

Tackling loneliness and social isolation in Tower Hamlets

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Overview

- Background
- Impact of loneliness and social isolation
- Local insight
- Loneliness event 14 November 2017
- Next steps

Background

- Addressing loneliness was identified in the Mental Health Strategy 2013-19
- 2 projects were commissioned by Public Health in 2015/16 and have now finished and reports received.
- The Ageing Well Strategy includes reducing isolation and loneliness as one of 10 key themes

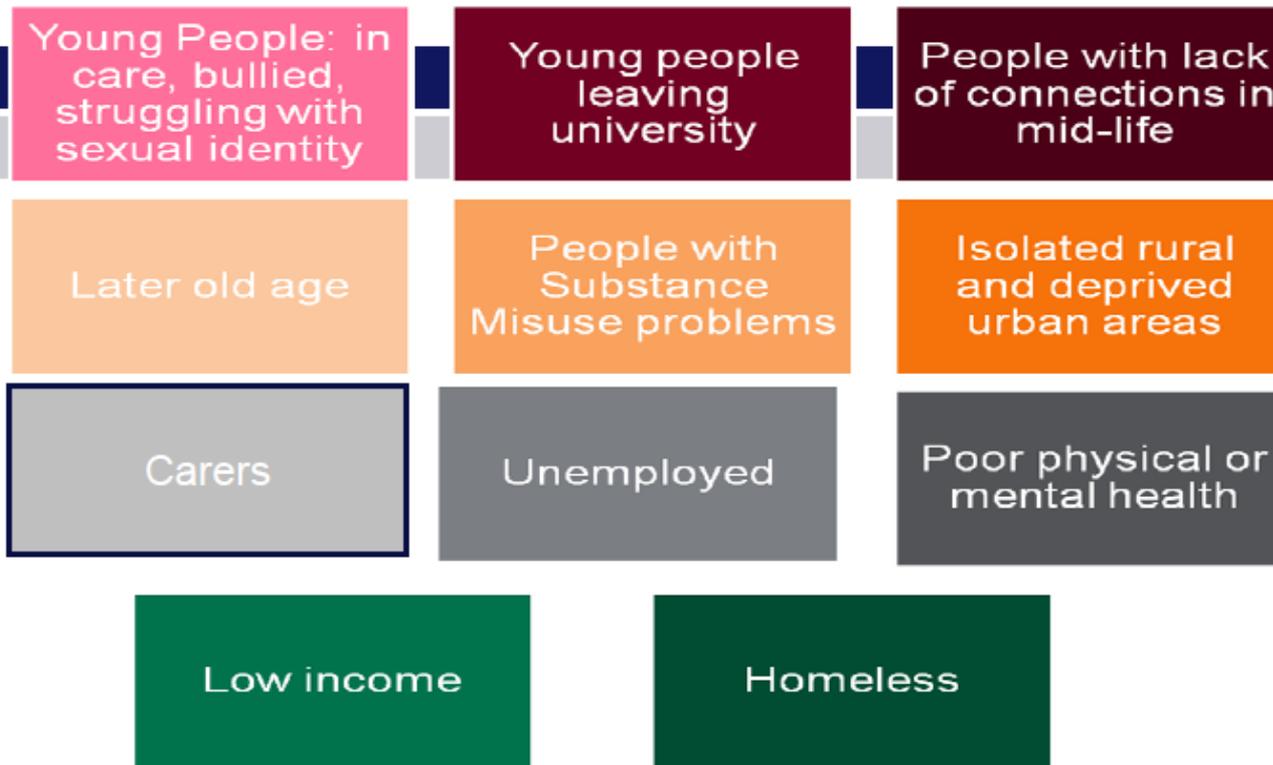
Impact of loneliness and social isolation

- Associated with 26% increase in mortality
- Leads to poorer physical & mental health
- Inc. risk of CVD poor health & higher rates of disability
- Inc. risk of dementia, depression & suicide
- Inc. risk of cognitive decline

