

Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023 – 2025

Working together to ensure people of all ages in Rotherham feel more connected to others and loneliness is reduced.

Introduction

Vision Statement:

People of all ages in Rotherham feel more connected to others and loneliness is reduced

Introduction

Loneliness is a very personal issue and people will describe it very differently. In this action plan the following definition will be used for loneliness:

“Loneliness can be defined as a subjective, unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship. It happens when we have a mismatch between the quantity and quality of social relationships that we have and those that we want.” Perlman, D. and Peplau, 1981, cited in HM (2018), ‘A connected society: a strategy for tackling loneliness’. ¹

The way people lead their lives in society is changing, for example, the nature of jobs has changed with developments in technology which means more solitary working. Many public services are moving towards a digital offer which means less human interaction. Whilst this can bring many positives, it has led to changes in how we now live, work, and interact. Loneliness is not a new issue, but it is being recognised as a major public health issue. Research has shown that loneliness is as harmful to our health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. Loneliness has been linked to numerous health issues like coronary heart disease, stroke, depression, cognitive decline, and an increased risk of Alzheimer’s. Feeling connected to others can reduce the risk of mortality or developing certain diseases. There is some evidence to suggest that people who are lonely are more likely to place a higher demand on public services, for example visiting their GP and A&E more often. Anecdotal evidence from frontline staff suggests that some demands placed on public services in Rotherham may be due in part to individuals feeling lonely.

Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

“Young or old, loneliness doesn’t discriminate.” Jo Cox

Loneliness can fluctuate over the life course and most people at some point in their life will experience loneliness. It is difficult to say what exactly causes loneliness but there are some known trigger factors which can be seen at an individual, community and societal level. Some of the factors are illustrated in the picture below¹:



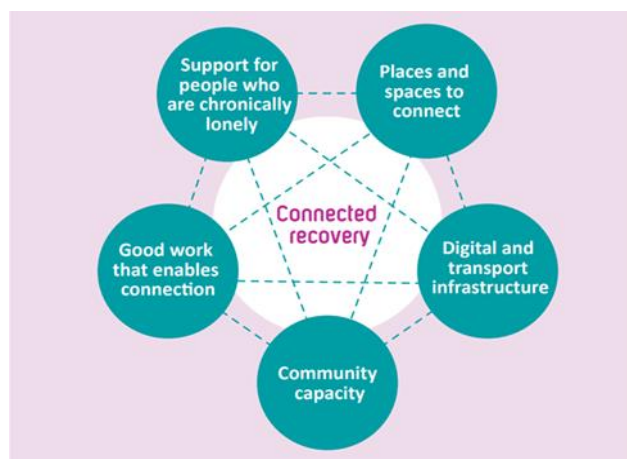
¹ [Events that trigger loneliness across the lifecourse - What Works Wellbeing](#)

Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

Other factors which operate at community and societal levels contribute to loneliness, these include transport, neighbourhood safety, access to services, financial hardship, insular communities, stigma and discrimination, digital technology, and work-life balance. Despite this there is a great deal of stigma attached to loneliness with a third of the adult population stating that they would be too embarrassed to say that they were lonely, making it more difficult for people to ask for help. Mental Health Foundation (2010) *The lonely society*.² The Marmalade Trust (Insert ref, <https://www.marmaladetrust.org/loneliness-guide>) states that it is the language around loneliness needs to change, 'admitting' to and 'suffering' from, could unintentionally add to the belief that something is wrong with the person. There is a case to make that conversation about it should be normalised.

Loneliness was brought into sharper focus during the first couple of years of the pandemic, particularly during the months of the severe restrictions. *'National levels of loneliness increased during the coronavirus pandemic. Those that were at greater risk of loneliness before the pandemic were more affected by loneliness during it.'* (Mental Health Foundation, 2022, 'All the lonely people', <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/MHAW22-Loneliness-UK-Report.pdf>).

Jones, Jopling and Kharicha (2021) (*Loneliness beyond Covid-19: Learning the lessons of the pandemic for a less lonely future* <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/wp-content/uploads/Loneliness-beyond-Covid-19-July-2021.pdf>), call for more than just the ongoing direct support for loneliness. Alongside this there needs to be a building up of infrastructure to facilitate connection, with investment into strengthening community capacity, green spaces, high streets, and meeting places, as well as transport and digital connectivity, to ensure a connected recovery. (*Chronically lonely refers to people feeling lonely more often or always).



Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

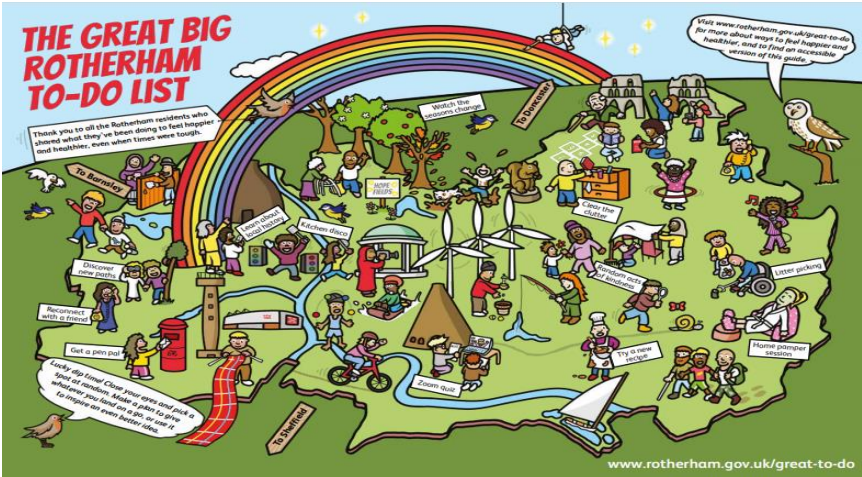
It is because loneliness presents as an issue wider than the individual, that a whole system response is required in Rotherham. In Rotherham actions to address loneliness are referenced in the Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy (Aim 4) and the refreshed Place Plan. This important public health issue has been championed by the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB).

