

Social Inclusion

Being socially included is one of the most powerful protectors of human well-being. Feeling that you are part of a family and community is necessary for feeling comfortable at a personal level, 'in your own skin'. We are social beings and we need to be among others with whom we identify in pursuing common interests in work and leisure. Human beings need to feel endorsed and accepted by the people they live and work with.

In rural areas, there are ways of life and strong community organisations that provide people with a sense of belonging. Agriculture involves communities of farm families who live and work cooperatively alongside each other, often for generations. Local sports clubs provide people of all ages with outlets for playing and spectating. Volunteering is alive and well in rural areas and not only helps those in need but is equally beneficial for volunteers. Involvement with others and maintaining good neighbourly relationships are hugely important for well-being and protecting social inclusion.

However, it is also the case that, inevitably, due to sparse populations, rural areas can lack social diversity. Research has found that for some, rural life can be stifling. Those who feel deep down that they don't 'fit in' are socially excluded and their well-being is at high risk. This can be the case even when the person is a member of an organisation but feels deep down that they are not part of it, but rather playing a role. People can furthermore feel 'stuck', unable to escape to alternative ways of living and working. Research highlights that such situations carry a risk of human susceptibility to suicide.

Minority Groups

Minority groups, such as Lesbian/ Gay/ Bisexual/ Transgender (LGBT) and migrant workers are an important part of rural society. It is important for all members of rural society to seek out membership of groups to which they can feel a sense of belonging and pursue their interests.

Where can I find out more about Social Inclusion?

- Your local farming discussion group
- Ulster Farmers' Union
Tel: 028 9037 0222
- NI Agricultural Producers' Association Tel: 028 8676 5700
- Young Farmers' Clubs of Ulster
Tel: 028 9037 0713
- Your local Rural Community Network organisation:

North Antrim Community Network Limited (NACN) Tel: 028 2177 2100

Rural Area Partnership in Derry Limited (RAPID) Tel: 028 7133 7149

The Antrim Down and Armagh Rural Support Network Ltd NI (TADA) Tel: 028 3839 8888

Cookstown and Western Shores Area Network (CWSAN) Tel: 028 8773 8845

Community Organisation of South Tyrone and Area (COSTA) Tel: 028 8555 6880

County Down Rural Community Network (CDRCN) Tel: 028 4461 2311

Omagh Forum for Rural Associations (OFRA) Tel: 028 8225 1559

Fermanagh Rural Community Network Tel: 028 6632 7006

Men's Sheds

Sheds offer a social space for men of all ages to engage in meaningful leisure activities, whilst chatting to other men from their locality. There are over 50 sheds across Northern Ireland. Tel: 028 9074 9494

Cara Friend

LGB&T Switchboard NI offers a listening ear and support to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender communities. Tel: 0808 8000 390