

Youth focus: North East

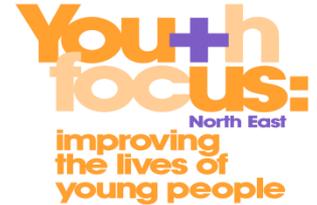
Tackling loneliness and isolation in Northern
England – Institute for Local Governance
Seminar – 7 December 2018

Steve Watson – Development Officer

improving
the lives of
young people

www.youthfocusne.org.uk

About Us

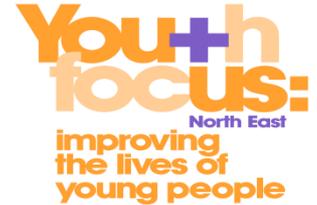


Established in 1989, we are an independent youth work organisation which works across the whole of the North East. Our work is focussed on those aged 11 to 25.

We have always been based in Gateshead, and three years ago we opened an office in Middlesbrough; giving us a strong presence in the north and the south of the region.

We work to improve the lives of young people.

About Us



Our projects and programmes cover a wide range of themes. These include:

Mental Health
Heritage

Social Action
Politics

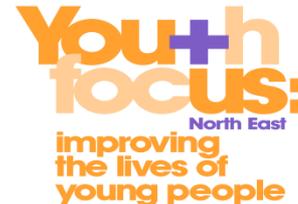
Employability
Intergenerational

Culture and

Developing new approaches and new projects with young people.

Over the last two years we have been developing and delivering projects that are specifically about youth loneliness and isolation.

A definition (... it's not the only one though)



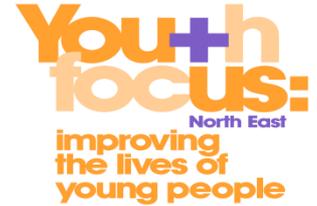
What is loneliness?

Loneliness is the difference between desired and actual social relations - either in quantity or quality of relationships (or both) (Perlman & Peplau, 1981) .

What is isolation?

A state in which the individual lacks a sense of belonging socially, lacks engagement with others, has a minimal number of social contacts and they are deficient in fulfilling and quality relationships (Nicholson, 2009).

Is it an issue?



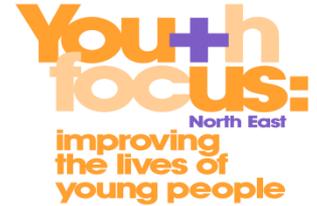
65% of young people feel loneliness is a problem for people their age.

81% cite the fear of people's reactions as a barrier to speaking about loneliness.

Young people are four times as likely to reach out to a friend who seems lonely, than admitting they feel lonely themselves.

Young people feel loneliness more intensely and more frequently than any other age group, new research has found. Two-fifths (40 per cent) of people aged 16-24 say they feel lonely often or very often.

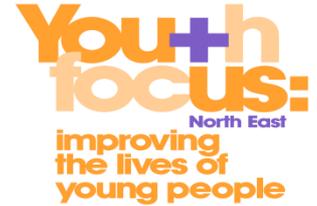
Is it an issue?



Loneliness can be as harmful for health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

(Social relationships and mortality risk: a meta-analytic review.
Holt-Lunstad J, Smith TB, Layton JB. PLoS Med 2010;7)

What we are doing?



We run a weekly drop-in called Fast Friends, which helps connect young people who are lonely or isolated, or are at risk of becoming so.

We are working with volunteers at Newcastle University to understand the challenges faced by students and actions we might take.

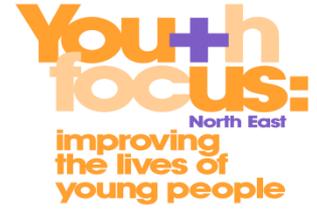
We have made a film with young people called 'We Are You', to help support conversations around loneliness and isolation.

Big Days - Alternative Prom

This is the recent Big Days alternative prom attended by 100 young people who missed out on their own school prom because they didn't fit in, had no one to go with or were not allowed to go. Dresses and suits were loaned to the young people free of charge and a host of volunteers helped out with hair and make-up.



Causes?

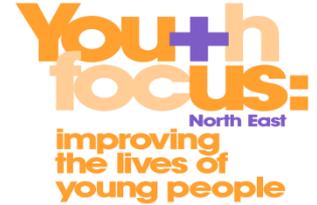


Whatever you do, don't forget to mention social media!!

We can make a difference...



Final thoughts



It can feel overwhelming at times – can I, the organisation I work for, all of you in this room ever do enough to tackle loneliness?

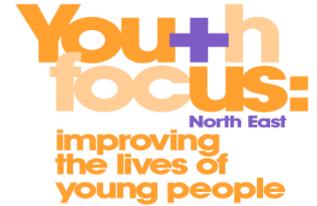
There is no single solution to youth loneliness – the most effective approaches begin with a small step and might take a long time.

How can we get people talking about the issue?

How can we get people thinking about the issue?

How can we get wider society to respond?

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