

<b>BRIEFING</b>	<b>TO:</b>	<b>Health and Wellbeing Board</b>
	<b>DATE:</b>	<b>10<sup>th</sup> July 2019</b>
	<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	<b>Sam Blakeman, Democratic Services, Assistant Chief Executives Directorate</b>  <b>Ruth Fletcher-Brown, Public Health, Adult Care and Public Health Directorate</b>
	<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>Loneliness Making Every Contact Count Pilot</b>

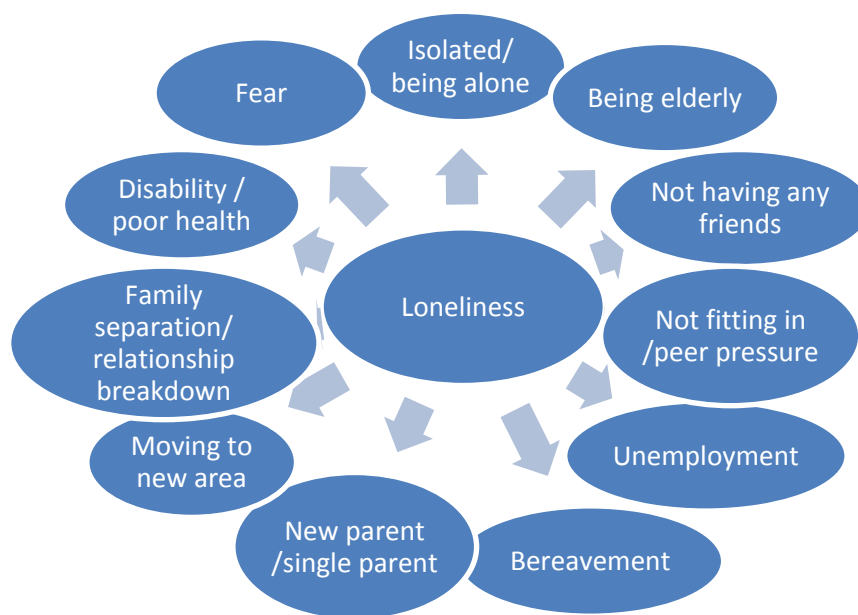
## Background

<b>1.</b>	<p><u>Local Context</u></p> <p>A consideration of loneliness became part of Rotherham’s refreshed Joint Health and Wellbeing strategy (2018-2025) in March 2018, as it was highlighted by the Chair of the local Health and Wellbeing Board as being a significant issue. While many think of loneliness as a social issue, it also affects people’s physical and mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>To recognise the importance of this to health outcomes it was included as a strategic priority under ‘Aim 4’ of the strategy to: <i>‘Mitigate the impact of loneliness and isolation in people of all ages’</i>.</p> <p>This was the start of a range of actions to better understand the local, complex, picture of loneliness, and to develop some specific actions that would help address the issue, using a whole-system, partnership approach (key actions are outlined below).</p> <p><u>National Context</u></p> <p>The Government published their Loneliness <a href="#">Strategy</a> on October 15<sup>th</sup> 2018 following a call for evidence that had over 400 responses. Following Tracey Crouch’s resignation in November 2018, the minister for loneliness is Mims Davies MP.</p> <p>The content of this strategy provided validation that locally in Rotherham, the approach and actions being explored were going in the right direction. The national, strategic actions that the strategy proposed would also enhance what was being done locally and help drive further change and action across the system.</p> <p>Key actions in the national strategy include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Plans to mainstream and standardise system of social prescribing with ‘link workers’ embedded</b> – national system in place by 2023. Schemes to be mapped. Best practice guide to be published. Online platform to be published. Learning programme to be established.</li> </ul>
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- **New money to develop community assets** - £11.5 million ‘building connections fund’. The grantees have since been [announced](#).
- **‘National conversation’ to reduce stigma for Loneliness** .
- **Focus on whole life course** – understanding that loneliness can strike at any point. Strategy notes that ‘vast amount’ of research has been done on loneliness for elderly – more needs to be done regarding young people.
- **Consideration of Loneliness embedded in national decision making process** – every government department to report back how they have embedded loneliness within their decision making process.

