

Report to Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board

28 March 2023

Subject:	Update on Scrutiny Review of Loneliness and Isolation.
Director:	Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer Surjit Tour
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1 Recommendations







- 1.1 That the Board notes the activities of the Working Group and the evidence gathered to date.
- 1.2 That the review continues into 2023/24 municipal year and the Board determines next steps in terms of evidence gathering.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The review has progressed well to date, and many sources of evidence have been explored. However, further time is required to gather more evidence and ensure that this is a comprehensive piece of work. Equally, some sources of evidence have opened up further avenues to explore. Further detailed analysis of data derived from the 2022 Sandwell Residents Survey is also being carried out by Public Health, which will provide more detail on the extent of loneliness and isolation within each of the six towns.



3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	Best start in life for children and young people	Loneliness and isolation can affect people of all ages and can have a detrimental effect on health and overall quality of life. Supporting people to have meaningful social relationships is not just crucial to people's physical and mental health. It also affects their engagement in the workplace and wider community cohesion. Successfully tackling loneliness and isolation in an evidence led way, will therefore support the delivery of all of the Council's Corporate Plan objectives.
	People live well and age well	
	Strong resilient communities	
	Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods	
	A strong and inclusive economy	
	A connected and accessible Sandwell	

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 Tackling loneliness and isolation is already a government priority, and the government published its strategy - *A Connected Society: A Strategy for tackling loneliness-laying the foundations for change* - in 2018. However, the problem has been exacerbated since 2020, as a result of the measures put in place to limit the spread of covid-19.
- 4.2 Research so far by the Working Group has shown that many organisations across the public, private and voluntary and community sector are undertaking initiatives that try to tackle loneliness and isolation.
- 4.3 The Appendix sets out a summary of evidence gathered so far by the Working Group. Further exploration is required in some of these areas and there are other avenues that the Working Group wishes to explore to ensure that it can produce a comprehensive piece of work, with



evidence led recommendations that meet the needs of Sandwell's population.

5 Implications

Resources:	The report does not propose any actions that will have any direct implications.
Legal and Governance:	
Risk:	All implications will be considered alongside the final report and recommendations.
Equality:	
Health and Wellbeing:	
Social Value:	
Climate Change:	
Corporate Parenting:	

6 Appendices

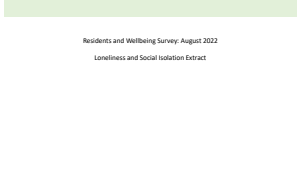
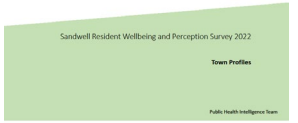
Summary of Evidence Gathered

7. Background Papers

Appendix lists hyperlinks to evidence gathered to date.



**Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board -Review on Loneliness and Isolation
Summary of Evidence Gathered**

Evidence/Source	Findings Summary
<p>Public Health - Sandwell Residents Survey Data</p>  <p>Town Profiles</p> 	<p>12,000 people surveyed (by telephone) in August 2022. For the first time the survey included questions on loneliness and isolation.</p> <p>Further in-depth analysis of the responses is being undertaken by Public Health, but initial analysis shows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not working/long term sick/retired scored highest for both L and I. • Feeling unsafe scored high. • Tipton highest for Loneliness • Wednesbury highest for Isolation. • Older people.
<p><u>Better Mental Health Programme..</u></p>	<p>Uses funding from £391,272 funding from PHE's (now OHID) Prevention and Promotion Fund for Better Mental Health to identify projects to complement and bolster existing support across the life course. Draws on established strong links with VCS to:-</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver interventions to improve mental wellbeing among Sandwell residents of all ages, with a particular focus on groups at increased risk of poor mental health. • Improve understanding of mental health and wellbeing among Sandwell's communities, including available support; and • Increase capacity among voluntary and community sector organisations supporting mental wellbeing.
<p>SCVO</p> <p>https://www.healthysandwell.co.uk/mental-health-wellbeing/better-mental-health/project-i/</p> <p>https://www.scvo.info/local-vcs-intelligence/community-health-portal/</p>	<p>Project I Community Mental Health Grant Programme focuses specifically on the area of promoting positive community mental health with funding being available to support early help/preventative activities; that are run BY local people FOR local people.</p> <p>Route to Wellbeing Portal allows users to set their own location and search from a wide range of services which are specifically local to them. Developed with (former) CCG funding, but not utilised as much by GPs as it is by other agencies.</p> <p>Data shows most traffic on social activities pages/links, then befriending second.</p> <p>The site maps Warm Spaces too.</p> <p>Reach is more with partnerships orgs, and less so with the general public. Resources limit further marketing activities.</p>
<p>Public Health - Literature Review</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets out risk factors and impacts. • Refers to ONS Lifestyles Survey/Data. • Areas with higher unemployment lonelier. • Risk factors comparable to obesity.



