



The County Durham Cree Network

Did you know that Durham Community Action and Durham County Council's Public Health Team support 40 Crees across County Durham?

The Cree project launched in 2011, originally based on the Australian Men's Shed movement (Cree being a local colloquialism for sheds). The network has evolved and expanded to offer safe, communal spaces to men, women and young people who may be experiencing poor mental health, risk of social isolation, self-harm, suicide and require support around their general health and wellbeing.

Cree groups support people of differing ages across County Durham by offering a range of activities including horticulture, arts and crafts and various social opportunities. The majority also provide food and trips out as well as other support services such as advice regarding benefits, housing or finances and opportunities to wash and shower. Peer support has been identified by members as the most important benefit of joining the Cree groups.

The 40 Cree groups work well together, sharing good practice and meeting regularly at the Cree network, hosted by DCA on a quarterly basis. A new website was also launched in November 2021 to raise awareness of the Crees. You can use the [interactive map](#) to find out about Crees near you, the activities taking place, training opportunities and wellbeing support for Cree staff and volunteers. You can also access local health data to help further understand the needs of Cree members.

The Cree is all about building strength and emotional wellbeing for people who feel vulnerable. Evidence shows that people who attend Crees become more resilient and less reliant on traditional health measures as they learn how to manage their own wellbeing. The wider community benefits from this, as Cree coordinators note that members are less likely to seek out the support of other services and more likely to use the tools, support and friendship found within the Cree group.

One male Cree member said: "This group has saved my life. I don't know what I would have done if you weren't there."

To find out more about the work of these groups and why they are so special you can contact our Cree Coordinator susan.tron@durhamcommunityaction.org.uk or visit our [website](#)