Loneliness is everybody's business: working together to combat chronic loneliness in Oxfordshire
A discussion paper for Oxfordshire Health Improvement Board, Sept 2017

This brief discussion paper is written as a supplement to the 2016 Age UK report 'No one should have no one: working to end loneliness in older people' and focuses on ways in which we can work together across Oxfordshire to combat chronic or persistent loneliness.

The paper builds on discussions at and arising from the Oxfordshire Jo Cox Loneliness Summit, hosted in Oxford on 14th July, 2017, which brought together a hundred people to raise awareness of loneliness and what we know about avenues out of loneliness, particularly in later life, to spotlight good practice and to pledge action.

In 2015, Age UK and The Campaign to End Loneliness published 'Promising approaches to reducing loneliness and isolation in later life' www.ageuk.org.uk/reducing-loneliness which identified the importance of combined, system-wide approaches and set out a new **framework** for tackling loneliness. The framework suggests that all of the following need to be in place to tackle loneliness systematically and successfully:

- **foundation services** to reach and understand the specific needs of those experiencing loneliness
- **direct interventions** (a menu of services) to improve the number and quality of relationships people have
- **gateway services** (transport and technology) to help people retain connections and independence)
- **structural enablers** (neighbourhood approaches, community development, volunteering, positive ageing) to create the right conditions in local communities to reduce the numbers of people experiencing or at risk of loneliness.

The Board is asked to note the importance of system-wide approaches and to consider the following actions at strategic, organisational, community and individual level:

Working together at a strategic level

The following strategic actions are all worthy of consideration:

- increasing the understanding of loneliness and its impact system-wide through having more information about loneliness in the JSNA
- making tackling loneliness a priority of the Joint HWB Strategy, with tangible action(s) eg support for 'social prescribing'

- review existing ways of measuring progress and agree on a system-wide approach. A chart on the current Four Measures of Wellbeing, which includes some of the technical detail, can be found here: http://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/personal-wellbeing-201112-201516. Campaign to End Loneliness have produced guidance on 'Measuring your impact on loneliness in later life', which contains some useful tools (copy attached).

Age UK Oxfordshire is in discussion with a range of organisations that have a focus on loneliness to set up a time-limited "action alliance" to review current activity against the framework and to facilitate joint working.

Working at an organisational level

We can all consider one or more of the following initiatives within our own organisations:

- raising awareness of loneliness, its impact and what can be done to tackle it amongst staff and the wider public, including making leaflets and other resources available
- urging staff to volunteer and considering actively supporting volunteering in work hours (eg as little as 30mins per week would enable staff to make a regular, weekly phone call to an isolated and / or housebound person. Across all our organisations, that would allow us to make a sea change
- prioritising loneliness and isolation for the support given to VCS organisations through grants
- facilitating road closures to enable community events to happen.

Working at community level

There are myriad ideas to stimulate new opportunities to help people connect at a community level, but here are a few that we could all support:

- encourage a **Good Neighbour Scheme** in every community in Oxfordshire: we currently have 80+ and rising. Their role in providing local transport, befriending and shopping and other small tasks is a vital tool to combat loneliness. Contact oxfordshiregns@hotmail.co.uk
- the **WI** have resolved to take action in local communities to address loneliness and will be launching their campaign on 13th November, World Kindness Day. They will be keen to work with others coordinating local work. Contact local WIs.
- intergenerational initiatives tackle loneliness across generations. www.fullcircleoxon.org.uk
- **The Big Lunch** initiative is a Lottery funded national initiative to bring communities together. They produce packs to help communities to organise events. www.edenprojectcommunities.com

Individually.......

.......we can all have an impact. A little kindness goes a long way!

Penny Thewlis, Sept 2017