

Name of meeting: Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC)

Date: 26 July 2022

Title of report: Loneliness and Social Isolation in Kirklees Post Pandemic – Proposed Scrutiny Scope

Purpose of report:

This report is to:

- Provide background information about tackling loneliness.
- Propose an outline scope to scrutinise the response to loneliness and isolation as we emerge from the Covid- 19 pandemic. Officers are keen to explore helpful ideas and suggestions to further develop the local response. The work is intended to support the Kirklees loneliness strategy and ultimately support the reduction in loneliness across Kirklees.

For Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to:

1. Note the information in the report
2. Review, discuss and approve the final scope and subsequent work programme.

Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	Not Applicable
Key Decision - Is it in the <u>Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports)?</u>	Key Decision – No
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	Not Applicable
Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> & name	Richard Parry 7/7/22
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance?	Not Applicable
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning?	Not Applicable
Cabinet member	Councillor Musarrat Khan – Health and Social Care

Electoral wards affected: This piece of work covers the Kirklees-wide response to tackling loneliness.

Public or private: Public

Has GDPR been considered? This report does not contain any personal information. Any evidence gathering exercises as part of the scrutiny work will be considered where required.

1. Summary

Loneliness is part of the human condition and is experienced by most people at some times in their life. Chronic loneliness, however, can have a strong impact on a person's physical and emotional wellbeing. Social isolation can be a risk for someone becoming lonely.

Kirklees Council and partners developed a vision and strategic goals for tackling loneliness in 2018/19.

The subsequent Covid -19 pandemic impacted on many people's ability to socialise and sustain meaningful connection. National evidence and local anecdotal evidence from citizens and local organisations suggest that recovery from the pandemic is unequal. Some people have resumed usual activities with relative ease, whilst others have faced increased barriers due to their emotional and physical health and other personal circumstances.

This report sets out a proposed approach to scrutinise the response in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic and inform a future collaborative approach across partners.

Council officers and partners through the loneliness steering group are keen to take on board any helpful ideas and suggestions, to further develop the local response. The work is intended to support the Kirklees Loneliness Strategy and ultimately support the reduction in loneliness across Kirklees.

2. Information Required to Take a Decision

Background

The national strategy for tackling loneliness (Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport) (DCMS), 2018) published October 2018, adopts the following definition of loneliness as:

'a subjective, unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship. It happens when we have a mismatch between quantity and quality of social relationships that we have, and those that we want'.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/936725/6.4882_DCMS_Loneliness_Strategy_web_Update_V2.pdf

The strategy emphasises that it is not the same as social isolation although they can be linked or overlap. It is possible to feel lonely when surrounded by people and conversely, some people do not feel lonely in solitude. Social isolation can lead to loneliness. It is important to consider this as a risk factor.

Chronic loneliness can have a strong impact on a person's quality of life. The national strategy (DCMS, 2018) cites research that suggests that loneliness is associated with:

- greater risk of inactivity
- smoking and risk-taking behaviour
- lower performance at work
- increased risk of heart disease and stroke
- increased risk of depression

- low self-esteem
- reported sleep problems and increased stress response
- cognitive decline and increased risk of Alzheimer’s disease.
- being more likely to be readmitted to hospital or have a longer stay
- being more likely to visit a GP, Accident and Emergency departments and enter local authority funded care.

What Works for Wellbeing reviewed evidence on effective interventions to address loneliness and concluded:

“Across the interventions that had an effect on reducing loneliness, we found these important mechanisms:

- ***no one-size-fits all approach*** to alleviating loneliness
- ***tailoring interventions*** based on the needs of the people they are designed for
- ***supporting people to form meaningful relationships***
- ***developing approaches that reduce stigma***”

<https://whatworkswellbeing.org/category/loneliness/>

This reinforces the need for personalised responses.

Kirklees Council and Partners developed a vision and strategic goals for tackling loneliness across the life course:

Vision:

‘Kirklees is a place where people and communities are more connected and support each other to develop meaningful relationships and reduce loneliness’.

