

SCRUTINY ACTION PLAN

Report: Loneliness / Social connectivity

Introduction

The bulk of the engagement activity that informed this report was carried out in 2022 and 2023 and it is important to acknowledge that there have been a range of changes and developments locally, leading up to the present report being published.

Many of the partners have post pandemic experienced both changes and challenges. Local voluntary and community sector organisations have been challenged due to reductions in national and local contract and grant opportunities as well as the cost-of-living crisis and reduced volunteering in some areas. This has continued to impact on capacity, for example within befriending services. As with many other local authorities, Kirklees Council have been undergoing a period of transformation linked to budgetary pressures. It is important to note that some of these changes have impacted upon some of the service delivery models talked about in this report.

However, there is a strong commitment to ensure that the learning and values underpinning this work are shared across Kirklees council staff and partners. For example, the integrated Community Plus service will uphold these values, as they continue to work alongside individuals and communities to empower them. They will also draw strongly on the Inclusive Communities Framework.

It also recognised that there no single organisation can 'solve' loneliness meet people's wide-ranging needs. Early intervention through empowering local communities is key to reducing the need for formal services. This is becoming increasingly important during this time of reduced resource across the system. Working in partnership in a time of reduced funding and capacity to embed the knowledge, skills and values across staff and local citizens is even more crucial. This approach will continue as an important whole systems approach to reducing social isolation and loneliness.

Directorate and Cabinet Member(s) or organisation asked to coordinate the response to the recommendation Cllr Pinnock – Adults and Health	FOR COMPLETION			
Recommendation	Do you agree with the recommendation? If no, please explain why.	How will this be implemented?	Who will be responsible for implementation?	What is the estimated timescale for implementation?
1.The framing should shift from ‘loneliness’ towards ‘social connectivity’ and friendship and that the Council and its partners should continue to take the lead on removing any stigma through open discussions of the issue.	Yes	<p>The values agreed by the loneliness partnership include tackling stigma and promoting a strengths-based approach and the loneliness conversations guidance embodies these values.</p> <p>Community Plus and other preventative services continue to be mindful of stigma and use of language when working with local community members and partners and questions are framed around social connection as part of any good life conversations, the core aim being to continue to signpost/connect people to activities and groups for social connectivity.</p> <p>Care was taken by the loneliness partnership when promoting events/activities and developing communications and resources not to use potentially stigmatising language which could be off putting for some people.</p>	Community Plus.	Already in place – 2023/2024 with continual review

		<p>These messages to partners and communities will continue as part of awareness raising linked to the developing and ongoing loneliness work.</p>		
<p>2. There should be a sustained and ongoing emphasis across all Council and wider partners to maintain awareness of the impacts of a lack of social connectivity and what every person can do to try and assist in identifying people who may be vulnerable and to provide an empathetic and helpful response, with every point of contact being an opportunity.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>For a cross section of officers e.g from Communities, Public Health and Democracy to meet up ¼ ly in order to share updates and learning.</p> <p>Public Health and Communities colleagues will work alongside colleagues from the Integrated Care Board in order to explore integration of social connectivity into the developing Wells programmes and delivery of the Health and Care Plan. This will focus on local learning and best practice and the evidence base behind social connectivity as a protective factor for mental health.</p> <p>Public Health will work to ensure the integration of social connectivity into the Kirklees Health and Wellbeing Strategy, in particular via the Healthy Places and Mental Health theme. Public Health and Communities Officers will take social connectivity to the Health and Wellbeing Board at an appropriate time in order to have a systems discussion and to ensure the commitment of partners across Kirklees.</p> <p>Explore the possibility of offering mental health (including social isolation) training to ward members in order to provide information and a safe space to ask questions.</p> <p>A redrafted, piloted and evaluated conversations guidance includes awareness of loneliness, impacts, spotting the signs, holding sensitive conversations and nudges social connections and signposting. This will be rolled out by community plus within communities.</p>	<p>Public Health and Communities</p> <p>Public Health, Communities and ICB colleagues</p> <p>Public Health and Communities</p> <p>Public Health and Communities</p>	<p>2024 / 2025</p>