This action plan will ensure that links are made to other supporting strategies and action plans, for example, Thriving Neighbourhoods, Rotherham Carers Strategy and the Rotherham Suicide Prevention and Self-Harm action plan.

Progress on the 2020-2022 Loneliness Action Plan

The first Rotherham Loneliness Action plan was signed off by the Health and Wellbeing Board ready for a launch date in March 2020, when the national restrictions commenced due to the pandemic. The start of the pandemic saw an increase in activity to address loneliness and isolation. These are just a few actions which took place, with many more happening at a community, neighbourhood, and household level:

- The introduction of the Rotherham Community Hub which saw local people volunteer to become Rotherham Heroes to collect prescriptions, shop for food and provide telephone befriending support. Telephone befrienders signposted to Rotherfed & befriending services network.
- Communications across the Partnership highlighted actions to address loneliness and included; promotion of Five Ways to Wellbeing messages (<https://www.rotherham.gov.uk/homepage/91/five-ways-to-wellbeing>), a film to encourage people to take action themselves to help people who might be lonely, The Great Big Rotherham To Do List (<https://www.rotherham.gov.uk/great-to-do>)



Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

- The Befriending Network formed during the pandemic and had a real impact, not least of all the delivery of the Better Mental Health for All Befriending Project through a group of VCS partners from the Network.
- Delivery of the Better Mental Health Befriending Project which was funded from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) Mental Health Fund in response to the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on mental health. This project was managed by Rotherham Federation and delivery for the befriending part of the project was from 5 voluntary sector organisations and commenced September/October 2021 finishing in May 2022. These organisations worked with adults, older people, carers, people living in deprived areas of the borough, people living with disabilities and long-term conditions and those from different minority ethnic groups. The sixth VCS organisation, Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR), worked with Theory Media Productions to produce some short films all about being a 'good neighbour'. This project supported:
 - 835 residents who were lonely and isolated were supported through the Befriending project.
 - 34% of beneficiaries for the Befriending project were from BAME communities. 525 residents who accessed the Befriending project
 - (63%) live in the most deprived 30% LSOAs in England.28% of beneficiaries of the Befriending project were living with a disability.

The Befriending project used the full 14 questions of the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/about/wemwbsvsswemwbs/>). Volunteers collated this information from the individual's pre and post support. The mean score at first assessment was 40.22, at second assessment 49.38. This increased by 9.22 and is classed as "significant" change.

This project collected case stories of people's journeys. The full stories can be found here: <https://www.rotherhamfederation.org/better-mental-health-fund/>. To view the films please visit: <https://www.varotherham.org.uk/befriending>.

Refresh of the Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan

This refresh has been informed by a call for evidence from stakeholders and a dedicated meeting of the Better Mental Health for All group. Partners were asked:

What's working well?

What are We Worried About?

What Needs to Happen Next?

Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

These are some of the responses from the stakeholder engagement:

What's working well?

- **Speakup** has lots of experience developing friendship circles. Prior to the pandemic in 2016, Speakup were successful with a People Health Trust grant and used this money to combat loneliness by creating 25 circles varying in size from 2-3 people up to groups of 8-10. This ran for over 18 months supporting, encouraging, and facilitating friendships to grow and flourish. Throughout the pandemic, many of these friendships survived and during this time worked with universities looking at the effects of Covid-19 and how this impacted on social isolation and loneliness. Presently, there are over 14 active circles which are working well without the support of inclusion workers, but with the support of peer support workers who are people with learning disabilities or autistic people.
- Being able to go to different meeting places, such as Socialise, Speakup and RANSS and other Social Enterprises that give people activities to do and allow people to meet new people with similar interests and connect /reconnect with new and old friends.
- The creation of activities such as walking bubbles, the Speakup quiz, yoga, pamper and 'Girls Can' these activities also help people to keep fit and healthy.
- More organised social events involving our peer support workers or inclusion workers to places like the theatre, music festivals, meals out, the Euros and various birthday meals. A holiday to America is now being planned. Speakup for autism regularly meeting at weekends for a meal or drink.
- Advice on hand from peer supporters and people with lived experience. This helps people to keep safe when out and about and can help people to live a more independent and social life.
- **Rotherham VCS Befriending Network**- The Befriending Network that formed during Covid has had a real impact, not least of all the delivery of the BMHF Befriending Project through a group of VCS partners from the Network. Getting together, sharing best practice, and ultimately reaching as many local people as possible has been a key success of the network.
- South Yorkshire ICB) commissioned Rotherham parent carers forum to develop RANNS: RANSS is a support service for neurodiverse adults (18+) with a Rotherham GP. They offer person-centred **post-diagnostic** support from Peer Support Workers with lived experience of autism or ADHD alongside group workshops. We also facilitate meetups, activities, and focused group discussions on neurodiversity-related topics for adults with a new or historic diagnosis of autism or ADHD*. Adults with a new autism or ADHD diagnosis can access a limited number of peer support sessions, counselling sessions and a 4-week group workshop to help them explore their diagnosis, and what it means for them as an individual.
- Partnership working – Rotherham prides itself on this across the voluntary sector.

Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

- Multi-agency working – established during COVID, identified gaps/issues/resources.
- Rother Rise – café groups available.
- Rotherham Gismo – a way to find out about groups in the local community (inputting postcode).

What are We Worried About?

- **Speakup-** Even with our friendship circles some people remain isolated (some through choice, but not many) and this has had an impact on people's lives. Some people are still afraid to go out into social situations such as the pub, cinema etc. Another fear is the cost-of-living crisis and the rise of energy prices as this is already beginning to prevent people from socialising with friends and family as they may have to choose between loneliness and friendship.
- Sometimes bullying and harassment of people with learning disabilities and autistic people: members of Speakup and other groups have faced this in the past and continue to face this.
- This can lead to people being too scared to go out due to being too afraid of what people will do or say to them, which once again can cause isolation and loneliness. People need to know more widely about how to report Hate Crime.
- People not having the right support when bad things happen in their life, such as grief, abandonment, and neglect.
- **Rotherham VCS Befriending Network-** Funding will always be a concern. We and other providers have been able to access grants for befriending support for the last couple of years, that are now either no longer available or they have a short term deliver period left. Some of this work, makes such a difference and really demonstrates that early intervention and prevention impact. Focus has turned towards the cost-of-living crisis.
- Research suggests that autistic people are more likely to experience feelings of loneliness compared to non-autistic people. This can be due to a lack of acceptance and understanding by society, making them feel excluded.
- Specific barriers to social opportunities include unwelcoming sensory environments (such as noisy pubs or restaurants), social anxiety, fear of rejection, experiences of bullying and lack of formal support (in education or as an adult).
- Many autistic people enjoy spending time alone and consider it important for their wellbeing. Loneliness is different though. Autistic people might feel lonely if they don't have opportunities to socialise or find this difficult. Autistic people might have friends/colleagues but feel misunderstood or feel they cannot be themselves around them. Many autistic people describe feeling lonely even when they are in company.
- Rotherham supports the preparation for adult outcomes that children have meaningful friendships and for this to happen requires all partners to ensure that they are open and welcoming.
- Investment – a lot of the projects run on time limited grants, which is not sustainable.

Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

- Capacity – Staff and volunteer recruitment.

What Needs to Happen Next?

- Further consultation with the voluntary and community sector about needs to happen.
- Concerns about capacity and recruitment of volunteers.
- **Speakup**- many of the people we know can have complex issues and anxiety, which needs the support of an inclusion worker or paid peer support worker to enable people to feel comfortable, develop and maintain friendships and thrive.
- Accessible Information about support services should be available in lots of different places and media platforms and regularly updated.
- When someone moves into a new area it would be good to be told about available support within their community.
- Funding for loneliness and isolation support is an ongoing issue. Could there be a way of mainstreaming some of the key services that have delivered so well during the last couple of years, to prevent the “come and go” local projects that we had seen previously?
- **Befriending Network**- The peer support model really works and demonstrates good value for money, targeting early help and support. This can be achieved by the recruitment and training of volunteer befrienders, who provide peer support and give confidence to our beneficiaries, being there to support them every step of the way. It’s the peer support given by our volunteers that can really make a difference in successful engagement.
- Being able to get additional support to people once friendships through peer support have been made, has had a significant impact on people’s lives. The access to other support services with the befriending work as a catalyst, such as advice and guidance relating to debt, home energy, employment support, training etc. are all examples of how we have supported the progression and development of our beneficiaries, all stemming from an initial welfare call.
- It would be good to maintain the Befriending Network but perhaps some consultation with partners/providers who attend on how this can be taken forward for everyone’s benefit? Perhaps we proactively introduce some other elements into the meetings, such as cost of living updates and other health related services/updates?
- Would the production of a monthly or bi-monthly e-newsletter help, to raise awareness of the support that is out there and how people can get involved? Could include a beneficiary case study in each edition that helps to demonstrate the impact of how becoming more involved in community life can be of real benefit.
- For social groups/youth groups to be more accessible – consider [sensory differences](#) and [communication](#)
- Invite autistic friends and family to social events, but without any pressure on them to attend.
- Allow autistic people to socialise on their own terms.

Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

- Societal change, including acceptance of autistic people's differences, and welcoming sensory environments, is needed to reduce social exclusion of autistic people.
- Promote the following resources: [How To Deal With Loneliness And Autism \(coping strategies and advice for dealing with loneliness\) - YouTube](#)
- Vulnerable groups identified clearly – Domestic abuse victims, Migrants, Ukraine refugees.
- Community meet spaces – to get projects initially off the ground.
- Kindness – Inclusive training to move away from a professional 'us' and 'them' approach
- Employer/Employee wellbeing – loneliness is an issue that has crept up especially from COVID – can be lonely in a big group such as a workforce
- 'Not just one thing' – needs to be a continued and consistent approach/support
- Library service – be aware of what the service can provide and facilitate/signposting, there are 15 library area/services. They are offering as a warm space over the winter months – could this be tied into the loneliness actions?
- Loneliness after life changes – particularly bereavement.
- Promoting of Safe Spaces – culturally competent, off up to 13 spaces a night, running 6pm -12am, Leeds have a good response so potential to share good practice?
- Frontline case studies within the voluntary sector to gain feedback around what they personally feel went well and what areas need improvement.
- Autism friendship groups – a real need and a great interest with regards to research.

