

## The Chatty Café Scheme Case Study

### Growing a Network of Chatty Cafes in Brackley, West Northamptonshire

This case study explains how one man (Jon Haslam), started a Chatter & Natter table in his hometown of Brackley, and how his efforts have inspired others to set up their own Chatter & Natter tables in different venues around the town. It shows how one person can encourage others to volunteer and feel empowered to grow the chatty café concept, with support and encouragement from the original group.

#### How many Chatter & Natter tables are running in Brackley?

- 5 venues offering Chatter & Natter tables in Brackley; The Old Fire Station, Paisley Pear Pub, Esquires Coffee, Brackley Medical Centre Café and Care Home visits.
- Total number of volunteers for 5 venues = 6
- Total number of regular attendees visiting Chatter & Natter tables in Brackley every month = 216
- Number of friendships built and conversations over 1 year = 1,000's!!

#### Background Information

In late 2021, Jon Haslam joined The Chatty Café Scheme as a telephone befriender volunteer. After providing weekly calls to support a lady who was experiencing loneliness, Jon thought about offering his services in a face-to-face capacity and considered if he could run a Chatter & Natter table in his local café.

#### Finding a venue

Jon set the idea in motion and approached The Lounge Bar, Brackley to see if they could offer a table once a week, where anyone can come and sit, talk and socialise. Richard, the Manager of The Lounge Bar loved the idea, and Jon got started. Jon hosted the table on a Thursday afternoon and was always on hand to welcome anyone who would like to go along.

Word quickly spread around the town, and Jon's Chatter & Natter table proved to be a big hit. Mayor of Brackley, Paul Wiltshire popped in for a natter and to meet those at the table. He said: "Loneliness or even just being alone does seem to be increasing in this day and age and the opportunity to chat with other people in a welcoming and safe environment without further commitment is very welcome."

In early 2024, Jon moved venues to The Old Fire Station and now hosts their Chatter & Natter table on a Tuesday from 3pm – 5pm.



On average the Chatter & Natter table (incredibly!) attracts around 150 people each month. Around 80 of them are regular attendees, and others drop in and out.

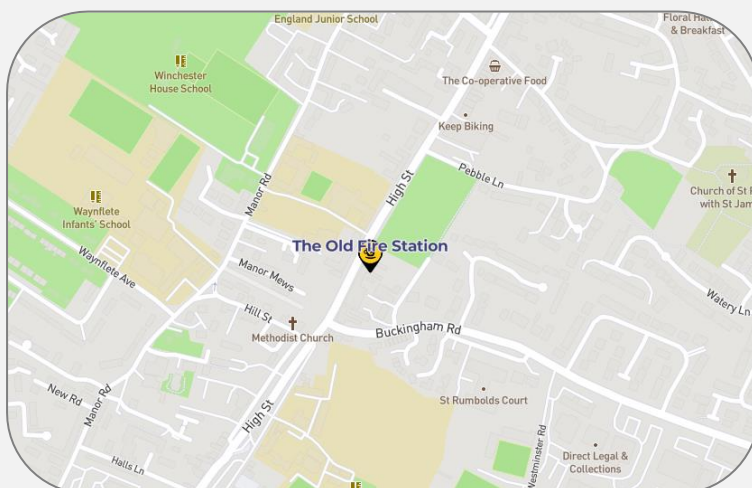


*The Chatter & Natter group in action, at The Old Fire Station, Brackley. Meetings are held every Tuesday 3pm – 5pm.*

### **What do the attendees say?**

Colin joined the group having been recommended by his doctor's surgery link worker. "I was suffering from depression and had very little access to company. I quickly became a regular and it has been wonderful to feel the benefits over time, building friendships and being part of the community."

Gill lost her husband in May 2024. She had attended bereavement sessions and then having been referred by the local social prescriber at the surgery she came to the Chatty Cafe a couple of months ago. "I was a little intimidated and nervous but after a couple of weeks felt more confident and really enjoy going. Gill is now a regular and whilst still upset at her loss, she explained that the Chatty Cafe group was showing her that she could still live and enjoy some happy moments without feeling guilty."





