

Madeleine Elliott  
me8133@gmail.com



# Loneliness and Isolation

A Survey of Initiatives to Combat  
Loneliness and Isolation in the North  
East Region

# Personal Risk Factors

- Sensory loss
- Loss of mobility
- Lower income
- Bereavement
- Retirement
- Becoming a carer
- Giving up driving
- Poor health
- Ageing without children (recent)

# Risk Factors in Wider Society

- Public transport
- Lack of public toilets or seating
- Suitable housing
- Fear of crime
- High population turnover
- Demographics
- Technology
- LGBT

# Impact of Risk Factors

Loneliness can be felt by people of all ages, but as we get older, risk factors which could lead to loneliness begin to increase and converge. The impact of loneliness can be devastating and costly to society as well as to the individual.

Robust scientific research shows that loneliness and the impact on health can be compared to smoking and obesity. It is therefore incumbent upon us all to address the issue.

# What is Loneliness?

- **Emotional loneliness** is felt when someone misses the companionship of one particular person; often a spouse, sibling or best friend
- **Social loneliness** is experienced when we lack a wider social network or group of friends
- **Loneliness or isolation.** One can be lonely in a crowded room but one is not then socially isolated. Loneliness is linked to social isolation but it is not the same thing.

# Solitude

- The word 'loneliness' expresses the pain of being alone.
- Language has also created the word 'solitude' to express the glory of being alone. (Paul Johannes Tillich)

# Loneliness Statistics in the UK

- 6 – 13% of older people say they feel very or always lonely
- 6% of older people leave the house once a week or less
- 17% of older people are in contact with friends and family or neighbours less than once a week, and;
- 11% are in contact less than once a month

# Continued

- Over half (51%) of all people aged 75 and over live alone (ONS, 2010)
- Almost 5 million older people say that the television is their main form of company

# Reasons to Act on Loneliness

- Number of people aged 60+ in the UK has reached almost 14.7m. This is expected to pass 30m by 2030 and those over 65 is projected to rise by nearly 50% to over 16m, currently 3.8m in this group live alone – 70% are women
- In the next 20 years, the number of people over 80 (currently 3m) will treble and those over 90 (over 0.5m in 2012) will double
- The number of centenarians rose over 73% in the previous decade to 13,350 in 2012, with 660 in this group being 105 or more

# Reasons to Act Continued

- The number of people over 65 in the north east is projected to be 20.4% of the population by 2021 compared with 18.7% for England. This is due to increases in births over deaths and increased net migration. Northumberland, the border county, is increasing at a higher rate than elsewhere. (Based on 2011 census, ONS)
- Loneliness has a very negative impact on health and is associated with conditions such as cardiovascular disease, dementia, poor sleep and depression. Both self-help and society can alleviate these factors.

# Businesses and Employers

- Support the workforce through the pre-retirement phase and into retirement to stay connected
- Offer products and services with built-in ways to bring people together, i.e. day time gym sessions at a reduced rate, walking football.

# Business and Employers Continued

- Provide information and advice for people who are lonely
- Reduce fear of crime

# Charities and Civil Society

- Tackle loneliness as a specific goal of their work through their strategic plans
- Build partnerships with statutory bodies and other charities
- Reach out to the most isolated groups
- Involve older people in service design  
“nothing about us without us”

# Individuals

- Prepare for one's future life, take the reins
- Volunteer – keep contributing to one's community
- Join local groups to learn something new, or to contribute one's expertise and experience

# Government

- Tackling loneliness as a health and wellbeing priority
- Ensure there is regular, affordable public transport for getting out and about; the free bus pass is an essential benefit – it is not a luxury
- Identify populations most at risk e.g. BME and LGBT groups
- Prioritise preventative services or activities which will reduce loneliness

# Government continued

Appoint a Commissioner for Older People

Thank You For Listening

ANY QUESTIONS?