

# impact

DEC 2020



rcc



[ruralcc.org.uk](http://ruralcc.org.uk)  
@ YourRCC



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# Let's talk loneliness



Throughout most of 2020 constraints, cancellations and closures have dominated our day to day lives and naturally this has led to many of us dwelling on all the things we cannot do. Recently we have consciously tried to shift our focus within the RCC onto the things that we can do. The things that we can do individually or collectively within our community to connect with and support others and to make the most of our time, energy and resources throughout the pandemic. One thing we know we can continue in earnest is our drive to reduce loneliness.

It is fairly common knowledge nowadays that loneliness and social isolation are harmful to our mental health. What isn't so widely recognised is just how much of an impact prolonged isolation can have on our physical wellbeing. The Royal College of Nursing identify that lack of social connections can increase the likelihood of early death by 26%, comparable to smoking 15 cigarettes a day, and higher than obesity and physical inactivity.

We have to confess, as recently as five years ago, our awareness and understanding of the issue of loneliness in rural areas was very limited and our activity focussed more on issues such as improving access to facilities, services and transport for those in need. We now know that this work would have contributed to improving connectivity and

loneliness, however this certainly wasn't an intentional outcome that we planned, celebrated or understood. Thankfully times have changed. Catalysed by the efforts of individuals such as the late Jo Cox MP, charities including the RCC are driving forward collective action across society to elevate loneliness from a stigmatised personal misfortune to being recognised as a major social issue impacting every village, town and city in the UK.

As we look towards 2021 with hope for a return to some form of normality, it is important we all remember that there is no vaccination for loneliness. It is only by each and everyone of us continuing to ensure those around us have meaningful social connections and support that we will turn the tide of loneliness sweeping silently across our communities.

If you would like to learn more about our work to tackle loneliness, including opportunities to get involved, visit [ruralcc.org.uk/loneliness](https://ruralcc.org.uk/loneliness) or contact our team today,

**Sam Howlett**  
Executive Director

**Kevin Butcher**  
Executive Director



# JOIN US

**£60**  
PER YEAR

## SUPPORT US

## TO SUPPORT YOUR COMMUNITY



**RCC membership is a rewarding way to help tackle issues and disadvantage in rural areas.**

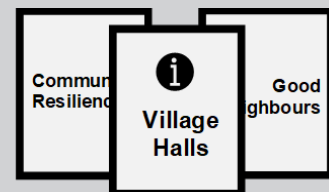
Working with the support of our members we act to reduce loneliness, prevent suicide, tackle unemployment, improve community facilities and increase social resilience across Leicestershire and Rutland.

As we face increasing demands on our resources, and challenges securing funding following Covid-19, your support would help us to continue to benefit and help the people and groups that need us most in your community. As just some examples of the impact you could help us have, your £60 membership fee could pay for:

- **100 cups of coffee** for people suffering loneliness
- **1hr of online training** to raise awareness of suicide

There are also some direct benefits to you, some of which are listed across the page. We will also invite you to any member focussed information sessions or events we hold throughout the year and keep you up to date on other things that may benefit you or your community.

## WHAT YOU GET AS A MEMBER



**Information sheets and resources**

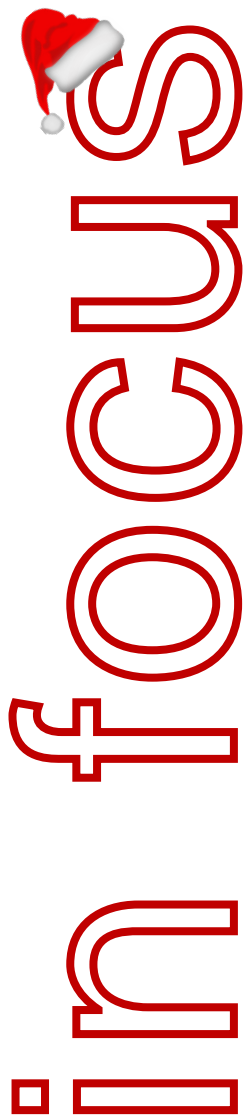


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# Rural Community Resilience

‘When crisis arises, we begin to see that community is the true and irreplaceable infrastructure.’

As 2020 draws ever nearer to a close we felt it only right to give another honourable nod of gratitude to the indisputable kindness of volunteer groups during an unforgettable year. Forming with a united resolve, individuals have come together to ensure everyone in their community who requires help, practically or emotionally, has the support they need. We are not the first to recognise this fantastic work; local and national press, local authorities and government have all championed the endless enthusiasm and caring contact in abundance, undoubtedly recognising the vital importance of volunteer led groups and their impact.