## Esquires Coffee – Hosted by Jo, Mondays 2pm – 4pm

Jo went along to The Old Fire Station and got to know Jon and the other attendees. The visit inspired her to set up her own Chatter & Natter table on a different day of the week in another venue.

Hosting the table on Mondays from 2pm – 4pm, Jo explained that quite a few attendees from the other Chatty Café groups also come along to her table. Jo said 'offering my Chatter & Natter table on a Monday is a great support for those who spend most of the weekend on their own, so it's good we can offer this chance to chat with others, as the week begins.'

### What do the attendees say?

"I suffered a bereavement early this year and had very little contact with others at home. I feel that Chatty Cafe is an outlet for my loneliness and a huge help."







## Paisley Pear – Hosted by Brenda and Claire, Thursday evenings, 6:30pm – 9pm

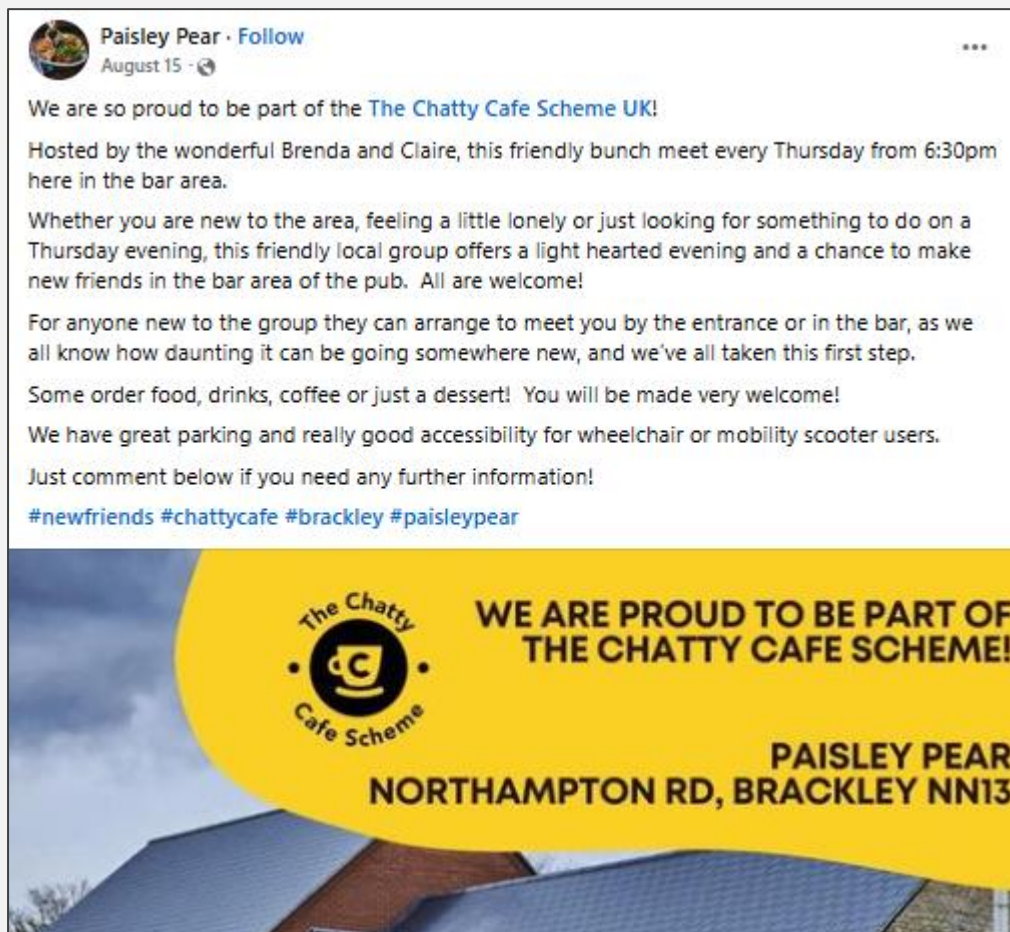
Brenda and Claire are regular attendees of Jon's group at The Old Fire Station. Quite often, attendees from The Old Fire Station would meet up and go to the pub in the evenings. To make this more of a regular thing, Brenda approached the local pub (Paisley Pear) and asked if they'd be happy to offer a table as a Chatter & Natter space, so they could open it up to more people and offer an evening group.

