



What makes us healthy?

# Social connections

**Strong social connections within and between communities is an important factor in achieving good health and living longer lives.**



**Stronger social connections can mean you become more confident, have increased skills, and a strong sense of purpose and hope**, which we know are important first steps in being able to address other factors which affect health.

**Some groups of people are particularly affected by social isolation.** Due to barriers in society, disabled people and people with learning disabilities are much more likely to be isolated and have fewer meaningful social connections compared to non-disabled people. Migrants and refugees are also disproportionately affected, for example due to language barriers and stigmatisation.



“Anxiety can be crippling. It can rule your life. Fundamentally, we’re social beings and coming together and connecting with other people is healing in itself.”

**Diane Bertie, project member and volunteer, Independent Arts, Active Communities**

“Being involved with Proud2Be has literally changed my life in the most positive and inspiring way. It’s a safe space where, for the first time in my life, I could actually be myself. I have gained confidence, met some wonderfully supportive friends and no longer feel isolated and alone.”

**Ange Hoey, project member and volunteer, Proud2Be, Active Communities**



The effect of **social isolation on mortality** is comparable to the impact of well-known risk factors such as **obesity, and has a similar impact to cigarette smoking.**<sup>2</sup>



**94 per cent** of participants (Active Communities Programme) felt that they were **making new friends** from the network they accessed through the project.<sup>3</sup>



1. Holt-Lunstad J, Smith TB, Layton JB. *Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-analytic Review*. PLoS Med 7(7): e1000316, 2010.  
2. Holt-Lunstad J, Smith TB, Layton JB. *Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-analytic Review*. PLoS Med 7(7): e1000316, 2010.  
3. People's Health Trust, *Active Communities Evaluation*, 2020.