
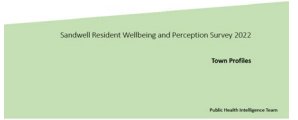


**Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board - Review on Loneliness and Isolation  
Summary of Evidence Gathered**

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"> <li>• Those not working/ long- term sick/ retired scored highest for both Loneliness and Isolation.</li> <li>• Feeling unsafe scored high.</li> <li>• Tipton highest of the six towns for Loneliness</li> <li>• Wednesbury highest of the six towns for Isolation.</li> <li>• Older people are more likely to feel lonely and isolated.</li> </ul>
<p><a href="#">Better Mental Health Programme</a>..</p>	<p>Uses funding from £391,272 funding from Public Health England’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"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Improve understanding of mental health and wellbeing among Sandwell's communities, including available support; and</li> <li>• Increase capacity among voluntary and community sector organisations supporting mental wellbeing.</li> </ul>
<p>SCVO</p> <p><a href="https://www.healthysandwell.co.uk/mental-health-wellbeing/better-mental-health/project-i/">https://www.healthysandwell.co.uk/mental-health-wellbeing/better-mental-health/project-i/</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.scvo.info/local-vcs-intelligence/community-health-portal/">https://www.scvo.info/local-vcs-intelligence/community-health-portal/</a></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. The site maps Warm Spaces too.</p> <p>Reach is more with partnerships organisations, 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"> <li>• Sets out risk factors and impacts.</li> <li>• Refers to Office National Statistics Lifestyles Survey/Data.</li> <li>• Populations with higher unemployment levels are lonelier.</li> <li>• Risk factors are comparable to obesity.</li> </ul>



- 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 Public Health and Neighbourhoods 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.

Morrison's (Wednesbury) agreed to consider introducing.

	Sainsbury's (Oldbury) does not have a café. No response from Asda and Tesco.
<p data-bbox="203 260 629 296">"Happy to Chat" Benches</p> <p data-bbox="203 344 680 552"><a href="https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/citylife-news/community/happy-chat-benches-aim-combat-loneliness-and-isolation">https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/citylife-news/community/happy-chat-benches-aim-combat-loneliness-and-isolation</a></p> <p data-bbox="203 603 680 767"><a href="https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/happy-chat-benches-around-cardiff-22102985">https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/happy-chat-benches-around-cardiff-22102985</a></p> <p data-bbox="203 818 680 983"><a href="https://www.sthelenswellbeing.org.uk/services/mental-wellbeing/pages/happy-to-chat-benches">https://www.sthelenswellbeing.org.uk/services/mental-wellbeing/pages/happy-to-chat-benches</a></p>	<p data-bbox="707 260 2000 379">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 data-bbox="707 430 2000 512">Assistant Director (Borough Economy) Green Spaces, Green Services, Events has indicated willingness to look at doing this this in Sandwell.</p>
<p data-bbox="203 1078 656 1198">Community Transport Let's Chat Bus and Community Hub</p> <p data-bbox="203 1249 680 1331"><a href="https://www.communitytransport.org/letschat">https://www.communitytransport.org/letschat</a></p>	<p data-bbox="707 1078 2000 1331">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. The project replicates a Walsall scheme that has been running much longer.</p>
Shop Mobility	<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>The service currently operates 6 days a week but will be reducing to 3 days due to funding reductions.</p>
Neighbourhood Partnerships Teams	<p>Neighbourhood Partnerships Teams undertake a variety of activities across the six towns, working with partners and Voluntary and Community Sector (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>
McArthur Glen Community Corner	<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><a href="https://www.mcarthurglen.com/en/outlets/uk/designer-outlet-west-midlands/whats-on/community-corner/">https://www.mcarthurglen.com/en/outlets/uk/designer-outlet-west-midlands/whats-on/community-corner/</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food Donation Station</li> <li>• Hot Desk Facilities</li> <li>• Community Library Book Swap</li> <li>• Chill-out lounge area</li> <li>• Affirmation Station</li> <li>• Life skills workshops such as First Aid Training and Sign Language classes</li> <li>• Exercise classes</li> <li>• An opportunity to meet and chat with your local Police, Ambulance and Fire Service</li> <li>• Literature Festival</li> </ul>
<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><a href="#"><u>Warm Spaces</u></a></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. Residents can 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 (2022). Data on attendance is still being analysed.</p>
<p><a href="#">Campaign to End Loneliness</a></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 <a href="#">Training</a>.</p>
<p><a href="#">Tackling Loneliness Hub</a></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"> <li>• Create a committed and established network of loneliness professionals across all sectors</li> <li>• Support loneliness professionals to work collaboratively and generate action</li> <li>• Increase the evidence base on loneliness</li> <li>• Support a national conversation on loneliness</li> </ul> <p>The Hub is supported by <a href="#">DCMS</a> and managed by a team at the Campaign to End Loneliness and the <a href="#">What Works Centre for Wellbeing</a></p>

