

## Bury Health and Wellbeing Board

Title of the Report	Combatting Loneliness in Bury
Date	26 September 2018
Contact Officer	Hayley Ashall, Head of Social Development & Engagement, Strategic Planning & Development Manager
HWB Lead in this area	Cllr Andrea Simpson, Lead for Health and Wellbeing Julie Gonda, Interim Executive Director Communities and Wellbeing

### 1. Executive Summary

Is this report for?	Information <input type="checkbox"/>	Discussion <input type="checkbox"/>	Decision <input type="checkbox"/>
Why is this report being brought to the Board?	<p>To inform the Board a loneliness strategy and action plan for Bury has been formulated and to gain endorsement from the Board.</p> <p>To inform the Board the intention to start a task and finish group to ensure the actions are mobilised and also to gain support for a pilot and workshop later in the year.</p>		
Please detail which, if any, of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities the report relates to. (See attached Strategy) <a href="http://www.theburydirectory.co.uk/healthandwellbeingboard">www.theburydirectory.co.uk/healthandwellbeingboard</a>	As loneliness can affect anyone at any time in life then this work is related to the first four health and wellbeing strategy priorities (Starting well, living well, living well with a long term condition or as a carer and ageing well).		
Please detail which, if any, of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment priorities the report relates to. (See attached JSNA) <a href="http://jsna.theburydirectory.co.uk/kb5/bury/jsna/home.page">http://jsna.theburydirectory.co.uk/kb5/bury/jsna/home.page</a>	As above this links to the life course priorities.		
Key Actions for the Health and Wellbeing Board / proposed recommendations for action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To endorse the paper, strategy and action plan</li> <li>• To support the formation of a task and finish group and make recommendations for membership</li> <li>• To endorse, support and help promote the workshop planned for November 2018</li> </ul>		

What requirement is there for internal or external communication around this area?	For Board members to help play their role in communicating the messages about loneliness in order to raise the awareness to our people, partners and workforce.
Assurance and tracking process – Has the report been considered at any other committee meeting of the Council/meeting of the CCG Board/other stakeholders....please provide details.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C&amp;WB SMT</li> <li>• Relevant Lead Member</li> </ul>

## 2. Introduction / Background

Before her death in 2016, MP Jo Cox set up the Loneliness Commission, following her death it was co-chaired by Seema Kennedy MP and Rachel Reeves MP. The Commission has grown and gained momentum and now highlights the detrimental impact of loneliness on people's lives and the economy. Jo Cox's own experience of feeling lonely at university and then seeing it first hand in her constituency areas fuelled her to derive the commission.

Over the past 18 months, people, community groups charities and businesses have been working together with the co-chairs and via their work have reached thousands of people across the country: young and old, disabled people, carers, parents, refugees and people seeking asylum, employers and the many people who simply started a conversation or said they were 'happy to chat'.

### The Commissions Vision

The commissions vision is that people come together to help one another with as little as a conversation, recognising that as Jo Cox is known to have said 'we have more in common than divides us'. It shouldn't take a disaster or crisis for community intervention to occur but this should be an everyday normal part of life.

Society today generates calls on our time, more pressure from home, school and work; less time to meet and get to know one another. Technology provides us with a tool to meet and create links on line and there are so many opportunities in our local area to become connected to local people, service and support in person. Despite the available support and opportunities many people are still lonely and isolated so it's how we identify, signpost, support or connect those people.

The Commissions work is about starting a conversation to ensure the future is one of connection, kindness and community not isolation, separation and loneliness.

The commission has gone from strength to strength, seeing Britain's first loneliness minister (potentially in the world) appointed, Tracy Crouch.

Earlier in the year a motion was passed at Council, asking for a Loneliness strategy to be formulated along with an action plan outlining activities required to tackle loneliness in Bury.

### 3. Key issues for the Board to Consider

#### **What is Loneliness**

Loneliness in the oxford dictionary is described as sadness because one has no friends or company; the fact of being without companies; solitariness; of a place the quality of being unfrequented and remote; isolation.

Loneliness doesn't discriminate and can affect anyone at any age, from any background, at any time of life, even those with people and support around them may not feel connected and may feel lonely. We all will have likely experienced feelings of loneliness at some point in time, however, it is when it is continuous and day to day normality, that it becomes chronic and likely to impact on our health and wellbeing. This can lead to difficulties in connecting with others and forming relationships.

Several studies over the years have tried to identify the levels of loneliness across the UK and among different groups. Studies found consistent levels of loneliness within the older generation reporting between 5-15% suggesting they are often or always lonely. Although there are some studies looking at loneliness amongst children, young people and adults of working age this is less robust and something that we should do more of.