		<p>The loneliness partnership was set up to bring together internal and external organisations, highlighting the issue of social connectivity. The group's role was to share good practice, promote awareness and to influence services to take accountability to tackle social isolation.</p> <p>It is proposed that the partnership continues to meet every 6 months in order to continue to share learning and best practice across the Kirklees system. This will be facilitated jointly between Public Health and Communities but colleagues across Kirklees will be integral to its development and continuation.</p>	Public Health and Communities	
<p>3. In recognition of the central and high-profile position of Ward Councillors within their local communities, efforts should be made to raise awareness of this issue with them and to offer appropriate guidance and support to them in assisting the provision of an effective local response</p>	Yes	<p>There is an established link to ward councillors through the Active Citizens and Places team who chair locality place-based meetings and have an overview of groups/organisations who can facilitate social connection. Community Plus also have strong links with Ward councillors who have a good awareness of the teams one to one work supporting individuals into social connection and wider asset-based community development to empower communities to develop social connectivity in their local areas.</p> <p>Conversations guidance can be promoted with ward councillors, and they can be involved in the roll out and championing of this as well as any specific initiatives.</p>	Active Citizens with the support of Community Plus Service	2024/2025

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<p>4. The mutual sharing of information across organisations/ groups about what other services/groups/activities were available in the area should be encouraged and supported and the provision of information on local community groups/activities through the use of local village/parish council newsletters on a regular basis.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Information is available on existing platforms such as place-based MS TEAMS sites and in partnership forums such as the Families Together Hubs.</p> <p>Information is also shared at local level by Community Plus/Social Prescribing, Local Anchor organisations, Community Champions, Third Sector Leaders, Libraries and Local Democracy.</p> <p>Use of a range of methods will be encouraged in order to meet place-based community needs.</p> <p>Community Plus colleagues to attend the Tackling Poverty Partnership in order to make connections and promote information as appropriate.</p>	<p>Community Plus</p>	<p>In place 2023/2024</p> <p>Will continually be reviewed and developed</p>
<p>5. It would be beneficial for group leaders to be provided with advice and guidance in respect of drawing people into the group and assisting if they are anxious about joining in.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>A key role of Community Plus is to support individuals into groups, building confidence and resilience, empowering people to do things for themselves without fostering dependency. Such skills and techniques are routinely shared with group leaders etc, who can continue to employ these directly with prospective group members, reducing the need for further hand off/referral to services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third sector leaders have an 'Open to All' initiative. Groups can sign up to say that they are open and inclusive and welcoming to people of all backgrounds. They receive a certificate which they can display. This will continue to be promoted. • The national Good Practice Mentor initiative offer free webinars to support loneliness in older people, including warm welcome training which 	<p>Community Plus</p>	<p>In place 2023/2024</p> <p>Will continually be reviewed and developed</p>

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		has been promoted locally and will continue to be promoted.		
<p>6. A pro-active approach should be adopted across the Council and wider partners in the provision of information, at the earliest stage, at all potential points of contact, with particular emphasis on doing so, at transition points in people’s lives. This recommendation arose from feedback that at points of stress it was challenging for people to try and find/access that information themselves. It was noted that an information pack, or similar, would be helpful so that people could look at it, at a later date, once they were in a better position to do so.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>With respect of specific information relating to social connectivity, Community Plus and other relevant service information is currently provided for client cohort in transition stages, such as death registration, Pathways to Adulthood services, hospital discharge etc</p> <p>The conversations guidance has a signposting section for activities that can support social connection. This could help support this recommendation if it is rolled out across services/ partners. This could be converted to a booklet by services who may wish to tailor the information for different stages of the life course e.g. bereavement.</p> <p>A wider consideration of information is needed across health & social care system and pathways and will be considered through the Integrated Care Board as part of the Well programmes.</p>	<p>Communities</p> <p>Public Health and Communities</p>	<p>2024/2025</p>
<p>7. The importance of retaining methods of communicating information by means other than online or social media be acknowledged, to ensure that those who do not/cannot use these are not excluded. This includes the need to ensure that person-to-person communication is not ‘designed out’.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Use of the Integrated Impact Assessment by all services across the council means that access to support (including digital exclusion) is considered as part of the council decision making process.</p> <p>Service information is currently available by means ‘other than digital’ i.e. by telephone or ‘person-centred’ at locality bases such as via Libraries/place-based drop-in sessions/community centres/café’s.</p>	<p>Council Wide</p>	<p>In place 2023/2024</p> <p>Will continually be reviewed and developed</p>