Resilience is derived from the Latin ‘resalier’ meaning springing back; one of the key attributes to the work of volunteer led community support is the speed in which individuals come together and respond to crisis. A prime example of this is seen in the response of local volunteer groups over the last 9 months. To harness the power of the positive momentum that has arisen it is important to ensure our communities have stronger more resilient networks that offer newly established groups the support they need to adapt and continue long into the future.

The RCC is pleased to have secured funding from The National Lottery Community Fund to support groups to formalise and plan for the more complex future needs within their community. Born from the suggestion of several groups, we are setting up a digital forum in which like-minded groups can come together to share learning and experiences with each other. Over the next 6 months we will be working closely with volunteers and community focussed organisations to undertake a variety of activities including:

- Increasing the capacity and awareness of volunteers through short training courses including cyber & fraud crime, wellbeing, safeguarding, suicide awareness and loneliness awareness
- Developing a peer to peer support network for new and existing groups to connect, collaborate and to share experience, learning and successes
- Providing bespoke support to communities to help them strengthen or formalise the structure of their local volunteer group.

If you would like to join the network, find out about our training, or have any questions regarding support for your group, contact us on 01455 856330 or via [info@ruralcc.org.uk](mailto:info@ruralcc.org.uk).

TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER





# RESILIENCE IN ACTION



Broughton Astley Volunteer Group was established by the community to reach and help people isolating or in need during the first lockdown. Volunteers worked tirelessly to deliver food and prescriptions as well as running a swap shop and collecting donations for local food banks. We caught up with coordinators Jan, Mark and Jenny to find out about their latest work.

Following on from our initial work to support local residents during the first lockdown, we were able to secure Registered Charity status for our group with enormous help from the team at the RCC. Since registering in October we have continued our vital work to reach and help people in need in our community and have also begun to put into place the foundations for various new community activities to help combat loneliness and at the same time bring back a sense of pride in our large village. From a survey we circulated throughout the village, we have gained large numbers of willing people wanting to join in with gardening, litter picking and social coffee and craft groups. Volunteers have already completed a few projects around the village. Spring bulbs were planted at the Memorial Garden and a raised planter at the village hall was filled. A large planter outside the Co-op was kindly cleared of old overgrown bushes by Leicester Tree Care before

our volunteers planted shrubs, some donated by Coles Plant Centre and others bought with local donations.

We have just published our second community newsletter which is hand delivered to every local household by a band of our volunteers. The newsletter details activities planned in the run up to Christmas and also an update of our groups work. It is available to read online, visit [www.issuu.com](http://www.issuu.com) and search Broughton InTouch.

Looking forward, now we are a registered charity we are focussing on fundraising to cover our longer term costs. Earlier this year we were awarded a grant by Western Power Distribution after being nominated by residents through our local MP Alberto Costa. We have also recently set up a Just Giving page and are grateful to have received a cash donation from local business Multicell Int. Ltd as part of their charity giving.





# intouch

LONELINESS AWARENESS TRAINING

**HELP END LONELINESS IN LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND**

**FREE 90 MINUTE ONLINE COURSE**

**OPEN TO ALL**

Just as anyone can feel lonely, anyone can take steps in their everyday life to reach out and help others in their local community suffering from loneliness.

Our FREE online training sessions are designed to help you take action by:

- Explaining the common causes and effects of loneliness
- Talking through ways to reach out, connect and help others that may be experiencing loneliness
- Sharing useful links, tools and resources to help tackle loneliness

**FIND OUT MORE AND BOOK A FREE PLACE TODAY**

**[ruralcc.org.uk/loneliness](https://ruralcc.org.uk/loneliness)**



**COMMUNITY  
FUND**

**01455 856330**

**[training@ruralcc.org.uk](mailto:training@ruralcc.org.uk)**





# Loneliness Awareness

**In September 2019 the RCC received funding from the National Lottery to deliver training around Loneliness Awareness called In Touch.**

Our overall aim is to reach out to anyone living in rural Leicestershire and Rutland who may benefit from accessing the training. Initially the courses were half day sessions delivered in community buildings to key members of any given community, the idea being that a collective approach could be used to consider ways to reduce feeling of loneliness and isolation.

In March of this year with news of the pandemic, like so many others, we had to re-consider our way of working. It very quickly became apparent that loneliness was more visible and we were keen to reach out and connect with communities but just in a different way.

