

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

Date: 20 December 2022

Title of report: Loneliness and Social Isolation in Kirklees Following the Covid -19 Pandemic – Identifying and Signposting to Support Social Connection

Purpose of report:

This report is to:

- Provide background information to support a discussion about how best to develop local responses to identifying, signposting, and referring people who are lonely or isolated.
- Enable OSMC to contribute their ideas about how to take forward a partnership project in the most effective way, with limited resource.

For Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to:

1. Note the information in the report
2. Review, discuss and suggests ways of developing local responses across partners in Kirklees.

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 Private Report/Private Appendix – No
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	Not Applicable
Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> & name	Richard Parry 02/12/22
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance?	No 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. Illustrative Storyboards are anonymised, but consent has also been sought to use these in the public arena.

1. Summary

Chronic and severe loneliness can have an impact on a person's health and wellbeing and lead to greater use of health and social care services.

Kirklees Council and partners developed a vision to tackle loneliness in 2019:

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

A partnership group was set up in 2020 to prioritise key workstreams and work together to 'make loneliness everyone's business'. The group has continued to operate throughout 2021 and 2022.

Kirklees Loneliness Steering Group have identified that identification, signposting is a priority area. Loneliness still carries a stigma and not everyone who feels lonely or isolated may recognise that this is impacting on their wellbeing.

To date, awareness raising has taken place to highlight the importance of the issue and to encourage action across frontline workers and planners to act. This has been via participation in national and local campaigns, and local engagement at events, meetings, and forums.

During the pandemic, some guidance was developed and shared across Local Integrated Partnerships and Gateway Care to support the Co-ordinated Community Response. This was at a time when there were national and local lockdowns and isolated people were being referred into telephone befriending support offers.

Due to restrictions on capacity, there was no formal launch of the guidance or any detailed communication plan or campaign to support to dissemination and use of the resource.

In addition, local signposting information is needed to support the guidance, now that services, activities, and groups have resumed operations.

This report sets aside some initial ideas for a partnership project to further develop local responses.

2. Information Required to Take a Decision

2.1 Background

According to the Current Living in Kirklees Survey at the end of 2021, 6% of respondents indicated that at they experienced loneliness most or all of the time.

Loneliness is part of the human condition and is experienced by most people at some time 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 to tackle loneliness in 2019:

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

Strategic goals:

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

2.2 Why is it important to develop our approach to identification and signposting in Kirklees?

Loneliness still carries a stigma – some people may not wish to identify as lonely or recognise that they are feeling lonely. They may not be in touch with frontline services. Also, they may not opt into specialist services (that are associated with loneliness, e.g., befriending), preferring more generic options that facilitate social interaction, such as community activities.

Understanding loneliness is complex. It is a subjective experience. Campaign to End Loneliness use the following definition:

