

Meeting: Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Sub-committee

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Title: Loneliness and Isolation in North Tyneside

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Service: Adult Social Care

Directorate: Health, Education, Children and Safeguarding

Wards affected: All

1. **Purpose of Report** The purpose of this briefing is to share some of the approaches that Adult Social Care (ASC) has developed in order to attempt to reduce the number of people who feel lonely or isolated. And to present some facts and figures in relation to those potentially at risk of loneliness within North Tyneside will be highlighted.

2. **Recommendations** Further debate and raising awareness of the impact of loneliness on a person's health and wellbeing.

3. **Background Information**

The Social Care Institute of Excellence (SCIE) published a paper in May 2012 – Preventing loneliness and social isolation among older people.

The Key messages from this paper are:

- Older people are particularly vulnerable to social isolation and loneliness owing to loss of friends and family, mobility or income.
- Social isolation and loneliness have a detrimental effect on health and wellbeing.
- Studies show that being lonely or isolated can impact on blood pressure, and is closely linked to depression.
- The impact of loneliness and social isolation on an individual's health and wellbeing has cost implications for health and social care services.
- **Half of all older people say the television is their main company according to research by Campaign to End Loneliness.**
- "Over one million older people in the UK live isolated and lonely lives. A million more feel trapped in their own homes and one in five older people see other people less than once a week. This may be due to having no family, physical disability or living remotely," say UK charity Friends of the Elderly.
- "Individuals who are socially isolated are between two and five times more likely than those who have strong social ties to die prematurely". (Marmot 2010)

ASC undertook some research in relation to this issue and in 2013 a paper was presented and discussed at the Senior Management Team in relation to how building community capacity and developing social relationships could contribute to reducing the number of people who felt lonely or isolated. At this time it was agreed to support two local organisations to undertake asset based community development (ABCD) with a view to testing out this method of working in North Tyneside and to get more people involved in their local community. The work was monitored through the Think Local Act Personal (TLAP) framework for building community capacity.

The findings from the initial 12 month period were really positive and it was clear that by reaching out and connecting people in the community their wellbeing was enhanced. ASC also undertook some demand management analysis and believed that if people could be provided with the right advice and information and support to access community resources they would feel more connected to their community and able to participate.

In summary, it is recognised that people maintain a better sense of wellbeing if they are independent and have a good social network. By intervening in this issue we can improve older people's quality of life, while limiting dependence on more costly services.

3. Details

The North Tyneside Joint Strategic Needs Assessment highlights the estimate that just over 14,000 people, aged over 65, are currently living alone in the borough.

The overall number of people who live alone is projected to rise by 13% by 2020 and for those aged over 75, it is projected to increase by 44% by 2030.

Of those living alone, there are approximately twice as many women as men aged 65-74 years and three times as many women as men over the age of 75.

In addition to these standard estimates, the methodology that the Campaign to End Loneliness has adopted in their national research has been replicated locally. This indicates that the number of people at risk of being lonely is over 21,000.

4. Current developments within ASC to help combat loneliness

Care & Connect was launched in December 2014. Care & Connect has been developed to promote the wellbeing of individuals and prevent and delay the need for social care support. This is achieved by providing an alternative, proportionate response to need through harnessing the strengths and assets of people and their communities and by building community capacity.

Care & Connect is delivered from Wallsend Customer First Centre, this is the 'hub' and there is an office open to the public 5 days per week. There are four Community Navigators who are each responsible for a specific area of the Borough, i.e. North West; South West; North East and South East. The navigators also operate weekly drop-ins within their respective areas, for example in the North West the navigator holds a drop-in/surgery at John Willie Sams; Oxford Centre; Wideopen library and the White Swan Centre, so is accessible to the local community and also understands what is going on in the area and where there are gaps, which informs the focus of future developments.

ASC also currently commission/provide funding for a number of preventative services within the Borough, for example, AGEUK befriending and enabling service; Methodist Church Live at Home; and the Good Neighbours scheme delivered via VODA.

Care & Connect has worked with over 720 people in its first year. The majority received information and advice as well as signposting to community resources. A number of people also received support from a navigator to access resources or services and a further 18% received a Social Care Wellbeing Assessment. 53% of people who access the service are 65+ and 35% of these are aged 75+.

Community initiatives have included support to residents to establish over 10 new groups, and we have a campaign to 'Make It Special' - the first event was held last Christmas, on Christmas Day, where we 'Made Christmas Special' for over 110 people who enjoyed a Christmas lunch in the company of others, across four different venues, and a further 50 people volunteered on the day.

Feedback from Christmas events

These comments are just a sample of the overwhelming feedback received from the Christmas Day events and illustrate really well the desire people have to be part of the community and connected to other people, and the positive impact it has on their wellbeing:

- "It gave me the chance to re-connect with some old friends and I also made some new ones"
- "It prevented me from sitting alone on Christmas Day"
- "Could not have wished for a better Christmas"
- "Without this event, I would have been sat on my own at Christmas, and it was a good change"
- "I have lived up here on my own for 10 years, and been alone at Christmas, this event gave me something to do on Christmas Day"
- "Last Christmas I was on my own and didn't spend it with anyone, but this Christmas I got the chance to make new friends and have a lovely meal"
- "Another lady and I swapped numbers at the event and have been in touch via telephone with her already and we have plans to meet up sometime in the future"
- "I would have been at a care home luncheon if it wasn't for you"
- "I had previously met a lady who was there, and it was really good to see and reconnect with her again"
- "Last year, I was sat on my own, eating pie and chips"
- "This Christmas was the best one I have had in a long time"
- "It was a great idea as it got me out of the house instead of alone at Christmas"
- "The volunteers were so lovely, and they have inspired me to want to volunteer next year! I want to help out at future events as a result of Christmas Day"
- "Much more enjoyable than sitting on my own at Christmas"
- "I made new friends at this event"
- "I already have plans to get together with 3 of the people I met as a result of this event"
- "If I didn't have this event, I would have been alone on Christmas Day and there are so many other people alone on Christmas Day and this event has prevented that"
- "I made friends on the day that I would love to meet up with again"
- "Best Christmas I have had since 1981" "I have been on my own for a very long time; it was a lovely change to spend time with other people. Especially on Christmas day"

Next Steps

Care & Connect will continue to work with the community to build community capacity. However, some targeted work will be undertaken, upon analysis of the data/mapping work to try and reach out to those who are potentially lonely and isolated and who may not know what is going on in their community or may not be able to access local groups etc. There is also work

underway to form connections with the residents of the North Tyneside Living Schemes and other sheltered accommodation providers to develop community work.

The 'Make It Special' campaign has continued and there have been coordinated Easter events and Big Lunch get togethers. We are now focusing on fundraising in order to Make Christmas Special again!