Governance

The implementation of the Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023 – 2025, will be overseen by the Better Mental Health for All Group. These meetings are chaired by Public Health and have representation from HWB partners. The multi-agency group meets bimonthly and is tasked to implement this plan and the Better Mental Health for All Action Plan. Progress against this action plan will be reported to the Mental Health (MH) and Learning Disability (LD) Transformation Group, a subgroup of the Rotherham Place Plan Board. Annual updates will be given to the Rotherham Health and Wellbeing Board.

The Partners represented on the Better Mental Health for All Group include:

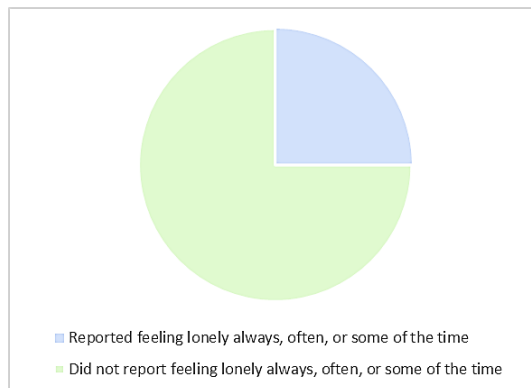
- Children, Young People and Families Consortium
- Crossroads

Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

- Healthwatch Rotherham
- NHS South Yorkshire
- RDaSH (mental health provider)
- Rotherham NHS Foundation Hospital Trust
- RMBC- Adult Care, Housing and Public Health (including Neighbourhoods)
- RMBC Children and Young People's Services
- RMBC Communications
- RMBC Culture, Sport and Tourism Service, Regeneration and Environment
- Rotherham Federation
- Rotherham United Community Sports Trust (RUCST)
- South Yorkshire Police

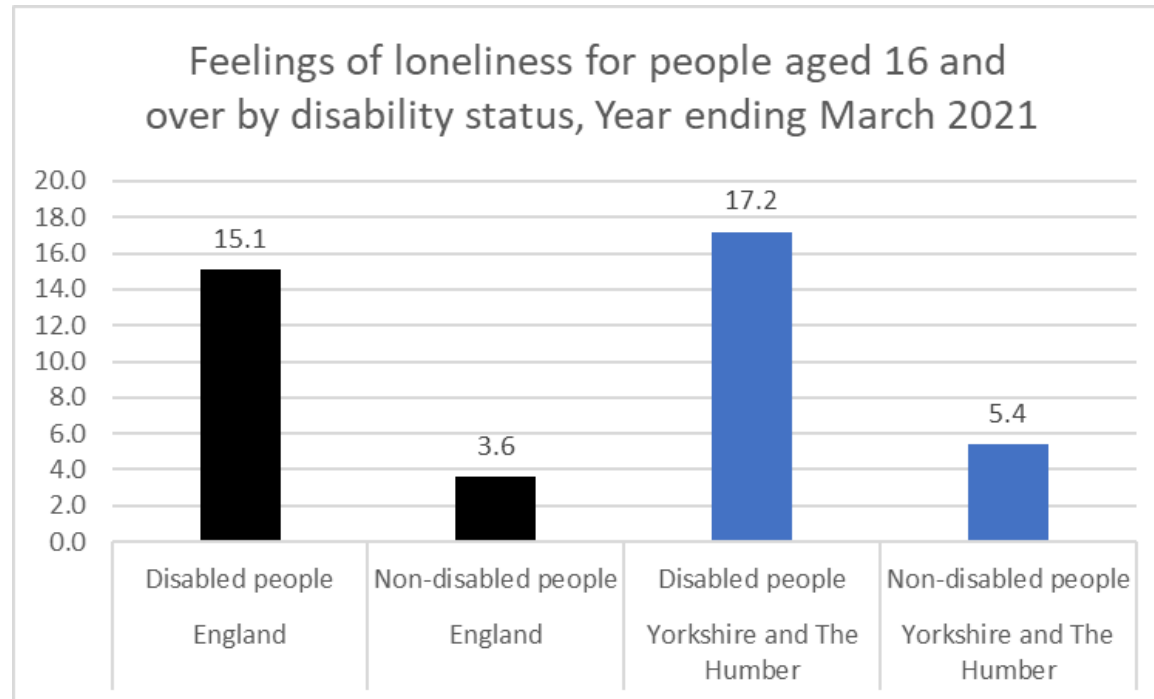
National Picture

- The Office for National Statistics (ONS) public opinions and social trends, Great Britain bulletin, September 2022, shows one-quarter of adults (25%) reported feeling lonely always, often, or some of the time in the latest period (26% in the previous period).

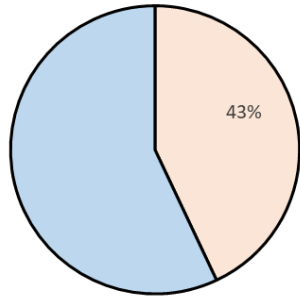


Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

- Feelings of loneliness for people aged 16 and over by disability status and region, ONS, year ending March 2021, show that in Yorkshire and the Humber, 17.2 % of people living with a disability experience feeling of loneliness often or always. This compares to 5.4% for non-disabled people. For England, this value is 15.1% and 3.6% respectively.