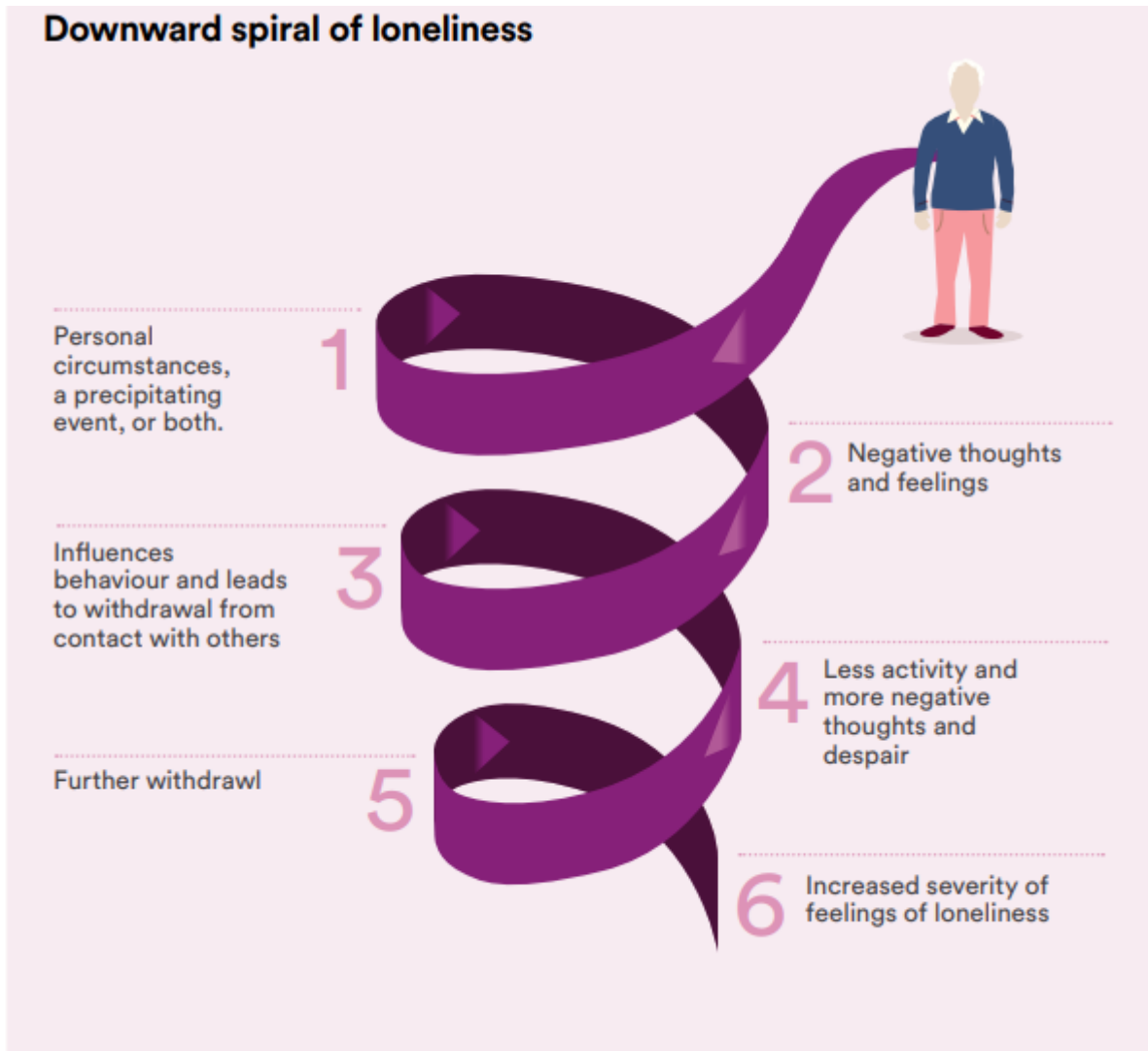
Loneliness is a subjective, unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship, which happens when there is a mismatch between the quantity and quality of the social relationships that we have, and those that we want (Perlman and Peplau, 1981) <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/about-loneliness/>

Campaign to End Loneliness also provides an overview of the different types of loneliness:

- **Emotional loneliness** - the absence of a significant other with whom a close attachment or meaningful relationship existed (a partner or close friend).
- **Social loneliness** - the lack of a wider social network of friends, neighbours, or colleagues.
- **Existential loneliness** - described as a universal aspect of the human condition which expresses the separateness of the person from others.

<https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/about-loneliness/>

Understanding the types of loneliness can be key to personalised support or signposting to prevent or alleviate the downward spiral, illustrated below.



Source: Campaign to End Loneliness: The Psychology of Loneliness – Why it matters and what we can do https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/wp-content/uploads/Psychology_of_Loneliness_FINAL_REPORT.pdf

Some frontline workers may not always recognise that loneliness is the root cause of a person's reduced wellbeing or that loneliness is being caused or linked to wider determinants of health e.g., mental ill health, physical illness. Some frontline workers may not understand the common life course triggers to be aware of such as bereavement, separation, moving to a new location, changing job or school/ college.

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected people differently. Some people have resumed their former activities from prior to the pandemic, whilst others may have acquired new barriers to meaningful social connection such as reduced confidence, loss of loved ones, disability, or ill health.

The cost-of-living crisis is impacting on some people's ability to participate in social activities.

