session, out of the 5 invites, 3 ladies attended. For Maggie, it was the first time she had been out of her home to meet new people since her husband passed away in January. Maggie happily shared with us that she enjoyed the meeting and said that her family were right! *“She did need to speak to people of a similar age.”* **Maggie also said that she felt worried about taking those first steps of going out and socialising but said she was so pleased that she had started her journey.**



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The Wider Picture

Dawn, one of the other attendees at the meeting, had been struggling throughout lockdown and was missing the opportunities to meet up with people and connect.

Dawn has a beautiful dog, that has been her constant companion during the pandemic and is a source of great joy & happiness. Even though Dawn was seeking the comfort of others, she was deeply concerned about leaving her dog at home, especially as the dog would become distressed at being left alone.

However, Jo was able to organise another garden meeting, this meant that Dawn could bring her dog along - it was safe to say that the other attendees loved meeting Dawn and her dog - forming real connections.

"It is lovely to be out and I think the venue is ideal." Dawn

Sally attended again and really enjoyed the time spent with others. When Jo spoke to Sally two weeks later, Sally said that she had met Dawn in the car park and they had a really good good catch up - **we hope that this is the start of a long-lasting friendship that supports them both.**

Next Steps

On behalf of Maggie, Jo has researched Liskeard and District University of the Third Age (U3A), and Maggie is very keen to progress this and become a full member. Jo has printed off some more information and the relevant membership forms for Maggie's to fill out. Jo is extremely confident that she will attend the next U3A meeting in November.

Immediately after the meeting, Sally and Dawn were both proactively picking up information from The Liskerrett Centre. This followed on from a conversation regarding the activities they have been running to support the community.

Both Sally and Dawn are very keen to meet up again in the future. **As Jo left them to talk, they were planning a walk, a nice coffee & catchup and joining an activity that they would both enjoy.**



Contact us

If you want support in your area, please contact the Inclusion Matters helpline on 01872 266383 or email@ageukcornwall.org.uk

Our aim is to improve well-being, keep people healthy and safe, create community connections and offer our support to anyone in need.

Inclusion Matters is a partnership between Age UK Cornwall, Disability Cornwall, Digital Inclusion from Cornwall Council, Inclusion Cornwall & Cornwall Rural Community Charity.