<a href="#">NHS England</a>	<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>West Midlands Ambulance Service has agreed to highlight NHS England training to staff (see below).</p>
<p>West Midlands Ambulance Service</p>	<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>
<p>West Midlands Fire Service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe and Well checks carried out by operational firefighters, and cover a range of topics, which includes loneliness and isolation.</li> <li>• Targets those living alone and the elderly.</li> <li>• Some officers are trained in complex needs e.g. hoarding.</li> <li>• Established partnership referral pathways and referrals are made to partner agencies when necessary.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>



<p>West Midlands Police</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surgeries and drop-in sessions across the six towns - ‘brew with the ladies in blue’, “cuppa with a copper”.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Working towards integrating more with South-Asian community.</li> <li>• Uses SCVO Route to Wellbeing Portal to signpost people.</li> <li>• Engages with Let’s Chat Bus.</li> <li>• Engages with Neighbourhood Partnerships Team and VCS</li> <li>• 12 officers dedicated to schools – risk of engagement in extremism and gangs for children who are lonely or isolated – working on diversion provision.</li> <li>• WMNow App is an engagement tool, translating into 152 languages. Mapping function enables targeting of certain groups.</li> <li>• During lockdowns PCSOs supported digital outreach activities, befriending services and comfort phonecalls.</li> <li>• IT system in development that will capture data on individuals and referrals made and working to improve data collection overall.</li> </ul>
<p>Social Prescribing</p> <p><a href="https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/workforce-development-framework-social-prescribing-link-workers/">https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/workforce-development-framework-social-prescribing-link-workers/</a></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><a href="https://www.activeblackcountry.co.uk/what-we-do/health-wellbeing/social-prescribing/">https://www.activeblackcountry.co.uk/what-we-do/health-wellbeing/social-prescribing/</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.healthexchange.org.uk/services/social-prescribing/social-prescribing-birmingham/">https://www.healthexchange.org.uk/services/social-prescribing/social-prescribing-birmingham/</a></p>	<p>The NHS has recently published a <a href="#">workforce development framework</a> 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><a href="#">Government</a></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><a href="#">Better Mental Health Programme..</a></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>

<p>Sandwell Libraries and Museums</p>	<p>Many arts, crafts and social groups are held across the borough in libraries and museums and in their outdoor spaces. A Friends group also exists, that helps with the running of the premises and such events.</p> <p>The libraries service leads on the Council's 19 Welcoming Spaces (formerly known as Warm Spaces - see above). In 2022 West Bromwich Library opened on Christmas day and offered hot drinks and snacks. 50 people attended at it was hoped that the library would open on Christmas day 2023 too. Other libraries would open on Christmas day, subject to staff volunteering.</p> <p>The libraries service has secured £88,000 from the "Know Your Neighbourhoods" fund, which will be used to tackle loneliness through volunteering. A volunteer co-ordinator would be recruited to lead on the project. The funding would also be used to put on additional activities. Public Health has advised that library staff and volunteers can be trained using the Make Every Contact Count (MECC) approach (see below).</p>
<p>Making Every Contact Count</p>	<p>The Making Every Contact Count (MECC) approach encourages health and social care staff to use the opportunities arising during their routine interactions with patients to have conversations about how they might make positive improvements to their health or wellbeing. MECC equips people with the competence and confidence to deliver health and wellbeing messages, to help encourage people to change their behaviour and to direct them to local services that can support them.</p>