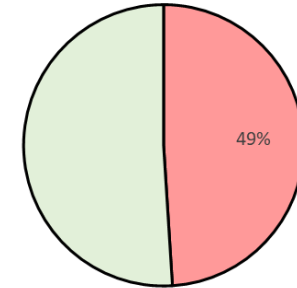
Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025



43% of 17 – 25-year-olds used Action for Children services experienced problems with loneliness.



1 in 10 men says they are lonely but would not admit it to anyone².



49% of people aged 65+ say their main form of company is either the TV or a pet³



Three out of four GPs say they see between 1 and 5 people a day who have come in mainly because they are lonely, and one in ten sees between six and ten such patients daily⁴.

33.3%

More than 1 in 3 people aged 75 and over say that feelings of loneliness are out of their control⁵.



Loneliness costs UK employers £2.5 billion per year⁶.

² [Millions of men are hiding their loneliness | Campaign to End Loneliness](#)

³ [rb_june15_loneliness_in_later_life_evidence_review.pdf \(ageuk.org.uk\)](#)

⁴ [Lonely visits to the GP | Campaign to End Loneliness](#)

⁵ [One-third of older people say feelings of loneliness are out of their control \(independentage.org\)](#)

⁶ [cost-of-loneliness-2017.pdf \(campaigntoendloneliness.org\)](#)

Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

The need for tackling loneliness is shown by every £1 invested in tackling loneliness, you can save £3 in health costs⁷, with an overall 81% of people agreeing that there are lots of actions everyone can take in their daily lives to help those feeling lonely.

The latest annual report for tackling loneliness (February 2022) is still following 3 overarching objectives:

1. Reduce stigma by building a national conversation on loneliness, so that people feel able to talk about loneliness and reach out for help.
2. Drive a lasting shift so that relationships and loneliness are considered in policymaking and delivery by organisations across society, supporting and amplifying the impact of organisations that are connecting people.
3. Play our part in improving the evidence base on loneliness, making a compelling case for action, and ensuring everyone have the information they need to make informed decisions through challenging times.

The strong message from the report is that tackling loneliness will require a response from public sector staff, employers and businesses, communities, and individuals. These organisations working together as one will lead to a more connected society.

The Local Government Association (LGA) have produced a guide for councils to enable them to see how effectively they are tackling loneliness. The guide makes the case for this important public health issue to have a whole system preventative approach and encourages local areas to define the nature of loneliness in their local area, knowing who is at risk.³ The LGA guide comments that whilst many people may know about the need to make healthy lifestyle choices there is less awareness about the importance of having social connections.

One of the announcements in the 2019 NHS Long Term was for people to have more control over their health and more personalised care when they needed it. The introduction of link Workers for Primary Care Networks (PCNs), under the GP contract reforms, was one of the actions to address this. Social prescribing link workers are one of five additional roles being funded within primary care, to bring additional capacity into the multi-disciplinary team, under the Network Contract Directly Enhanced Services (DES).

With one in five GP appointments focusing on wider social needs, rather than acute medical issues, many GPs report that they spend significant amounts of time dealing with the consequences of poor housing, debt, stress, and loneliness. Social prescribing and community-based approaches aim to assist with this by reducing pressure on clinicians like GPs, improving people's lives, helping with community resilience, and ensuring that the needs of diverse and multicultural communities can be met.⁴

Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

Covid-19 Impact

After a year of lockdowns, social distancing, and restrictions on travel and gatherings, some groups of people have reported high rates of loneliness and poorer well-being in recent months. In the midst of Covid-19, lockdowns and social restrictions made the loneliest of people even more lonely with 1 in 18 people in the UK felt a reduction in social contact during lockdowns made their life harder⁸. A recent study found that 9 different characteristics would put you at a greater risk of feeling lonely during the pandemic (see table⁹ below).

Important risk factors for adult loneliness	Other characteristics carry a small increase in the risk of being lonely, both before and during the pandemic.
• Being young (18-30) • Living alone • Having a low income • Being unemployed • Having a mental health condition	• Non-white ethnicity • Low educational attainment • Being female • Living in urban areas

During the Covid lockdowns, young people alone were 5 times more likely to feel lonely due to their social connections being restricted. Therefore, there is a real need nationally and locally for the loneliness action plan.