After tweaking the content of our course, reducing the time to 90 minutes and becoming familiar with the IT side of things we were ready to deliver over Zoom.

Despite the changes to the way we deliver the sessions the key message relating to loneliness has stayed the same, which is often the smallest of gesture or conversation can have the biggest impact.

Our sessions consider the causes and effects of loneliness, ways of addressing the issue and provide a collective space to share resources. So far, we have delivered nine sessions and trained over 173 people from a wide range of communities and backgrounds. The overall feedback has been very positive, with most participants telling us that they feel better equipped to reach out and connect with others following our session.

We have weekly sessions planned up until the end of the year. Everyone is welcome to attend and can do so by registering on our website or alternatively by giving our team a call on 01455 856330 so that we can register on your behalf.

In the New Year we are planning to continue to deliver our In Touch training online and are hopeful at some point in 2021 we can return to face to face delivery out on the ground within rural communities.

Alongside our InTouch training we are pleased to share that in the New Year we will also be delivering a number of other wellbeing training sessions. These will include online safety, wellbeing at work, suicide awareness and safeguarding. All our sessions will be free to access by members of the community and delivered safely online over Zoom.



# It's for you!

We have used Rural Coffee Connect to reduce the impacts of isolation and loneliness by creating a safe and welcoming space for people to build connections and support others in their community throughout Covid-19





# Tackling **Loneliness** - Our Impact

## **LONELY BUT NOT ALONE**

### **LUCY'S STORY**



Lucy lives on her own but has a good network of friends. We first met Lucy upon visiting a small rural village where she attended for a cup of coffee with her daughter. She explained that her daughter was moving away and was grateful for the opportunity to have a cup of coffee whilst spending some time together. Lucy and her daughter visited for two weeks together but on the third week Lucy returned on her own as her daughter had moved out. She explained that she was still socialising with friends online and within Covid-19 guidelines, however she found it hard to open up to them about how she was feeling following her daughter leaving home and having recently lost a close family member. It was clear to see that visiting each week was a window of escape for Lucy to connect with people outside her close circle who she felt more comfortable talking too.

Lucy contacted us after our visits to say "I've enjoyed my coffee over the last few weeks and have valued the chance to connect safely with neighbours and new acquaintances, and to be able to chat and laugh over coffee."

## **CONFIDENCE TO CONNECT**

### **KATE'S STORY**

Kate moved to a rural village just before the Covid-19 crisis. Although she was very excited to join a new community, lockdown meant she found herself isolated and lacking the confidence to reach out and connect with her neighbours.

When we visited her village in June, Kate came along toward the end of our session despite feeling uncomfortable and nervous. The welcome she received put her at ease and encouraged her to return at a slightly earlier time the next week. Whilst with us, Kate spoke to another local resident, George, who joined us for a coffee on his break from working to fix a fence near the van. George works as a handy man and gardener for several local people. Kate connected with George via social media whilst with us and arranged for him to do some regular gardening. We were delighted to see Kate grow in confidence over her return visits to the van where she began talking confidently to other new people, smiling, and building local connections.



**rural coffee  
connect**

connecting people one cup at a time



**COMMUNITY  
FUND**



This project is funded by the European Social Fund and the National Lottery Community Fund

\*Participants must meet all eligibility criteria to be considered for entry onto the programme



# Tackling Rural Unemployment

**Well 2020 certainly turned out to be an unexpected year! I think it's safe to say no matter who you are or where you are from it's had a huge impact on us all in some way, shape or form. Here at the Work.Live.Leicestershire project our team have done a fantastic job of adapting the way we have delivered outreach and keywork. Our partners have also adjusted to the circumstances of Covid-19 to be able to deliver a more tailored approach for our participants.**

During Covid19, outreach came with its challenges, no more could we have our drop-in sessions or hold events to meet people face to face. This led to difficulty in forming new relationships with the communities we work in. Luckily the WiLL team are resilient! We were fortunate enough to secure two market stalls when the restrictions eased, one in Coalville and one in Melton Mowbray (Covid19 regulated) which helped us spread the word of WiLL. We also took to the internet and social media achieving the promotion of WiLL in a safe, fresh and current manner.

We created tailored and themed advertisements on a range of platforms, including a short video (which you can view on our RCC Facebook page) and the response we got from the public was fantastic. We've had so much engagement from people that really needed our help and it's been a pleasure to work with them positively during these hard and uncertain times.