Estimates in Tower Hamlets

- 16% of over 65's (2,500 TH residents) are likely to be lonely 'all or most of the time' - referred to as 'chronic loneliness'
- Loneliness levels amongst care home residents are between 22% and 44% (10% in the wider community)

Risk Factors for Loneliness



Local Insight

Public Health Commissioned 2 Projects:-

- Community Perspectives on Loneliness
- Action on Loneliness: care homes

- Stakeholder event in Nov 2017 to report findings

Community Perspectives on Loneliness

As you get older you become infirm, invisible, incoherent, incontinent

Aim: To explore people's views on loneliness. Twenty volunteers were trained in community research techniques to find out the thoughts and experiences of loneliness of 600+ residents from a wide range of backgrounds and ages.

It was depression – like catching a germ, I just wanted to die, as straight as that

I often wonder 'who can I ask if I smell?'

Eight themes were identified as having an impact on loneliness:

- Mental health and wellbeing
- Physical health
- Feeling safe
- Housing conditions
- Family, relationships and life experiences
- Community activities and social networks
- Culture, faith and cohesion
- Environment and infrastructure

My family are busy – they don't know I am lonely

I refresh my mind and meet friends by coming to the Mosque

Action on Loneliness: care homes project

"I don't really enjoy talking. If I talk, it's not because I want to, it's because I have to. I'm not a friendly man; I was once, a long time ago. I'm friendly with John (volunteer) though. I think I enjoy meeting with him more than anyone. I think he is a great chap."

Resident

- 5 care homes and 1 extra care home with a focus on Asian elders were involved
- 51 volunteers were recruited and matched with 51 residents based on common interests
- When the project came to an end, whilst there was a desire among care homes to continue it due to its success, this was not possible due to specialist knowledge and time required to support the volunteers and costs associated with it

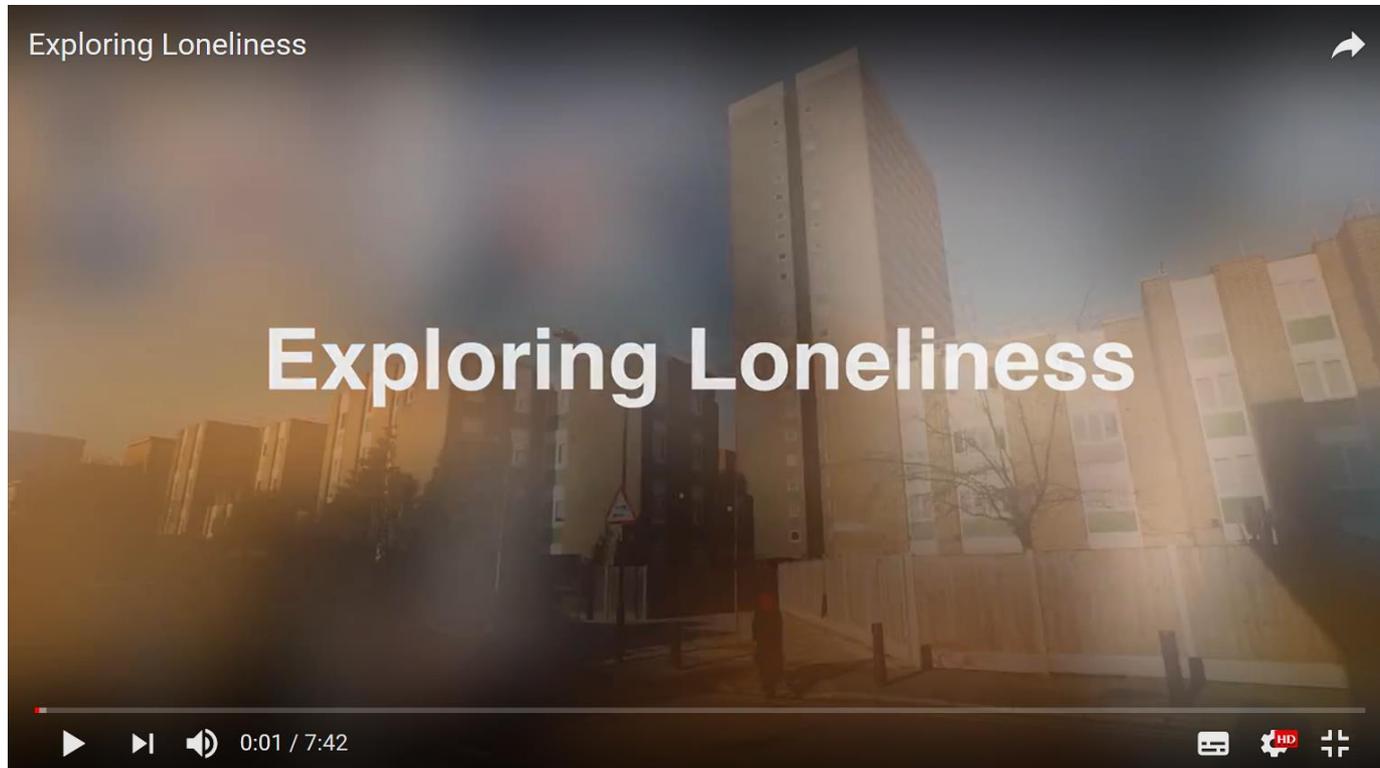
"They enjoy a lot of one to one time which is impossible to give ...there is just not the time to sit down with them every single day, even for 30 mins with one person, we cannot do that with 41 people."