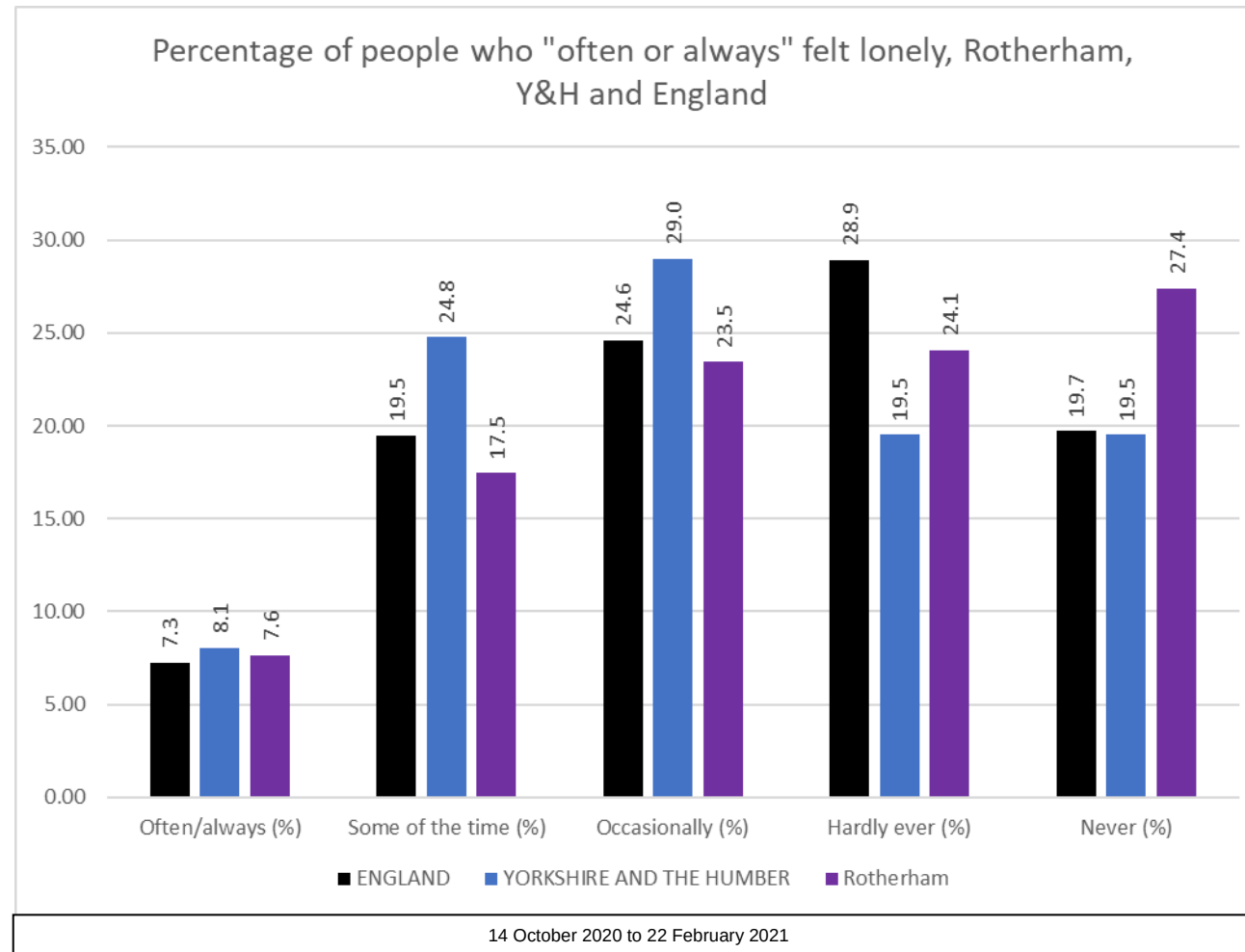
SOUTH YORKSHIRE INTEGRATED CARE PARTNERSHIP

The approach it is taking is in line with the guidance building on existing work in South Yorkshire and each of its place communities and priorities for this initial strategy. There is an expectation that during 2022/23 the South Yorkshire Integrated Care Partnership develops an Integrated Care Strategy for South Yorkshire. Significant engagement and work have been undertaken to date by ICP partners to develop Health and Wellbeing Strategies, Place Plans and the South Yorkshire NHS Strategic Plan and it is upon these that the South Yorkshire Integrated Care Strategy will build.

Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

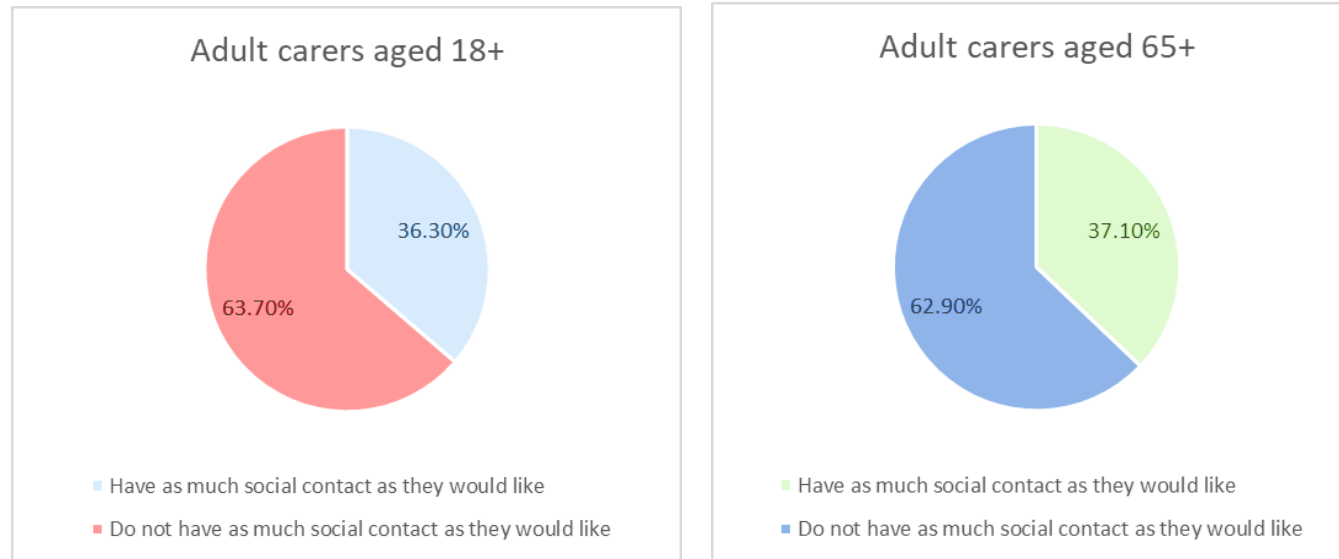
Local picture– What loneliness looks like in Rotherham