The pub quickly agreed, and Brenda and Claire trained as Chatty Café volunteers and started hosting a Chatter & Natter table at the pub in February 2024. The table runs on a Thursday evening, 6:30pm- 9pm.

### What do the attendees say?

Very recently a lady joined our table after the death of her husband. She has openly said that joining our local chatty cafe tables has helped her hugely alongside her GP's support. She was suffering from immense grief and feelings of isolation which have reduced since joining our group.

The pub has been a great support in helping raise awareness of the Chatter & Natter table:



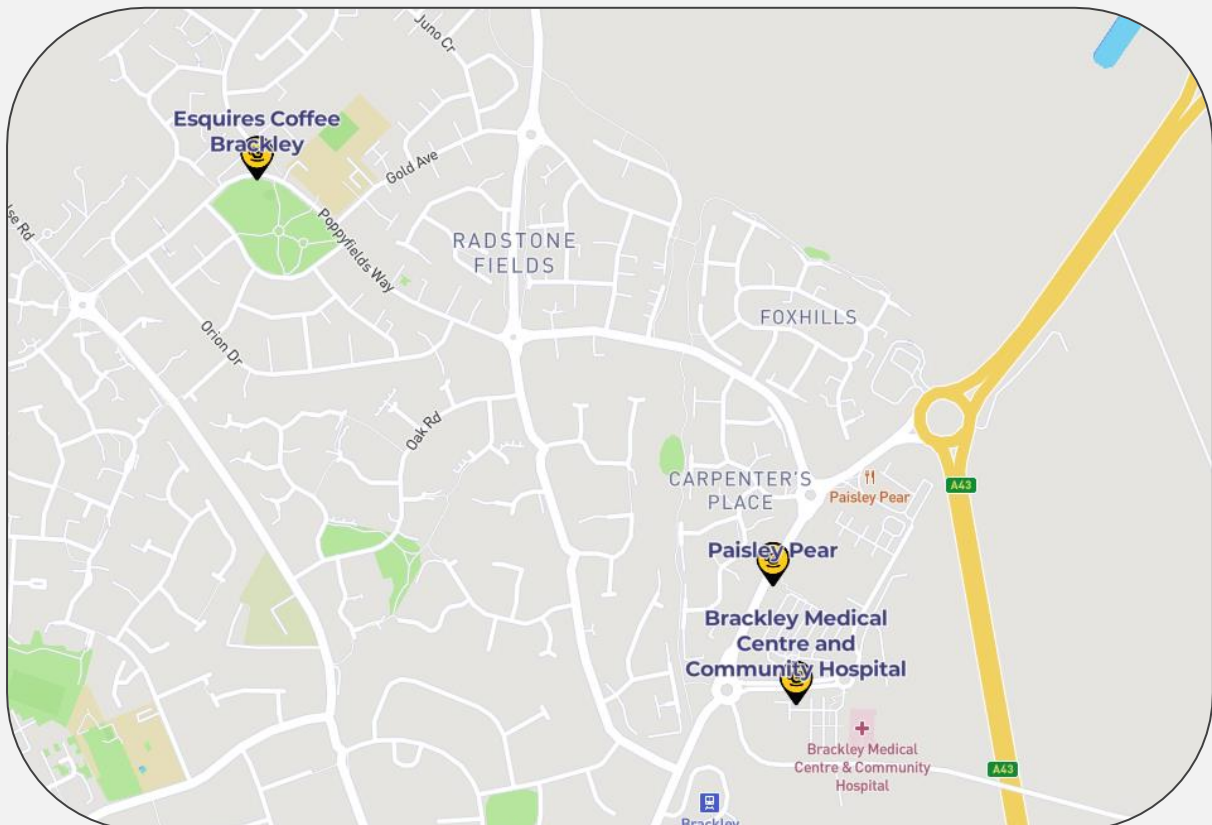


Lots of smiley faces at the pub.

