

REPORT TITLE: SOCIAL CONNECTIVITY IN KIRKLEES – FINAL REPORT

Meeting:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee
Date:	20 September 2024
Cabinet Member (if applicable)	Councillor Amanda Pinnock Education and Communities
Key Decision Eligible for Call In	No
<p>Purpose of Report To report upon the work of the Committee in respect of the issue of social connectivity in Kirklees, its recommendations and the response received from the Cabinet Member for Education and Communities.</p>	
<p>Recommendations</p> <p>(1) That the final report and the recommendations made, further to the scrutiny of the issue of social connectivity in Kirklees, be endorsed.</p> <p>(2) That the response from the Cabinet Member for Education and Communities to each of the recommendations be noted.</p> <p>Reasons for Recommendations</p> <p>The Committee has undertaken research related to the issue of social connectivity in Kirklees, both pre and post-pandemic, and has identified a number of key themes and conclusions resulting in a number of recommendations which were presented to the relevant Cabinet Member and Strategic Director for consideration.</p>	
<p>Resource Implication: Whilst there is no dedicated financial provision for the work, the Loneliness Strategy, and the actions identified as a result of the Committee's report, will be delivered through drawing on capacity across citizens, communities, staff teams and professional partners as well as through existing strategies, workstreams and programmes, as part of fostering wide ownership of the work across Kirklees.</p>	
<p>Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> & name</p> <p>Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance?</p> <p>Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning?</p>	<p>Richard Parry 12-9-24</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>Samantha Lawton 17-7-24</p>

Electoral wards affected: All

Ward councillors consulted: Not applicable

Public or private: Public

Has GDPR been considered? No personal data included.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 In April 2022 the Committee agreed to undertake a piece of work in respect of loneliness in Kirklees pre- and post-pandemic.
- 1.2 The scope for this work was established at the meeting of the Committee held on 26th July 2022, as set out below:
- 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 go 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?
- 1.3 A final report was produced in March 2024 which provided a summary of the evidence gathered under each of the terms of reference above and set out a number of conclusions and recommendations, arising from the consideration of this evidence, and the key themes that had been identified.
- 1.4 The final report was shared with the Cabinet Member for Education and Communities with a request that a formal response be made to the recommendations.

2. Information required to take a decision

- 2.1 Throughout 2022/23 the Committee held a number of formal and informal sessions to gather evidence, as follows:
- 4th October 2022 - The Committee considered the role of the Partnership Loneliness Steering Group
 - 20th December 2022 – This meeting focussed on how best to develop local responses to identifying, signposting, and referring people who are lonely or isolated and how loneliness could be ‘made everyone’s business’.
The discussion included consideration of the staff guidance document ‘Conversations on Loneliness Guidance’. This had been shared with staff at the start of the pandemic and aimed to encourage and assist them to identify people who may be experiencing loneliness, through their normal interactions, and to be able to signpost them to appropriate support. Attendees explored the potential to develop this document, to enable both citizens and staff to use it more comprehensively following the pandemic.

- 18th April 2023 – The Committee considered a comprehensive ‘Terms of Reference Review’ and identified the areas of focus to be addressed prior to the conclusion of this piece of work.

2.2 Members engaged with the following teams and partner organisations:

- Kirklees Partners’ Loneliness Steering Group.
- Local Integrated Partnerships.
- Local Area Co-ordination.
- Public Health.
- Community Plus.
- The Council’s Wellness Service.
- Luv2MeetU – a charity which operates on a national basis and organises events for small groups of people with learning disabilities or autism to address issues associated with independence and/or loneliness.
- Yorkshire Children’s Centre – a local charity which takes a lead on the befriending partnership work in Kirklees.
- Age UK (Kirklees and Calderdale).
- Yorkshire Childrens’ Centre. (Note: now called ‘Fresh Futures’)
- The Carer’s Trust Mid Yorkshire – a local charity working to support unpaid family carers.
- Carer’s Count - a not-for-profit organisation that supports unpaid carers within Kirklees.
- The ‘Our Voice’ Team; this team is part of the Council’s Children’s Services and aims to strengthen the voice and influence of children and young people.

and visited the following groups to discuss the issues with service users:

- Long Covid Support Group - one of two support groups run by the Council’s Wellness Service based at Batley Town Hall.
- Young Onset Dementia Support Group – led by volunteers through Yorkshire Children’s Centre.
- Carer’s Count at two locations in North and South Kirklees
- Carer’s Trust Listening Group.

2.3 The Committee’s final report which includes:

- A summary of the evidence gathered under each of the terms of reference
- A number of conclusions and recommendations, arising from the consideration of this evidence
- The key themes that had been identified, is attached as Appendix 1.

2.4 The response to the recommendations from the Cabinet Member for Education and Communities is attached as Appendix 2.

3. Implications for the Council

3.1 Council Plan

This work has links to a number of the Council’s shared outcomes:

- 3.1.1 'Best Start' – confident children ready to do well at school and in life.
If young people feel connected to their peers and that they are a part of their communities this will contribute to good emotional wellbeing and assist them in acquiring the necessary life skills to cope with points of transition and challenges.
- 3.1.2 'Efficient and effective' –
Working collaboratively with partners to inform and shape priorities and take pro-active early intervention on this issue could have a potential long-term beneficial impact in terms of reducing demand for health, mental health and care services.
- 3.1.3 'Independent' –
Residents feeling connected to their local community will help and empower them to make necessary changes and to access appropriate support to allow them to live independently and have control over their lives. Improved mental health and wellbeing will assist individuals in successfully managing change.
- 3.1.4 'Safe and Cohesive' –
Improved connections with communities can encourage engagement and active participation and ensure that people feel safe and part of the place where they live. This also helps to build sustainable and thriving communities.
- 3.1.5 'Shaped by People' –
This work could assist in making individuals feel included, listened to and boosting their confidence to get involved and enhance their ability to contribute. Access to groups where there is shared experience can help people in moving forward and making positive changes to their lives.
- 3.1.6 'Well' –
The importance of social connectivity for both physical and mental health and the impact on quality of life is widely recognised. Strengthening social connectivity in Kirklees, through the use of early intervention, could contribute to the improvement of outcomes; encouraging and supporting people to take positive steps that will assist with their physical and mental health.

3.2 **Financial Implications**

- 3.2.1 The Kirklees Loneliness Strategy and the actions identified as a result of the Committee's report will be delivered through drawing on capacity across citizens, communities, staff teams and professional partners as well as through existing strategies, workstreams and programmes, as part of fostering wide ownership of the work across Kirklees.

3.3 **Legal Implications** - not applicable

3.4 **Other (eg Risk, Integrated Impact Assessment or Human Resources)** – not applicable

4. **Consultation**

Consultation was undertaken with the groups listed at paragraph 2.2 above.

5. **Engagement**

Engagement has been undertaken with the groups listed at paragraph 2.2 above.

6. Options

The Committee is asked to formally endorse its final report and the recommendations contained therein and to note the response and proposed actions from the Cabinet Member for Education and Communities.

7. Next steps and timelines

This report concludes the work of the Committee, and the recommendations will be taken forward, as detailed within the formal response from the Cabinet Member.

8. Contact officer

Sheila Dykes, Principal Governance Officer
01484 221000
E-mail: sheila.dykes@kirklees.gov.uk

9. Background Papers and History of Decisions

Previous reports to Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee:

26th July 2022

4th October 2022

20th December 2022

18th April 2023

10. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Final Report

Appendix 2 – Cabinet Member's response to the Committee's recommendations

11. Service Director responsible

Samantha Lawton, Service Director, Legal, Governance and Commissioning