Throughout the pandemic so far our RCC WiLL project keyworkers have been more important than ever to ensure that participants feel supported by offering help to develop a plan for moving forward in their lives and to reach their goals. Covid-19 has thrown up issues such as internet accessibility, lack of voluntary roles to access and companies altering their workforces depending on demand. Keyworkers and project partners have continued to reach out and help WiLL project participants by keeping nimble and responding by offering more online courses to focus on training, provided over the phone C.V. writing and sourced voluntary roles with outside provision. WiLL project keyworkers became a consistent point of contact with the participants mental health at the forefront of the support offered.

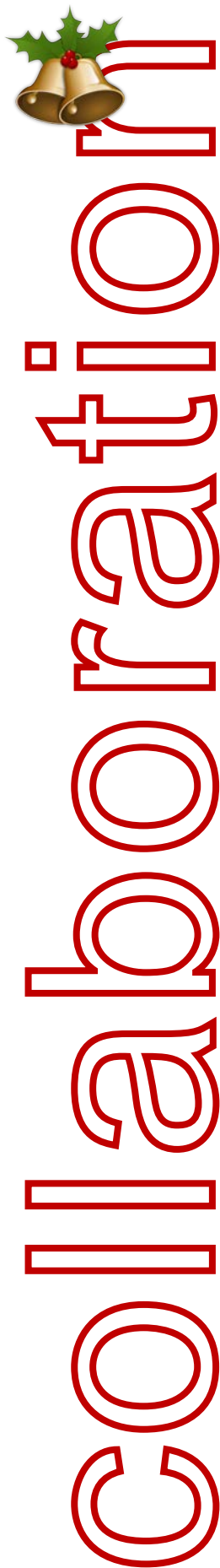
Outreach

## JANICE'S STORY

At the very start of lockdown in March Janice contacted the project in search of support with creating a CV and finding part-time work close to where she lived. Janice stated she was finding looking for employment to be almost impossible as she had no access to the internet and although she used to regularly visit the library to get online the restrictions meant the libraries were closed. Thankfully we were able chat to Janice over the phone to gather the information required to create her a CV. After the CV was created several hard copies were posted to Janice. Alongside this Janice received regular phone calls from her keyworker who highlighted jobs that may be of interest and



supported Janice with any applications she made. Janice said "without the WiLL program I would have never been able to have a CV. They sent it out to me really quickly which meant I could begin handing it out to local companies and be in a good position to find a job. I could never have achieved this without support from the WiLL project."



# Our Support for Village Halls

2020 has been a tough year for village and community halls. In addition to the normal pressures of maintaining and managing a safe multi use facility, events this year have led to a huge array of additional challenges, disruption and unprecedented uncertainty.

For our small team, 2020 has been a year like no other. Throughout the pandemic we have tried to share as much information and resource as we can to help halls overcome the challenges of safely managing their facility throughout the crisis. At times, the complexity and rapid changes to regulations and guidelines, coupled with the sheer volume of enquiries we have received has been overwhelming. Despite the pressure we have been under, our team has responded excellently, ensuring that all enquiries are followed up effectively and that updates to guidance and resources are shared with the hundreds of facilities on our ever expanding database.

Unsurprisingly, the huge increase in demand for advice and support with managing village and community halls this year is not restricted to Leicestershire and Rutland. As many of you will know, our support forms part of a national offer delivered collectively by our partners across the Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) Network, almost all of who have seen an incredible increase in demand without any increase in funding or staff resource. One thing that has become abundantly clear is that without working collectively with our colleagues across the ACRE Network, sharing knowledge, expertise and resources, there is no way that we could have dealt with the demand or provided the level of quality information and advice we have locally.

This collective approach is one that we plan to expand and build on as we move forward from Covid-19, of course with our ACRE Network partners, but also with village and community halls within our area. We believe by supporting halls to work together to share knowledge, experience and resources, we can collectively help to secure the long term success and prosperity of all village and community halls in our area.

As a starting point we are delighted to confirm that we have formed an exciting partnership with Warwickshire RCC (WRCC) to bring together village and community halls from Leicestershire, Rutland, Warwickshire and Solihull. As well as the continued provision of our existing services

and resources, we will be rolling out a package of new training and awareness sessions for those managing facilities and developing a forum for halls across the region to connect, share and explore opportunities for collective action and support.