- Links to delayed transfers of care.
- NHS several touchpoints to assess risk.

Supermarket Slow Lanes

<https://www.unilad.com/news/slow-checkout-lane-netherlands-supermarket-205944-20230109>

Offers customers that have time to chat a slower checkout lane Aim is to combat loneliness.

Asda, Tesco, Sainsbury's, Morrison's all contacted, and none (of those who responded) have slow/chat lanes.

Morrison's Wednesbury has calendar of community events, working closely with PH and Nhoods Teams.

Chatty Cafes Scheme

<https://thechattycafescheme.co.uk/>

Offers three services, all designed to reduce loneliness and/or social isolation:-

- Encouraging venues to offer 'Chatter & Natter' tables, where customers can get together and chat. We have a network of venues around the UK offering Chatter & Natter tables, many are hosted by Chatty Table Volunteers.
- Virtual Chatty Cafe Sessions held on Zoom every Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 1pm – 1:30pm. Anyone over 18 can join, simply to chat to others.
- Telephone Friendship Service for anyone over 18 who is experiencing loneliness and could benefit from a weekly chat on the phone.

From the website there is one scheme operating in Sandwell, at Dorothy Parkes Centre in Smethwick.

	<p>Morrison's (Wednesbury) agreed to consider introducing.</p> <p>Sainsbury's (Oldbury) does not have a café. No response from Asda and Tesco.</p>
<p>"Happy to Chat" Benches</p> <p>https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/citylife-news/community/happy-chat-benches-aim-combat-loneliness-and-isolation</p> <p>https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/happy-chat-benches-around-cardiff-22102985</p> <p>https://www.sthelenswellbeing.org.uk/services/mental-wellbeing/pages/happy-to-chat-benches</p>	<p>The 'Happy to Chat' benches feature a simple sign which reads '<i>Sit here if you don't mind someone stopping to say hello</i>' and are designed to help combat loneliness and encourage community interaction.</p> <p>Assistant Director (Borough Economy) Green Spaces, Green Services, Events has indicated willingness to look at doing this this in Sandwell.</p>
<p>Community Transport Let's Chat Bus and Community Hub</p> <p>https://www.communitytransport.org/letschat</p>	<p>Year long project started in October 2022 and funded by Department for Transport. The aim of the project is to tackle and reduce isolation and loneliness in our local communities by providing places where people can connect to others, chat to people, socialise, meet others, build new links and connections, and be signposted to other services in our local communities that might be beneficial to them.</p>

	<p>Provides mobile units (Let's Chat Bus), community hubs and passenger transport, to try to reach as many people as possible. It is about bringing people together, from all walks of life, and creating a feeling of inclusion Replicates a Walsall scheme that has been running much longer.</p>
<p>Shop Mobility</p>	<p>Provides a wheelchair and mobility scooter loan service in West Bromwich, supporting those with mobility difficulties who may otherwise be unable to go out. Wheelchair loan also available, short term (a day) and long term (6 months).</p> <p>A collaboration with Tesco (New Square) provides 4hrs free parking for blue badge holders. Previously provided a small café facility (hot drinks) but space too small to continue.</p> <p>Service currently operates 6 days a week but will be reducing to 3 days due to funding reductions.</p>
<p>Neighbourhood Partnerships Teams</p>	<p>Neighbourhood Partnerships Teams undertake a variety of activities across the six towns, working with partners and VCS organisations to develop existing provision and build capacity within the community to support the creation of new activities where gaps are identified. Loneliness and isolation is a priority area.</p> <p>Some link with social prescribers but the arrangements for social prescribing differ across Sandwell/by Primary Care Network.</p>

<p>McArthur Glen Community Corner https://www.mcarthurglen.com/en/outlets/uk/designer-outlet-west-midlands/whats-on/community-corner/</p>	<p>The community corner provides a safe warm space for the local community to enjoy as well as hosting a plethora of free to attend events and activities (up until 31st March.)</p> <p>Food Donation Station Hot Desk Facilities Community Library Book Swap Chill-out lounge area Affirmation Station Life skills workshops such as First Aid Training and Sign Language classes Exercise classes An opportunity to meet and chat with your local Police, Ambulance and Fire Service Literature Festival</p>
<p>Housing Home Checks</p>	<p>All Council tenants are being visited as part of a tenancy check and also a conversation where needs can be discussed/observed, and referrals made to appropriate agencies.</p> <p>Around 2,000 Home Checks have been completed so far. 224 people have reported that they feel lonely or isolated but a breakdown of this by town is still awaited.</p>
<p>Warm Spaces</p>	<p>Free, safe and supportive spaces that people can visit during the colder months. People can also have a chat with staff about other support services available. Get advice and information about benefits, energy support, managing bills, how local charities can help, and how to access community support to combat isolation.</p>