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		<p>As noted under Recommendation 4, use of a range of methods will be encouraged in order to meet place-based community needs.</p> <p>The use of the Inclusive Communities Framework also supports this to ensure not cohorts are excluded from accessing information.</p> <p>Access Strategy ensuring information is available to people at the right place and time and in various formats</p>		
<p>8. Information on local activities/groups should be provided, for young people, through trusted sources such as schools and colleges, perhaps through inclusion in a school/college newsletter.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>This is in place via channels such as Families Together, Libraries, school Community Hub coordinator/ Early Support Services/Local Anchors and Young person-centred groups such as Kirklees Youth Alliance/Brunswick Centre.</p>	<p>Loneliness Partnership Group</p> <p>Youth Development Board</p> <p>Other routes as appropriate.</p>	<p>In place 2023/2024</p> <p>Will continually be reviewed and developed</p>
<p>9. That it would be of assistance to have an accessible comprehensive record of community activities/groups, whilst noting the importance of ensuring that this information was up to date.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Place-based information is available via locality teams/Place-based leads, Families Together Hubs within the council and 3rd sector organisations/TSL/ Community Anchors commissioned to support the development of community capacity.</p> <p>The integration of services across Customer and Access services has further supported the development of this work with Communities and Community plus services</p>	<p>Customer and Access Services</p>	<p>In place 2024/2025 with continual development</p>

		development of placed based community relationships and assets logs.		
<p>10. There was a need, where possible, to build capacity in:</p> <p>Befriending services: This one-to-one approach was important and could assist in building an individual’s confidence, acting as a first step to joining groups/activities or visiting a library and building connections.</p> <p>Peer support groups targeted towards people in the same situation e.g. carers or dealing with particular conditions or with a protected characteristic</p> <p>Open access activities: It was noted that: Provision needed to be as local as possible to assist those who did not feel confident or could not afford to travel.</p> <p>Consideration might be given to developing on ‘warm spaces’ model. Libraries offer a warm spaces model locally.</p> <p>People were more likely to use a provision if there was an activity such as a quiz, or a collective shared purpose other than just a place to meet and this could take the pressure off those who found it challenging to initiate/join conversations. (See above) offered by libraries.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Kirklees have a range of Befriending offers currently but there are sustainability and capacity challenges for those funded from short term grants and challenges with recruiting volunteers. A Befriending partnership has been operating for mutual support across organisations.</p> <p>There is also the continual recognition that befriending does not meet all the communities needs and is vitally supported by other community led activities and support services to ensure access to them.</p> <p>A number of peer support groups operate across Kirklees e.g. those led for carers by Carers Count. The provision of these will be monitored through 3rd sector contract with TSL / Community Anchors who support to develop community capacity.</p> <p>The Working Together Better partnership and the contract for this partnership is centred around connection and supporting peer support, encouraging connectivity and support to develop into volunteering. This work continues and social connectivity remains integrated into the model.</p> <p>Placed based offer of support to residents remains a council priority. Access to support within the Library service has expanded to offer enabling support to access other council services through online and telephony support and will continue to be rolled out across its placed based footprint to a further 8 locations.</p>	<p>Across systems, council and partner services – monitored through appropriate governance structures ie partnership boards</p>	<p>In place 2023/2024 with continual development</p>

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<p>The possibilities for such provision should be considered within the regeneration plans for the district's town and village centres.</p>		<p>The warm spaces model will continue within the Libraries alongside its existing community activities offer.</p> <p>Continued monitoring of this support will be reviewed by Public Health and Communities and reported though to the ICB's Well boards as appropriate.</p>		
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