

OUR SOCIAL SPACE



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Saturday Nights In – Our Speakeasy

Building Social Health Through Community Connection

PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT

Background

Saturday Nights In – Our Speakeasy was developed in response to feedback from participants attending Our Social Space's community programmes. While many people enjoyed regular classes and activities, there was growing demand for relaxed weekend opportunities where people could simply spend time together, meet new people and feel part of a welcoming community.

Our mission is to improve social health by reducing loneliness and strengthening community connection. Saturday Nights In extended this mission beyond weekly classes by creating a monthly programme of welcoming evening events where people could relax, socialise and enjoy shared experiences.

Across twelve months, participants enjoyed a varied programme including film screenings, quiz nights, social dancing, board games and community talks. By offering different activities, the programme appealed to a broad range of interests while encouraging people to return and build lasting friendships.

The programme ran from **July 2025** to **June 2026**.



Why Social Health Matters

Social health – our ability to feel connected, included and valued – is just as important as our physical and mental health.

Many adults experience loneliness or social isolation because of changing life circumstances, caring responsibilities, retirement, poor mental health or simply a lack of welcoming opportunities to meet others. These experiences can affect confidence, wellbeing and a sense of belonging.

Saturday Nights In was built on the belief that small, welcoming community spaces can make a significant difference. By bringing people together around enjoyable shared activities, the project created opportunities for friendships to develop, confidence to grow and community belonging to flourish.

Programme Delivery

During the project we delivered:



Average attendance: 2.6 events per participant

Activities Delivered

4

Film Screenings



3

Quiz Evenings



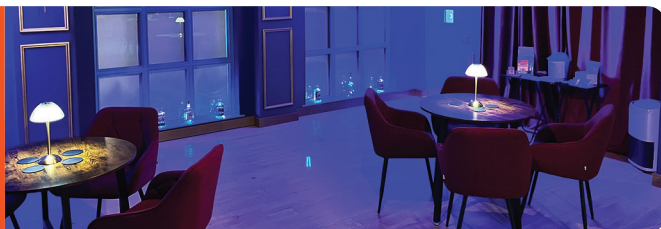
3

Social Dance Evenings



1

Board Game Night



1

Community Talk



Participant Profile

GENDER

64%
Female

36%
Male

AGE RANGE

4%
18–24

11%
25–34

4%
35–44

36%
45–54

29%
55–64

9%
65–74

7%
75+

AREA OF RESIDENCE

47%
Belfast

15%
Lisburn & Castlereagh

15%
Antrim & Newtownabbey

11%
Mid Ulster

4%
Ards & North Down

4%
Mid & East Antrim

2%
Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon

2%
Causeway Coast & Glens

PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTIC

16%
Neurodiverse

9%
Carers

15%
Living with a mental health condition

56%
None of the above

4%
Prefer not to say

Community Impact

Participants told us the project made a real difference.

IMMEDIATE IMPACT

41% felt happier and more uplifted	23% felt more socially connected
14% had fun and enjoyed themselves	13% tried something new
9% felt less lonely	

SINCE ATTENDING

23% made new social connections	23% felt part of a community
22% were attending for the first time	14% said it had improved their mood
9% found something to look forward to	9% felt more confident attending social spaces

Participant Voices

"To me it's inclusiveness and community."

"Escape from everyday life, a chance to relax and build my confidence."

"I really enjoyed the company, the atmosphere was very warm and welcoming."

The Social Impact

Saturday Nights In exceeded its original participation target, engaging **79 people**, compared with the anticipated **30**, across a programme of twelve community events. More importantly, participants returned. With **203 attendances**, people attended an average of **2.6 events each**, suggesting the programme became more than a series of one-off activities. It became a place where people developed confidence, built friendships and felt part of a welcoming community.

Participant feedback consistently highlighted three themes:

- A welcoming atmosphere.
- Opportunities to connect with others.
- Improved wellbeing through enjoyable shared experiences.

Many participants described looking forward to each month's event, making new social connections and feeling more confident attending community spaces.

Wider Impact and Sustainability

Saturday Nights In demonstrated that low-cost, community-led evening activities can play an important role in reducing social isolation and strengthening social health. The learning gathered through this project has informed the continued development of Our Social Space's wider community programme. Film screenings have evolved into **The Flicks Hut** community cinema, while Our Speakeasy continues to provide welcoming opportunities for connection through themed events, music and community activities.

The project has shown that creating spaces where people can simply spend time together can have a lasting impact on confidence, belonging and community wellbeing.

Acknowledgement

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the **Community Foundation Northern Ireland**, through the **Micro Community Fund**, for supporting **Saturday Nights In – Our Speakeasy**.

This investment enabled Our Social Space to establish a new programme of monthly community evening events that brought people together through film, music, games, conversation and shared experiences.

The project exceeded its participation target and demonstrated how welcoming, low-cost community activities can strengthen social health, reduce isolation and foster lasting social connections.

We are grateful to Community Foundation Northern Ireland for investing in community-led initiatives that help people connect, belong and thrive.



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