

Information Sheet

A group discussion about social connection

Would you be willing to join a group discussion about what it means to you to feel socially connected in your community?

The University of East Anglia (UEA) is conducting a study to understand what it means to feel socially connected in the East of England. The study is being led by PhD Candidate, Miss Alice Wreford, assisted by Professor Tracey Sach, Dr Adam Wagner, Professor Fiona Poland, Dr Linda Birt, Dr Louis LaFortune and Dr Jennifer Whitty. It is funded by the National Institute for Health Research Applied Research Collaboration East of England and the UEA.

Organised social activities help build good social connections, which help improve health and well-being. The types of social connections we like to create are different, depending on who we are. Therefore, we would be interested to hear what it means to you to feel involved in your community and what you look for in your connections.

The overall aim of the research is to help improve the ways in which local authority and government decision-makers compare organised groups, which help create social connections across the East of England.

What is involved?

This supportive group discussion will be 1-hour, with up to 6 other people. 2 researchers will be there to help direct and organise the discussion.

You will be asked to think about what it means to you, or what helps you, feel connected to others in your community. We will share ideas, one idea in turn, until we run out of ideas. We will then discuss these ideas as a group, before we ask you, individually, which is the most important.

Before the discussion, we will ask you to complete a short questionnaire (5-10 minutes). The answers to these questions will help us better understand and contextualise the results we get. Helping us show local authority and government decision-makers what different people look for when they take part in social activity services.

We are offering both virtual discussions (via online video conference e.g., Teams or Zoom, where you will be asked to leave your camera on) and in-person discussions within local community spaces (e.g., your local library or village hall). We will tell you which in-person location is near to you once you have registered your interest to take part. You may then decide if you are happy to attend. All in-person discussion will follow up to date COVID-19 guidance.

Do I have to take part?

No, it is up to you to decide. If you decide to take part and then change your mind, you can stop at any time. If you stop, then you can also ask for your data to be removed from the study if you wish. If you would like to do this, please contact Miss Alice Wreford using the details at the end of this information sheet.

Are there any disadvantages in taking part?

Discussions about social connection can sometime feel upsetting, particularly if you feel yourself struggling with loneliness. We would like to share some resources with you, where you can find support:

- “Mind” offers advice and support to anyone struggling with their mental health (<https://bit.ly/3RVGJ25>, 0300 123 3393)
- “NHS” website offering lots of information, including a number of helplines for those who are feeling lonely (<https://bit.ly/3cHLYeX>)
- “Age UK” offers a range of support to help people age well (<https://bit.ly/2JadY1t> 0800 678 1602).

Will my involvement be confidential?

Yes. We will ask you to complete the consent form, which will ask for your name only. You will then be assigned a unique identification (ID) number; all data relating to your responses will be stored using this ID number. In the initial questionnaire will ask your age, ethnicity, religion and which city, town, or village you live in. We will link this to your ID number in case you ask for us to remove your responses from the study. The file linking your name with your ID number will be stored separately. Your details will only be seen by researchers running this study and will not be passed onto other organisations.

The group discussion will be voice and video recorded and listened to by the research team at the UEA. You will have the opportunity to request a typed transcript should you wish. Your views will be combined with those of others who are taking part in the study. We are likely to illustrate any reports we write with quotations from the discussion, but we won't include your name; all quotations will be anonymised and labelled with generic terms e.g., “participant 1”. If you are involved in a video call discussion, we ask that nobody record the sessions.

All information collected will be stored in compliance with the 2018 Data Protection Act and the 2018 General Data Protection Regulation. We will process all data on a password protected UEA computer with personal data only stored on UEA OneDrive (access limited to research team members only). At the end of the study, all information that identifies you will be deleted; only anonymised data will remain. After 10 years all anonymised data will be destroyed.

If concerns about your or someone else's health and well-being or safety is raised, confidentiality may be breached. In this instance details may be passed on to appropriate emergency services.

What will happen to the results from the study?

The results from the study will be used to understand what we look for in our social relationships as we age in the East of England. The results from this study will be added to our work to help show what types of interventions you, the East of England community, would like to see funded.

Who can answer my question?

If you have any questions about the study, please contact Alice Wreford, the Study Researcher by email a.wreford@uea.ac.uk. If you have any questions that can't be answered by Alice Wreford, or if you have any concerns about how the research is being done, please contact Professor Kristy Sanderson at UEA who is independent of this research. They are reachable by email Kristy.Sanderson@uea.ac.uk.