**LOOK OUT FOR OUR NEW EXPANDED SERVICE  
LAUNCHING EARLY 2021**



**The rate of suicide is  
three times higher  
in males than females**

**#StartAConversation**  
**if you are worried about a  
friend or colleague. Together  
suicide is preventable.**

**START A  
CONVERSATION**

**SUICIDE**  
*is preventable*

**[StartAConversation.co.uk](http://StartAConversation.co.uk)**



# Lockdown and Suicide

**A core part of our charitable work is to raise awareness of the issue of suicide. Our experience in this field has taught us that it is just as important to challenge stigma, myths and misconceptions around the issue as it is to inform people about the facts.**

Some months ago, a figure emerged, perpetuated on social media, that the number of deaths by suicide nationally had increased 200% since the Covid19 lockdown was introduced. This figure is false, however we continue to see and hear it quoted regularly through our day to day work.

So why is it important to challenge this claim of a 200% increase in suicide? We know that how we talk about suicide is important – both to those in distress and potentially at risk of suicide, and to those bereaved by a death by suicide. We should not give the impression that suicide is inevitable. We believe that suicide is preventable. Erroneous claims that a rise in suicide is inevitable may prompt some people in distress to feel their situation is hopeless and that they have no alternative – thus reducing the likelihood of them reaching out for help.

On 9 November, the National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Safety in Mental Health (NCISH) released ‘real time surveillance’ suicide data for 2020 covering several parts of England, with a total population of 9 million. The month by month figures are reassuring: there has been no rise in suicide following lockdown. This should not lead to complacency of course; any death by suicide is an individual tragedy, and likely to cause distress and grief to many others. We should also be alert that, in the words of Professor Louis Appleby (NCISH), “lockdown itself may not be the biggest threat to mental health. That may come from the economic fall-out yet to bite its hardest”.

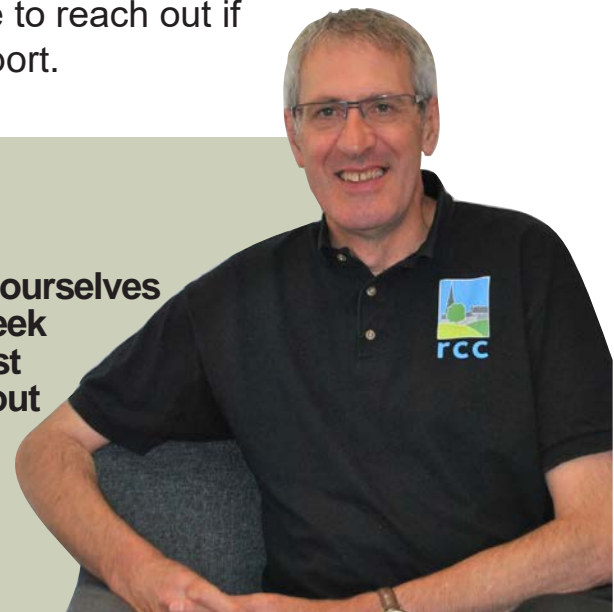
In short, the causes of suicide are complex and multiple, but we should all be alert to individual risk, and feel confident and able to reach out if we ourselves, or someone we know needs help or support.

## A MESSAGE FROM MIKE

**It has never been more important for each of us to keep ourselves aware of the facts around suicide and to know how to seek help for ourselves or those around us if needed. The best place to start is to visit [StartACoversation.co.uk](https://StartACoversation.co.uk) to find out more and to pledge your support for our campaign.**

**For latest details about our suicide awareness training sessions you can e-mail me on [training@ruralcc.org.uk](mailto:training@ruralcc.org.uk).**

DEAD  
SWARE



leicestershire and rutland

# rural

**communities week**

**19-23 april**

#ruralcommunitiescan



**rcc**

## CELEBRATING RURAL COMMUNITIES

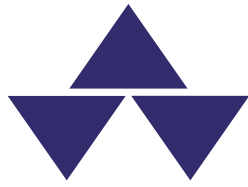
Sadly following the cancellation of the 2020 Rural Awards, and due to the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions into early next year, we have taken the tough decision not to run the Awards as normal in 2021. Whilst our celebration dinner would not normally take place until October, it is simply not practical for us to launch the process for entries and judging in such uncertain times.

**ruralcc.org.uk**  
**@YourRCC**

In the absence of our Awards for another year, we still want to take time to celebrate the amazing impact local people, groups and facilities can have on our rural communities. To achieve this in 2021, we are delighted to announce that we will run the first Leicestershire and Rutland Rural Communities Week from 19-23 April.

Please keep your eyes out on our website and social media in the New Year for more details about the activities and events we have planned across the week.





Allied Westminster



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