Frontline workers and citizens need to understand the signs of loneliness and be equipped with the confidence and skill to have sensitive conversations. They need to be able to respond with advice, support or signposting on to appropriate activities or services where needed, in a personalised way.

There is no 'one size fits all' approach to tackling loneliness– reducing loneliness and isolation requires a range of support options as well as systems-level enablers such as access to transport and digital technologies. Appendix 1 shows the wide range of potential responses to reduce loneliness and isolation.

This reinforces the need for a partnership approach to identifying people who would benefit from improved social connection.

The citizens of Kirklees also play a vital role in preventing and reducing isolation and loneliness in looking out for neighbours, family, friends, or colleagues who may feel isolated or lonely. Local citizens are vital assets in identifying the most vulnerable people who may not be known to local services or support offers. This need to be acknowledged and factored into local responses.

2.3 Where do Referrals Currently Come from?

Loneliness is currently being identified in Kirklees via Social Prescribing Link Workers (via primary care), Community Plus and other 'specialist' support options such as befriending services. Local Area Co-ordination also work alongside people to support meaningful connections. A range of other services/ frontline workers or citizens may also be signposting people into activities, practical or mental health support. Kirklees Libraries and Wellness Service signpost and refer as well as other public and Third Sector organisations.

Some Examples:

Community Plus:

This year, the largest referral sources for Community Plus as a whole have come from Adult Social Care, Health Professionals, and self-referrals. This accounted for well over 60 % of all referrals. Other sources include Gateway to Care, Care Navigation, Housing, Third Sector, Education, Early Support, Children's social care, Emergency Services, Social Prescribing Link Workers, and Libraries.

Though people predominantly requested to be connected into to social activities (77%), there has been a slight increase in people wanting to connect to someone to talk to and to connect to their local community over the last year.

Two storyboards in Appendices 2 & 3 illustrate the referral into to Community Plus, the work carried out and the outcomes of that work.

Befriending Services:

A review during the pandemic identified a range of referral sources from organisations offering befriending across Kirklees. Some had open/self-referral. Others mentioned organisations they already had a relationship with through word of mouth.

The following specific services were mentioned:

- Gateway to Care
- Social Care
- Community Plus
- Wellness Service
- Jo Cox Foundation
- Jobcentre
- Locala

More recent examples of referrals sources have included:

- CMHTs (both NK and SK Core and Enhanced teams)
- Social Care Hub
- Community Plus and Social Prescribers.
- Housing associations
- Other MH organisations
- Thriving Kirklees practitioners (0-19 Health Practitioners, Family Nurse Partnership)
- Midwifery
- Early Support (Kirklees Council)
- Schools and nurseries

Feedback from befriending support providers suggests that demand for these services has been increasing but at the same time it has been challenging to recruit volunteers.

It is important to acknowledge that some lonely or isolated people may never need or wish to accept these services if they are supported in the community by friends, families and neighbours. They can be empowered to develop meaningful connections without the need for service interventions through practical advice and/or community kindness and being offered opportunities to share their individual gifts and strengths and develop connections within their community, for example via local volunteering or helping a neighbour.

2.4 Progress to Date

Over the last few years awareness raising has taken place to highlight the importance of the issue and to encourage action across frontline workers and planners to identify and respond. This has been via participation in national and local campaigns, and local engagement at events, meetings, and forums.

During the Covid -19 lockdowns and at the height of the pandemic, some guidance was developed and shared across Local Integrated Partnerships and Gateway Care to support the Co-ordinated Community Response.

The Guidance was taken from information from Age UK and Campaign to End Loneliness during the pandemic and What Works for Wellbeing. Since then, more guidance and resources from a range of sources have become available and can be fed into refreshing the guidance. The guidance included definitions, triggers to loneliness, signs out look out for, dealing with difficult topics, advice for people during lockdown restrictions.

Due to restrictions on capacity, there was no formal launch of the guidance or any detailed communication plan or campaign to support dissemination and use of the resource.

In addition, local signposting information is needed to support the guidance, now that services, activities, and groups have resumed operations.