Strategic goals:

- Making loneliness everyone’s business – encouraging citizens, front line workers, planners, and systems leaders to have regard to tackling loneliness as part of day-to-day life or working life.
- Making the most of existing assets to address loneliness – citizens, communities, staff, spaces, and support offers that can support or signpost to help.
- Understanding the experiences and expectations for different groups, communities throughout the life course – to support tailored responses.
- Fostering personalised approaches for those that need extra support to overcome barriers to developing meaningful connection

According to Campaign to End Loneliness (CEL), the Covid -19 Pandemic has impacted on people in an unequal way. People who were already at risk of loneliness (due to existing factors such mental ill health) were impacted more by the restrictions. CEL also anticipated that some people would recover spontaneously following the pandemic, but others would face barriers to making social connections due to their emotional and physical health or other personal circumstances.

Appendix 1 Summarises some of the existing intelligence and examples of some of the work carried out to date.

Options

Further to discussions with the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) and an informal meeting of the OSMC in April 2022, the following scope has been developed. The scope is to enable the Kirklees response to be considered in light of the Covid- 19 pandemic and recovery. The scope will cover loneliness through the life course and will include carers. It will also consider social isolation and other risk factors for loneliness. This work is important for supporting ongoing work to tackle loneliness and local ownership of the issue. The strategy is intended to be a whole systems approach to tackling loneliness - with Kirklees Council, partners citizens and communities all playing their part.

Rationale:

This piece of work is important because:

- We do not know the full extent of loneliness or whether we are seeing the tip of the iceberg coming through currently because of Covid -19.
- We know that there are a range of local assets that support loneliness locally, but we want to make sure that our most vulnerable people do not fall through any gaps.
- This scope cuts across all 4 strategic goals in the loneliness strategy:
 - Making loneliness everyone's business
 - Making the most of existing assets
 - Personalised support
 - Understanding lived experience across different groups.

The scope will seek to address the following questions:

- What is the relevant national and local research evidence on the prevalence of loneliness prior to the Covid- 19 pandemic and since the Covid-19 pandemic?
- What work has been carried out to date to address loneliness in Kirklees?
- What factors such as social isolation and other issues contribute towards loneliness and how have they changed during the pandemic?
- In light of the changes brought about by the pandemic, what are the protective factors, actions or interventions needed now? In the future?
- What are the key challenges to enabling meaningful social connection for people who are experiencing loneliness in Kirklees following the Covid-19 pandemic? How could responses to the challenges be developed or improved?
- How are Councillors/Officers/ services within the council identifying loneliness, offering support and signposting? Are there any plans in place to develop this? How could this be improved?
- How can ward Councillors and scrutiny further support this work going forward?
- How are partners currently identifying loneliness, offering support and signposting? Are there any plans in place to develop this? How could this be improved?

Outcome that we hope to achieve through scrutiny work in the longer term

Reducing loneliness and isolation is the longer-term goal of this work. The work will help to ensure that:

- more lonely people are being reached and supported in a personalised way,

- the profile of loneliness as an issue is further raised across council and partners to take collective action,
- there is improved collaboration across partners in Kirklees.

Risks

- Recommendations could be challenging to implement without resource to support this.

Resource Requirements/ Costs

- The scope is very broad covering the whole life-course, so it is difficult to anticipate the full resource required at the outset. In response to this, the proposed scope may benefit from a phased approach; the first phase being focused on trying to better understand the impact that Covid continues to have and what it is like to live with Covid-19 as an endemic virus in society.
- The ongoing approach to this scrutiny scope may benefit from a flexible response depending on emerging findings and responses can be tailored accordingly.
- The existing loneliness partnership steering group with representatives from the council, Third Sector, Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Locala is well placed to plan the response.
- It is anticipated that the work outlined within the scope will require project support currently estimated at 18.5 hours during the work and including the final report to scrutiny.

Timescale

- It is proposed that the work starts in August 2022 with initial visits to hear personal experiences, taking place in August and September 2022.
- The OSMC will consider if there are any other areas of focus and whether further evidence is required.
- Once all the evidence is compiled, the OSMC will consider the findings and any recommendations it may wish to make to the relevant Cabinet Member.

Services and Agencies involved

Kirklees Loneliness Steering Group

- Kirklees Council
- Yorkshire Children's Centre - representing Befriending Partnership and Community Anchors
- Clinical Commissioning Group
- Northorpe Hall
- Third Sector Leaders
- Locala
- Jo Cox Foundation

The Steering group has been recently reviewed and additional partners are being invited to join the group.

A wider range of organisations to be involved in this scrutiny work, as required, including Community investment Funded projects and other community groups.