<p><a href="#">Friendly Benches</a></p>	<p>Specially designed outdoor seating spaces that act as meeting points and social hubs, hosting regular activities and events for people of all ages and abilities.</p> <p>There are 15 (nationally), the closest one to Sandwell being in Halesowen (Dudley). They are run by volunteers.</p> <p>An <a href="#">independent evaluation</a> of the scheme in 2023 concluded that the initiative is having a positive impact on communities.</p> <p>The cost of a bench is £19,037, which includes full installation and ongoing support, advice and guidance from The Friendly Bench CIC team, including support with fundraising, marketing, sharing of best practice, ideas and resources as well as publicity and promotion to help keep the local community engaged and ensuring continued impact.</p>
<p>Sandwell Parents of Disabled Children</p>	<p>Members of the working group visited one of Sandwell Parents of Disabled Children's (SPDC) group session at West Bromwich Leisure Centre in November 2023. The group was started in 2003 by parents, using their own money, for play and leisure purposes. The group is now a registered charity and receives funding via SCVO. The group holds various contracts with Sandwell Children's Trust for different age-related activities and also puts on training and events across 34 weeks of the year with dedicated events for parents. Funding is on a three- year basis so there is often a lot of anxiety during the last year of the contract as worries start about whether further funding will be awarded. Having to pay for venue hire limits the funds available for activities. Demand for the service outweighs capacity, and a rota and waiting list is used to manage attendance.</p>

Members spoke with a number of parents and the following key feedback was noted:-

- they don't get the "school gate" experience, because their children are taken to school by SEND transport services;
- parents feel lonely while their child is at school;
- some children are also carers and don't get the typical childhood/teenage experience;
- grandparents can also be affected;
- some of the parents are disabled themselves, so already felt isolated before becoming a parent;
- after becoming a parent of a disabled child their friends sometimes drift away because they are unable to join in social events;
- disabled children can often display challenging behaviours, which makes people avoid them;
- the group is only funded for under 18s and upon reaching adulthood the support services that are available to them change, adjustment period can be difficult, particularly those who have been supported by the group since the age of 4;
- some school's SENDCOs hold events for parents;
- parents have to spend a lot of time "fighting" with professionals for support and/or diagnoses;
- short breaks separate the child from the family, parents don't always want this and want to see their child enjoying the activities – "how can strengthen a family by splitting it up?";

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• some parents felt as if they never had the opportunity to leave the house due to their caring commitments;</li><li>• parents benefitted from receiving ‘peer support’ from other parents who attended the group.</li></ul>
<p>The Benefits of Pets</p> <p><a href="https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/the-importance-of-animals-tackling-loneliness-one-pet-at-a-time/#:~:text=Staying%20home%20with%20a%20cat,depression%2C%20anxiety%2C%20and%20loneliness.">https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/the-importance-of-animals-tackling-loneliness-one-pet-at-a-time/#:~:text=Staying%20home%20with%20a%20cat,depression%2C%20anxiety%2C%20and%20loneliness.</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.monash.edu/news/articles/using-pets-to-support-healthy-ageing-pilot-study#:~:text=Monash%20University%20researcher%20Dr%20Em,from%20migrant%20and%20refugee%20backgrounds">https://www.monash.edu/news/articles/using-pets-to-support-healthy-ageing-pilot-study#:~:text=Monash%20University%20researcher%20Dr%20Em,from%20migrant%20and%20refugee%20backgrounds</a></p>	<p>It is widely acknowledged that pets can positively benefit the well-being of owners and for many older people living on their own, their pets are their reason for living. The benefits of having a pet include relieving stress, lowering heart rates and blood pressure, plus helping us become physically active; directly reducing the risk of mortality, and even helping us cope with physical and emotional situations, including pain.</p>