In 2021, the Tackling Loneliness and Social isolation Training Programme was launched nationally. Health Education England shared an early evaluation of the training (see Appendix 4). In 2022, as part of the development of the Kirklees Cares training resource, currently being soft launched, Kirklees Council Learning and Organisational Development Team have added access to this free training on to the site.

Discussions are being held about how to develop a 'loneliness' area on the site and build up local training resources on the site.

[Tackling Loneliness and Social Isolation programme - Kirklees Cares - Care Learning Resources](#)

[Kirklees Cares - Adults and Health Learning & Resources](#)

The training includes five short modules that use individual case studies:

- What do we mean by loneliness?
- Who can loneliness affect?
- Evidence based interventions
- Talking about Loneliness
- Services and initiatives

The training was recently shared with the Loneliness Steering Group inviting feedback.

Links have been developed with Health Education England via the National Tackling Loneliness Hub and there is potential to look at some joint promotional activities in the future.

2.2 Key Challenges

- Engagement of busy professionals who are already under pressure following the pandemic, who may be 'firefighting' and have no capacity for additional early intervention work of this nature.
- The Loneliness Programme does not have a dedicated project worker in place for this piece of work, although some options are being explored to bring capacity to the work in 2023.
- Improved identification and signposting could lead to an increase in demand that could outstrip capacity. This is an unknown quantity, so it is difficult to project or plan for.
- Whilst there are many support offers in place as well as community activities that people can join, there is a risk to sustainability of community support offers in view of the current cost of living crisis and post pandemic austerity.
- Recruitment of volunteers in some areas such as befriending services has been a challenge in 2022.
- The impact of cost of living on people's ability to afford to join in activities that they may be referred or signposted to, e.g., cost of joining in activities, travel costs etc.

2.2 Options

Initial ideas for taking the work forward include:

- 1) Review existing conversations guidance with frontline staff who may have used or potentially could use the resource. An informal meeting has been set up with OSMC to start to explore this.
- 2) Further development of guidance on identifying and having conversations about loneliness and the addition of signposting information - building on the latest national, local evidence and resources.
- 3) Co-produce the resource with wider stakeholders to ensure that it is as accessible and user friendly as possible across frontline staff and tailored to the needs of different communities and ages (of priority is to target young adults in transition as part of the Young Adults Connect Project)
- 4) Map frontline stakeholders that may benefit from using the resource. Link the work to a campaign to encourage frontline workers to participate in the loneliness training resource via the new Kirklees Cares Resource. NB A targeted and staged approach across different professional groups may be the most realistic approach. A pilot could be set up for a particular professional group. This would require commitment from senior leaders (e.g. training and human resource leads).
- 5) Develop a communication plan/ campaign to promote the guidance and training. For example, mapping key services points/ forums and dissemination points, of which Community Anchors and local councillors are well placed to promote and support the campaign alongside champions in health and social care services.
- 6) Promote the Loneliness training across Kirklees Council and partner organisations via the Kirklees Cares platform.
- 7) Work alongside Kirklees Learning and Organisational Development team to build up training resources and guidance on the Kirklees Cares platform in the longer term.
- 8) Ensure that the neighbourliness and informal support is included in this – aimed at the citizens in Kirklees. Local Area Co-ordination Team have conversations with people about taking small steps to get to know neighbours. It will be important to include this element - not just formal support.
- 9) Launch the guidance via a partnership event – although this may not be feasible during the current economic climate - so alternative promotional activities may need to be developed.
- 10) Set up informal drop- ins / reflective practice sessions that go alongside the guide to help bring together communities and allow them to share their views and experiences.
- 11) Evaluate the usefulness and impact.

3. Risks

- Lack of project resource to take the work forward effectively – dedicated resource needs to be in place.
- Lack of capacity across partner organisations, particularly for frontline workers.
- Life course approach is broad – guidance will need to be tailored for different population groups, so it will require a diverse range of partners/ stakeholders to be involved to ensure the messages are appropriate and accessible for different people. A phased approach may be more realistic.

- Increases in referrals could lead to support services being oversubscribed or inappropriate referrals- this would need to be monitored carefully and could be mitigated by a triage service ensure people are directed to the most suitable support. Any launch or campaign work would need to have these contingencies in place in case of a surge in referrals.