3. Implications for the Council

Working with People

- This scrutiny work will offer more opportunity to hear personal experiences from the citizens experiencing loneliness and staff offering support to shape future responses.

Working with Partners

- The Loneliness Steering Group have been very keen to develop partnership working further. The group supported a Community Investment Fund bid to develop a Local Connection Coalition based on the national model. <https://www.connectioncoalition.org.uk/>
- It was hoped that this would bring much needed capacity into this work. Unfortunately, the bid was unsuccessful. As an alternative, the steering group may look to set up a face-to-face networking event for wider partners in the autumn. The scrutiny work will complement this and explore how to further develop partnership working to tackle loneliness and will help to support a future strengthened collaborative response.

Place Based Working

- In recognition of the importance of place, presentations about the topic of loneliness have been delivered to place based working groups in 2021 and 2022, as part of 'making loneliness everyone's business'. Front line staff have been encouraged to identify opportunities and act where needed.
- In addition, two 'hyper local pilots' are being considered in two different areas of Kirklees linked to Local Area Co-ordination (Marsden and Slaithwaite and Ravensthorpe, Scout Hill, Pilgrim, and Beckett Estate).
- The scrutiny review needs to be mindful of place and it is intended that where possible, visits and observations will include different places across Kirklees.

Climate Change and Air Quality

- It is not anticipated that this review will have a direct impact on climate change or air quality. However, if people are encouraged to be more socially connected, this could result in more people using transport to get out of the house and meet others in the local community. It would not be possible to quantify this.

Improving Outcomes for Children

- The scope of the review includes all ages, so it is anticipated that the longer-term outcomes of this work will improve children's wellbeing by helping to reduce loneliness and associated impacts.

Other (e.g., Legal/Financial or Human Resources)

- Please see resource requirements section above.

Do you need an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)?

- This piece of work is about evidence gathering to inform future responses to tackling loneliness in Kirklees rather than introducing or changing a new activity, service, or policy at this stage. Once recommendations have been made, this may result in some changes so an IIA may be needed at a later stage dependent on the outcome.

4. Consultees and their Opinions

- This scope was developed in consultation with Councillor Smaje, as OSMC Chair and the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, who was keen to keep the scope broad.
- Councillor Khan – Portfolio Holder Adults & Health – Broadly supported the scope in understanding the impact of Covid 19 on Kirklees communities regarding loneliness. Councillor Khan recognised the potential size and scale of the piece of work and therefore supported the notion of having a scope, which will keep the work focused.

5. Next Steps and Timelines

- It is proposed that the work starts in August 2022, with initial visits to hear personal experiences, taking place in August and September 2022.
- The OSMC will consider if there are any other areas of focus and if further evidence is required.
- Once all the evidence is compiled, the OSMC will consider the findings and any recommendations it may wish to make to the relevant Cabinet Member.
- The final deadline for this work is to be determined in due course.

Recommendations from the review will help to support in the longer term:

- More lonely people being reached and supported in a personalised way.
- The profile of loneliness as an issue being further raised across council and partners to take collective action.
- Improved collaboration across partners in Kirklees.

6. Officer Recommendations and Reasons

- OSMC approves the scope and recognises the capacity implications for officers, members, and partners in carrying out the work.
- OSMC approves the engagement approach and timescales, which will enable OSMC members to visit individuals and groups and hear first-hand personal experiences.
- OSMC considers as a next step, the overall timescale for the work including a final report back to OSMC.

7. Cabinet Portfolio Holder's Recommendations

- Not Applicable.

8. Contact Officer

- Carol Gilchrist, Head of Local Integrated Partnerships: Adults and health – Communities and Access Services, carol.gilchrist@kirklees.gov.uk
- Helen Gilchrist. Project Manager, Local Integrated Partnerships: Adults and Health – Communities and Access Services, helen.gilchrist@kirklees.gov.uk

9. Background Papers and History of Decisions

- Portfolio Briefing Meeting (20/9/21) – initial discussion about development of scope
- Senior Leadership Team meeting (10/01/22) – update on scope being developed.
- Portfolio Briefing Meeting (7/3/21) – sharing of draft scope
- Informal Workshop Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (19/4/22)- scope discussion.
- Portfolio Briefing Meeting (11/7/22) – update on scope

10. Service Director Responsible

Jill Greenfield, Service Director, Customer and Communities, Adults and Health, Communities and Access Services.