	<p>All 19 libraries as well as community centres, leisure centres and voluntary and community sector venues.</p> <p>The initiative has been very well received. Data on attendance is still being analysed.</p>
<p>Campaign to End Loneliness</p>	<p>Works to ensure that people most at risk of loneliness are reached and supported, services and activities are more effective at addressing loneliness and a wider range of loneliness services and activities are developed.</p> <p>Also provides Training.</p>
<p>Tackling Loneliness Hub</p>	<p>An online learning and exchange space for professionals working on loneliness across the public, private, charity and academic sectors.</p> <p>Membership is open to all professionals in England who are working on loneliness.</p> <p>The Hub aims to facilitate learning and discussion to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a committed and established network of loneliness professionals across all sectors • Support loneliness professionals to work collaboratively and generate action • Increase the evidence base on loneliness • Support a national conversation on loneliness

	<p>The Hub is supported by DCMS and managed by a team at the Campaign to End Loneliness and the What Works Centre for Wellbeing</p>
NHS England	<p>Provides an e-learning resource, developed by Health Education England (HEE) in collaboration with Public Health England and the Campaign to End Loneliness. It provides information to help health and care learners to recognise people who may be at risk from loneliness and social isolation and understand the potential negative outcomes this may have on their health.</p> <p>WMAS has agreed to highlight NHSE training to staff (see below).</p>
West Midlands Ambulance Service	<p>Advised they are unable to offer any information or support and they do not capture data on repeat callers. However, has agreed to include NHS England's training (above) in its e-learning resources for all staff.</p>
West Midlands Fire Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe and Well checks carried out by operational firefighters, and cover a range of topics, which includes loneliness and isolation. • Targets those living alone and the elderly. • Some officers are trained in complex needs e.g. hoarding. • Established partnership referral pathways and referrals are made to partner agencies when necessary. • Two-way process needed – partnerships to drive safe and well check referrals and WMFS can identify those in need of social prescribing for example, but reports that social prescribing is disjointed across Sandwell.
West Midlands Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surgeries and drop-in sessions across the six towns - 'brew with the ladies in blue', "cuppa with a copper".

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal get-togethers with local groups at various locations throughout the three wards where PCSOs meet with members of the community in an effort to facilitate cohesion with hard to reach parts of the community such as the elderly – “knit and natter” and similar craft groups. • Working towards integrating more with South-Asian community. • Uses SCVO Route to Wellbeing Portal to signpost people. • Engages with Let’s Chat Bus. • Engages with Neighbourhood Partnerships Team and VCS • 12 officers dedicated to schools – risk of engagement in extremism and gangs for children who are lonely or isolated – working on diversion provision. • WMNow App is an engagement tool, translating into 152 languages. Mapping function enables targeting of certain groups. • During lockdowns PCSOs supported digital outreach activities, befriending services and comfort phonecalls. • IT system in development that will capture data on individuals and referrals made and working to improve data collection overall.
<p>Social Prescribing</p> <p>https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/workforce-development-framework-social-prescribing-link-workers/</p> <p>https://www.activeblackcountry.co.uk/what-we-do/health-wellbeing/social-prescribing/</p>	<p>Social prescribing is a way to connect people with community-based services, groups and activities that meet practical, social, and emotional needs that affect their health and wellbeing, and increase people’s active involvement with their health and their community. Social prescribing is happening across Sandwell; however, the approach varies across the eight Primary Care Networks and more information is required.</p>

<p>https://www.healthexchange.org.uk/services/social-prescribing/social-prescribing-birmingham/</p>	<p>The NHS has recently published a workforce development framework to provide clear and consistent standards and improve the quality and consistency of social prescribing.</p> <p>The Council is currently developing a Social Prescribing Strategy for Sandwell. As part of this work officers from Public Health have met with a number of social prescribers and obtained their feedback on how the approach can be strengthened. Strengthening the voluntary and community sector is also critical to the success of social prescribing, to ensure that there is adequate provision to refer patients into.</p>
<p>Government</p>	<p>There is a range of resources on the government website that are still to be explored in depth to support this review.</p>
<p>Better Mental Health Programme..</p>	<p>Funding from Public Health England’s Prevention and Promotion Fund for Better Mental Health has been used to help a number of organisations, through grants, to improve mental health and wellbeing and to provide an overall strategy to ensure that residents of Sandwell are given all the support they need; especially those who were vulnerable. Uses existing community links to bolster existing support and services.</p> <p>Initial analyses show that the programme has been very successful, with a self-rated evaluation of wellbeing showing that “wellbeing” scores had increased by 17.8%.</p>