## Key Issues

2. National research by the Office for National Statistics on loneliness found that several groups of people were more at risk of loneliness and that there were a set of ‘triggers’ that pushed people into a period of loneliness. These are set out below:



## Key Actions and Relevant Timelines

3. **Loneliness Making Every Contact Count Background**
- One of the key actions within the Health and Wellbeing Strategy under this priority is to roll out a programme of Making Every Contract Count (MECC) training across the borough which focuses on loneliness. The South Multi-Agency Group (MAG) decided that loneliness was to be one of its key priorities. This was due to all partners highlighting their experiences of dealing with local people who they believed to be lonely, but were causing significant ‘pressure’ on local resources due to front-line

workers not knowing how to help and support them. The loneliness task group therefore approached them to collaborate on developing a pilot project which would test out MECC for loneliness.

The MAG is made up of representatives from the Council, including housing, neighbourhoods, early help and community safety, as well as Fire & Rescue, Health and the Police, to encourage locally informed multi-agency working. In collaboration with public health specialists a pilot was developed to test out and evaluate how front-line workers (in Wickersley, Maltby & Dinnington wards) could identify loneliness, using their knowledge of local people and asking questions based on the MECC 'healthy chat' approach.

MECC has traditionally been used to identify and signpost for smoking, reducing alcohol consumption and weight issues, therefore using it to address loneliness presented something much more complex, as it is much harder to 'see' and there is not one single 'solution' to the problem. Identified front-line workers will be 'up-skilled' to gain a subtle understanding of possible signs of loneliness, a picture of loneliness in Rotherham, suitable methods and ways to talk about these sensitive issues and the appropriate ways to signpost residents to services.

The pilot would also test a new 'community connector' role, which will sit within the Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR) social prescribing team, and offer a bespoke light-touch connecting service, locating appropriate groups and activities for the identified resident (not a full social prescription). It was decided that many of the people that are lonely may require some appropriate 'hand-holding' to engage them. Research shows that lonely people are more likely to perceive, expect and remember others behaviour to be unfriendly and as such may not be willing to voluntarily attend organised community groups.

The pilot will run for 6 months, and will then be evaluated and inform the roll-out of Loneliness MECC across the borough. The evaluation will attempt to understand how the front-line professionals dealt with asking questions around loneliness and any issues regarding the issue's stigma as well as assessing the signposting and referral pathways.

The pilot project has been designed so that attempts to tackle loneliness are embedded into the everyday activities of the front-line workers and to attempt to reach a demographic who are normally missed by traditional methods to address loneliness and social isolation. The pilot has been designed with a consideration of a whole 'life-course approach' rather than focusing exclusively on elderly people.

### **MECC Training**

All 3 MECC loneliness training sessions have taken place. 32 front-line workers have been trained from across the different public sector organisations who operative in Rotherham. These include:

- Police Community Support Officers
- Fire and Rescue Community Support Officers
- Area Housing Officers

- Area Housing assistants
- Outreach Workers
- Neighbourhood co-ordinators
- Anti-Social Behaviour officers
- Health advocate
- Equality and inclusion advisor
- Environmental health officer
- District Nurses

The training sessions took place in Maltby, Dinnington and Wickersley (the same areas where the pilot is taking place). The Community Connector role is in post and awaiting referrals from front-line workers.

**Timescales**

MECC training – April 2019

Beginning of Pilot – June 2019

End of Pilot – December 2019

Borough-wide launch – Spring 2019

The national campaign ‘Five Ways to Wellbeing’ will be central to the loneliness action plan. Rather than beginning a new branded campaign, it was decided to maintain and continue to support *Five ways*. We have a large amount of resources and will spread knowledge of the campaign through the Loneliness Make Every Contact Count training.



**Recommendations**

4. The progress of the Loneliness pilot is noted by the Health and Wellbeing Board.