Care home manager

Loneliness Stakeholder event

- Nov 2017; fed back on findings from projects
- 60 people from a wide range of organisations represented incl: Idea stores, Volunteer Centre, Carers Centre, District Nurses, Adult Social Care, Tower Hamlets Homes, Parks, Strategy & Policy, Integrated Commissioning & Cohesion

Video on loneliness



www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbRiGtR_I_0

Discussion groups

- Strategic approaches to tackling loneliness
 - Detecting and measuring loneliness
 - Reaching lonely and isolated people
 - Supporting lonely people through neighbourhood approaches
 - Tackling loneliness – the role of information and advice
 - Tackling stigma related to loneliness
 - Awareness raising
 - Insight and understanding
 - Enabling activities
 - Enabling environment
- & a Poetry competition....

Recommendations from event

- :Target high risk group: young people, people with disabilities, long term conditions, older people, people who live alone, carers & bereaved
- Key people who can access lonely people:
 - Estate level: Resident warden, concierge, housing associations
 - Community level: post office, pubs, betting shops, idea stores, faith groups, cafes, local retailers
 - Health level: GP, bereavement services, district nurses, health visitors
 - Social care: Social workers, Home care staff, care workers, Meals on wheels, Fire & Rescue
 - Others: Samaritans

Recommendations continued

- :Need for more toilets in the park
- Stronger partnership with schools and older people:
 - Lunch club for older people in schools
 - Walk a mile with older people
 - Integration of ‘adopt a gran/grandad’ with school-based internet classes
- Raise awareness among frontline & non-frontline staff e.g. barbers
- Have friendship benches on strategic sites
- Enable older, disabled & housebound people to access internet
- Routinely & sensitively ask people about their social contacts for e.g. by social care staff

Next Steps – for discussion

- This is a crosscutting issue across the partnership
- Engagement with the public and community organisations has highlighted feasible actions and opportunities to address loneliness
- There are a range of strategies and programmes that are already addressing issues of loneliness eg Ageing Well Strategy, Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Social Prescribing, Healthy Communities
- The next steps will be to review how best to drive concerted action across a range of partners

Winning poem

Little old Flo

*She sits and she waits...for what she does not know
Because it is not for her company, these people that come and go
They may pause for a moment and almost catch her eye
As they turn down the bed and hang out the sheets to dry
As they wash her down
And sterilise her teeth
Always someone new, busy, unaware of her grief*

*They do not know you see, that once she was like they
Full of life and in a rush to get through the day
Full of responsibly of people to care
Now they are gone and all that is left is her despair*

*You see, nothing is lonelier than having loved and lost
There is no greater pain, and no greater cost
As the emptiness that follows swallows you whole
Once you were someone
Now your just little old Flo*

No time to stop sorry, goodbye Flo, time to go