### Brackley Medical Centre - Hosted by Lynne, Thursday 10am - 12pm

Brackley Medical Centre is a GP surgery and Community Hospital, with an independent small cafe on-site. They wanted to make it a community cafe for everyone not just those visiting the doctors.

A member of staff hosts the table to ensure there is also someone there to welcome people. Adding to the number of Chatty Cafes in Brackley, often attendees go to all venues and drop into the different groups running across the week.



## Brackley Care Home Visits – Hosted by James

James is a regular attendee of Jon's table at The Old Fire Station. James' wife felt he needed to socialise more and encouraged him to go along to Jon's Chatter & Natter table. James reluctantly went along but has found the impact on him has been tremendously positive.

James had the innovative idea of taking the Chatty Café 'on tour' to offer conversations to those who might really need it but due long long-term health conditions, might be struggling to leave their home and access the cafes in the town. Whilst residents at care homes might be provided with warmth and medical support, for those without any family or regular visitors, the lack of conversation can be detrimental to their mental well-being.

This led to the idea of taking the Chatty Café concept into care homes and in 2023, James trained as a Chatty Café volunteer to help get this idea off the ground.

The Manager of Brackley Care Home said; *"The regular monthly meeting up of the friendly faces from the local Brackley Chatty Cafe is always an event that our residents look forward to and it is gratifying to watch the friendships being formed."*

### Brackley Care Home proud to host community café

Published on 16th November 2023



## Raising Awareness

The local Town Council have been great at sharing details of all the Chatter & Natter tables in Brackley, below is a recent article that appeared in a resident's newsletter.





COMMUNITY NEWS

## CHATTY CAFES ARE GROWING IN BRACKLEY!

The Chatty Café Scheme is a non-profit organization aiming to reduce loneliness and social isolation by providing opportunities for people to meet up and chat face-to-face. Participating venues designate a table as a 'Chatter & Natter' table, creating a space to bring people together for chatting. The Chatty Café Scheme runs a volunteer programme and trains local people to host the Chatter & Natter tables, at a set day and time every week.

We are delighted to share the news that more 'Chatter & Natter' tables have started across Brackley. If you'd like to meet other people for a chat, check out the participating venues below:





**DAY TIME SESSIONS:**

Esquires Coffee Brackley, Juno Crescent, Brackley NN13  
Every Monday, 2pm – 4pm

The Old Fire Station, 37 High St, Brackley, NN13 7DW  
Every Tuesday, 3pm - 5pm

Brackley Medical Centre and Community Hospital, Wellington Rd,  
Brackley, NN13 6QZ  
Every Thursday, 10am - 12pm

Helmdon Community Larder, 20 Church St, Helmdon, Brackley, NN13 5QJ  
Every Friday, 1.30 - 3.30 p.m

**EVENING SESSION:**

Paisley Pear, Northampton Rd, Brackley, NN13 5FH  
Every Friday, 3pm - 7.30pm

### Training and Support

To support other Chatty Table volunteers across the UK, Jon Haslam has led interactive training sessions online, to help those needing advice and ideas to improve attendance at their tables. His 'hands-on' experience as a volunteer helps shape The Chatty Café Scheme's training and volunteer programmes. In April 2024, Jon joined The Chatty Café Scheme's Board of Directors; to help steer the organisation and ensure it remains close to its mission to reduce loneliness.

### Awards

Jon has been shortlisted for the 'West Northamptonshire Male Role Model Awards 2024' for his significant contributions to the local community.