4. Resource Requirements/ Costs

This project is at initial idea stage and advice is being sought from OSCM about the scope and efficient ways to carry out the work. Further work will take place to develop a realistic scope. It is anticipated that the following will need to be factored in:

- Dedicated project manager and project worker time.
- Dedicated time across relevant council staff and partners to commit to the work.
- Dedicated time for staff to participate in training.
- Cost of design/ printing a resource if this is to be hard copy (this would be explored as the work develops).
- Other promotional costs e.g., potential events/ drop -in sessions/ reflective practice sessions.

5. Timescale

- Initial ideas shared with Loneliness Steering Group- 27 September 2022
- Portfolio Briefing - 12 December 2022
- OSMC to share any initial thoughts at the OSMC meeting on - 20th December 2022.
- Informal discussion with front-line works and partners to take place- 20th December 2022

6. Services and Agencies involved

Kirklees Loneliness Steering Group are well placed to support this work. The steering group have a combined reach into a range of different service areas, communities, and population groups.

- Kirklees Council with representation from Local Integrated Partnerships, Commissioning Mental Health) Public Health, Children and Families. Local Area Co-ordination
- Yorkshire Children's Centre - representing Befriending Partnership and Community Anchors
- Kirklees Health and Care Partnership
- Northorpe Hall Child and Family Trust
- Third Sector Leaders
- Locala Health and Wellbeing community healthcare provider
- Jo Cox Foundation
- Housing – representative being sought
- Active Citizens and Democracy
- Strategic Migration and Refugee Manager
- Social Care
- Huddersfield Town Foundation

7. Implications for the Council

Working with People

- This steering group has a volunteer representative with lived experience, who can provide valuable insight into this work. Work is also taking place via the Kirklees Council Your Voice team to support the co-production of responses for young adults. Frontline workers will be involved in the development of the guidance to ensure it meets their needs and is a useful resource.

Working with Partners

- The Loneliness Steering Group include a wide range of partners as listed above. Any further stakeholders will be identified as part of the work.

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'. Frontline staff have been encouraged to identify opportunities and act where needed. Place based meetings will be factored into to the work as a means of continuing to raise awareness, tapping into expertise on the ground and championing the work going forward.
- In addition, two 'hyper local pilots' being run by Local Area Co-ordination (Marsden and Slaithwaite and Ravensthorpe, Scout Hill, Pilgrim, and Beckett Estate) may provide opportunities to input learning and for some early piloting of resources.

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 loneliness strategy 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)?

- It is acknowledged that loneliness can impact disproportionately on some groups across the life course. However, this work is aimed at skilling up front-line workers to identify loneliness and respond across all age groups and communities. The work does not involve setting up a new service or withdrawing an existing service. As the scope of the work develops an IIA can be completed if necessary.

8. Consultees and their Opinions

- A draft scope has been shared with members of the steering group in September 2022.
- To complement this, input from OSMC is being sought to shape the work.
- This work forms part of a broader piece of work.
- The overall 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.

9. Next Steps and Timelines

- OSMC to share any ideas or advice at the OSMC meeting on 20 December 2022.
- Scope of the project to be finalised February 2023.

Recommendations from the OSCM 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.

10. Officer Recommendations and Reasons

- OSMC notes the work carried out to date.
- OSMC provides any suggestions on how identification and signposting can be developed and supported going forward.
- OSMC to advise on most effective way to take forward this work.

11. Cabinet Portfolio Holder's Recommendations

- Not Applicable.

12. Contact Officer

- Jill Greenfield, Service Director, Customer and Communities, Adults and Health – Communities and Access Services, jill.greenfield@kirklees.gov.uk
- Helen Gilchrist. Project Manager, Local Integrated Partnerships: Adults and Health – Communities and Access Services, helen.gilchrist@kirklees.gov.uk

13. 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 (7/3/22) – 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.
- Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Meeting – Scope Discussion (26/7/22).
- Portfolio Briefing (8/8)/22 Update following Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Meeting (26/7/22)
- Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Meeting (4/10/2022)
- Portfolio Briefing Meeting (12/12/ 2022) – update on the work.

14. Service Director Responsible

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