#### **What the Statistics tell us about who experiences loneliness:**

- Over 9 million adults are often or always lonely (British Red Cross and Co-op)
- 43% of 17 – 25 year olds using Action for Children services experienced problems with loneliness (Action for Children)
- Research with pre-school children found that more than one-in-ten say they are lonely and unhappy with their social relationships. (Action for Children)
- One-in-five children aged seven to 12 say they are lonely sometimes or often. (Action for Children)
- Four-out-of-five adolescents report feelings of loneliness at some time, and almost a third describe these feelings as persistent and painful. (Action for Children)
- In a survey on student mental health, loneliness was ranked as the fifth most important out of ten 'grand challenges' faced by university students in the UK. (Action for Children)
- Action for Children's recent poll of over 2000 parents found that more than half had experienced a problem with loneliness, with a fifth feeling lonely in the last week.
- Over half of parents (52%) have had a problem with loneliness with 21% feeling lonely in the last week. (Action for Children)
- 72% of young people reported that they had recently felt lonely or isolated. (Dame Kelly Holmes Trust)

- Young people in the North of England (78%) experienced higher levels of loneliness than those in the South of England (71%).
- 50% of disabled people will be lonely on any given day (Sense)
- For 3.6 million people aged 65 television is the main form of company. (Age UK)
- 38% of people with dementia said that they had lost friends after their diagnosis. (Alzheimer's Society)
- 58% of migrants and refugees in London described loneliness and isolation as their biggest challenge. (The Forum)
- More than 1 in 3 people aged 75 and over say that feelings of loneliness are out of their control. (Independent Age)
- 8 out of 10 carers have felt lonely or isolated as a result of looking after a loved one. (Carers UK)
- More than 1 in 10 men say they are lonely, but would not admit it to anyone. (Royal Voluntary Service)

Various things in life can lead to someone being lonely for instance a person who has outlived their friends and family. Research has shown life transitions including moving home; changing schools or work; coming to the country as an asylum seeker; leaving the armed forces; leaving care; becoming a carer; experiencing family breakdown or bereavement and or developing a health condition all can lead to chronic loneliness. There are also some groups of people who maybe more vulnerable to becoming lonely when compared to others groups of people. Research shows loneliness is more prevalent amongst disabled people, those with a mental health issue, those in poor health, those who live alone, the oldest older people, carers and people from some but not all minority ethnic communities.

The numbers of people who are either lonely and or are being identified as lonely are on the increase. Evidence nationally and locally shows loneliness isn't just detrimental for individuals but also to the economy. In the Greater Manchester Population Health Plan 2017-2021, it is estimated that less than 30% of presenting issues at GP surgeries actually require clinical intervention, and 70% of appointments are actually down to issues around wider social determinants, a figure which rises in areas of deprivation.

- Loneliness costs UK employers £2.5 billion per year. (Co-op)
- Disconnected communities could be costing the UK economy £32 billion every year. (Big Lunch)
- Three out of four GPs say they see between 1 and 5 people a day who have come in mainly because they are lonely, and one in ten sees between six and ten such patients daily. (Campaign to End Loneliness)
- Weak social connection is as harmful to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. (Holt Lunstad)

## **Starting to take action on loneliness in Bury**

The evidence and research is overwhelming, loneliness is real and impacts on a significant amount of people every day. Given that loneliness is about connectivity, it would be reasonable to suggest that some, if not most cases of loneliness could be preventable and or certainly supported to reduce loneliness amongst our population.

To help raise awareness of loneliness in Bury, a strategy on a page has been developed (see appendix 1) and an action plan outlining some of the potential activities required has been developed to accompany the strategy (see appendix 2).

The basis of the strategy and action plan, is about raising awareness of loneliness, encouraging and enabling people, partners and workforce, to help identify when a person may be suffering from loneliness and help to signpost, direct or connect them. This might be in the form of a community group, connecting to a neighbour to grow a friendship, being supported by a volunteer or a befriender or helping connect a person to a relevant organisation or service to support a particular condition or need. At the bare minimum this is about starting a conversation and asking someone 'how are you?'

### **Next steps**

It is recommended that a task and finish group (cross sector and organisations) is formulated to support the strategy and action plan, develop further actions and gain commitment to support the 'taking action' on loneliness in Bury.

It is also recommended we pilot some focussed activity in a particular area, this might include working with GPs, local organisations and services to identify the triggers for loneliness and those who they believe are lonely. They working with volunteer befrienders, the neighbourhood engagement team, community teams and organisations, will help to connect them. The pilot would enable us to test some of the suggested activities and also enable us to map the existing services and excellent work already tackling loneliness. The result of the pilot would help shape an offer that we could roll out to other areas in Bury. It is suggested this work will start with a workshop, inviting local people, organisations and professionals, to understand better what loneliness is and how it impacts people, identify potential triggers, solutions and develop mechanisms or ideas of how we could connect people to the solutions. Following the workshop the task and finish group will develop the pilot and campaign to accompany the work. The workshop will likely take place in early November and the pilot will be in the Whitefield, Unsworth and Pilkington Park area.

There is commitment from the Co-op to fund refreshments at the workshop and the Social Development and Engagement team will facilitate the workshop and support the task and finish group and the pilot. However there is an ask for other teams, services and organisations to help fund and or support the loneliness strategy, pilot and ongoing work, therefore any commitments or suggestions would be welcomed.

#### 4. Recommendations for action

- a) The Board to endorse the paper, strategy and action plan.
- b) The Board to support the formation of a task and finish group and make recommendations for membership.
- c) The Board to endorse, support and help promote the workshop planned for November 2018.
- d) The Board to identify potential funding streams that may be used to support this work.

#### Financial and legal implications (if any)

If necessary please seek advice from the Council Monitoring Officer Jayne Hammond ([J.M.Hammond@bury.gov.uk](mailto:J.M.Hammond@bury.gov.uk)) or Section 151 Officer Steve Kenyon ([S.Kenyon@bury.gov.uk](mailto:S.Kenyon@bury.gov.uk)).

There are no known legal implications to this report, some funding has been identified for the work to date and other sources of funding are being explored.

**e) Equality/Diversity Implications. Please attach the completed Equality and Analysis Form if required.**

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