The ONS estimates of loneliness and personal well-being during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic by showed that 7.6% of Rotherham residents felt lonely often or always and 43% of Rotherham residents felt lonely in the previous 7 days.



Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

In 2018/19 only 36.3% of adult carers aged 18+ had as much social contact as they would like and for those aged 65+ this was 37.1%



The Office of Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) plan to include loneliness indicators in the Public Health Outcomes Framework this year, which will give a more detailed picture for Rotherham. However, there has been some focused work with specific communities of interest in Rotherham to establish how loneliness affects them.

Vulnerable Groups identified in Rotherham are*:

- Young people
- Domestic abuse victims
- Migrants
- Ukraine refugees
- People with learning difficulties (such as autism)

**These groups were identified in the refresh loneliness action plan meeting with stakeholders*

Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

Helpful resources on loneliness

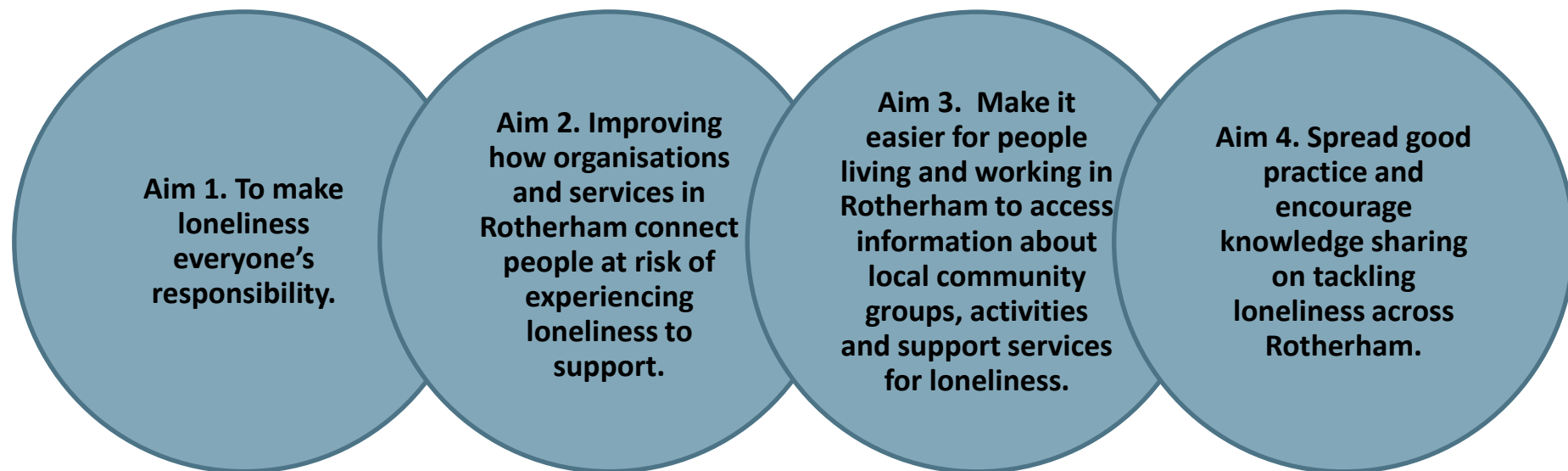
- Bellis, A (2019), Tackling Loneliness, Briefing Paper, Number 8514, 5 August 2019, House of Commons Library.
<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8514/CBP-8514.pdf>
- Campaign to End Loneliness, guidance for councils and commissioners.
<https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/%20guidance>
- Campaign to End Loneliness (2021), Loneliness beyond Covid-19 Learning the lessons of the pandemic for a less lonely future
[Loneliness-beyond-Covid-19-July-2021.pdf](https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/Loneliness-beyond-Covid-19-July-2021.pdf) ([campaigntoendloneliness.org](https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org))
- Department for Digital Culture, Media, and Sport (2019), Loneliness Fact Sheet from the Community Life Survey for England 2018-19
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/community-life-survey-2018-19>
- Government refresh of Loneliness report [Tackling Loneliness annual report February 2022: the third year - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-loneliness-annual-report-february-2022-the-third-year) (www.gov.uk)
- Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness: A call to action
https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/active-communities/rb_dec17_jocox_commission_finalreport.pdf
- Local Government Association (2018), Loneliness How do you know your council is actively tackling loneliness?
https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/22.28%20-%20Loneliness%20Must%20Know_02.pdf
- Local Government Association Combating loneliness: A guide for local authorities
https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/combating-loneliness-guid-24e_march_2018.pdf
- NHS England and NHS Improvement (2019) Social prescribing link workers: Reference guide for primary care networks;
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/pcn-reference-guide-social-prescribing.pdf>
- Royal College of General Practitioners, (2018), Tackling Loneliness A Community Action Plan
<https://www.rcgp.org.uk/-/media/Files/News/2018/RCGP-tackling-loneliness-may-2018.ashx?la=en>

Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

- What Works Wellbeing (2018), What do we know about tackling loneliness?
https://whatworkswellbeing.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/woocommerce_uploads/2018/10/briefing-tackling-loneliness-Oct-2018.pdf

Action Plan Framework

Considering national and local evidence, the framework for the action plan will cover the whole life course and will aim to tackle loneliness as early as possible and throughout a person's life as circumstances change. Addressing loneliness is a complex and will require support from all sectors within Rotherham; Partners of the HWB, local communities, people with lived experience, private sector, and voluntary and community groups. Evidence and actions will be added as more information is available from working with Partners and the public. The action plan will follow four aims when addressing the issues of tackling loneliness. The four aims are as followed:



Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

Aim 1. To make loneliness everyone's responsibility.

Objectives	Actions	Who will lead?	By when?	What do we want to see as a result?	Progress to date
Raise awareness amongst all partners, businesses, and the public of the importance of social connections. Create a social movement to empower people to see that everyone has a role in tackling loneliness Use the Rotherham Five Ways to Wellbeing as the campaign to encourage a whole society response to address loneliness.	- To develop clear and consistent messages in relation to loneliness, the affects and impact on people across the whole life course. - Partners of the HWB to use agreed messages in communications to their workforce and public. - To develop clear self-care/self-help messages which encourage and help people to develop and maintain good social connections using the themes of Five Ways to Wellbeing: To be Active To Connect To Give To keep Learning To Take Notice. - To develop clear messages about how people can look out for others.	Communication Leads and identified champions from all HWB partners.	Starting November 2023	- Consistent messages about loneliness which are supported and communicated by all HWB partners. - People living and working in Rotherham having a good understanding of how they can help themselves and others. - Five Ways to Wellbeing messages prominently used as a way of promoting wellbeing. - People reporting that they feel that they feel connected and supported by the	

Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

Objectives	Actions	Who will lead?	By when?	What do we want to see as a result?	Progress to date
	- To work with Comms colleagues to have a scheduled programme to promote these messages throughout the year, linking in with national campaigns where appropriate. - To promote and celebrate examples of good practice.			people they live and work with.	
Utilise local assets to address loneliness and improve opportunities for people to connect.	- HWB partners to understand how local assets can be used as community hubs. - Actions in place to use local assets as places for people to connect.	HWB partners		Creation of more community hubs/opportunities for people to connect.	
Involve local people in coproducing solutions to tackle loneliness, utilising local assets.	- To work with local communities where loneliness is identified in Ward plans. - To work with community of interest groups to look at solutions to address loneliness. - To look to use local assets to address loneliness within	Neighbourhoods, RMBC working with Elected Members Local community Communities of interest- CYPS, AC, H & PH, VAR, VCS, and partners of the HWB.	Ward plans- work ongoing.	- More inclusive and connected communities. - More people engaged in community volunteering roles. - Empowered communities which use their local assets to	

Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

Objectives	Actions	Who will lead?	By when?	What do we want to see as a result?	Progress to date
	geographical communities and communities of interest. - To share learning and best practice from ward activity with other areas. - VAR to lead on workshops with VCS organisations to explore solutions. - Development of the Befriending Providers Network – capacity building, standardised measuring/approach/.			address loneliness. Shared good practice being adopted in other areas.	
Promote and increase the use of neighbourhood centres	- Promote the use of neighbourhood centres for tenants. - To install WIFI to designated centres to promote digital inclusion for tenants	Housing Operations Manager	September 2023	Tenants feeling less isolated and connected to the local	
For partners to mitigate against loneliness in the planning, commissioning, and development of services/policies.	To agree a set of measures to ensure social connectivity is considered in place-based initiatives such as planning, commissioning of services, housing, and transport.	Champions from HWB.		Evidence of social connections being considered in place-based initiatives such as planning, commissioning of	

Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

Objectives	Actions	Who will lead?	By when?	What do we want to see as a result?	Progress to date
				services, housing, and transport.	

Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

Aim 2. Improving how organisations and services in Rotherham connect people at risk of experiencing loneliness to support.

Objectives	Actions	Who will lead?	By when?	What do we want to see as a result?	Progress to date
To understand the needs of specific groups/communities who are more at risk of loneliness and use this to address to issues leading to loneliness, improve support and connect people to local offers. (examples include children and young people, adults with Learning Disabilities and autism, new parents, carers)	- To work with organisations and people with lived experience to do some detailed work to understand the issues which are leading to loneliness. - Develop specific actions to address this. - Ensure information is shared in training like MECC. - Promote opportunities for these groups/communities to connect with others.	Public Health, Speak Up, CYPS, HWB Partners, VCS	Working with specific communities to understand the issues to commence January 2023 MECC training to incorporate information gleaned from January 2023	- Specific actions to address loneliness for vulnerable groups. - Informed workforce - People feeling connected where they live and work.	
Mapping services/organisations which are available to support Rotherham residents	- Working with Council and VCS to capture local information on centres, groups, Libraries, events. - Information will be stored on a map which the public will have access to- JSNA	Public Health Intelligence, VAR, Adult Care, Housing and Neighbourhoods, RMBC	First draft December 2022	Interactive map that the public can use to find out what is available in their local community.	

Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

Objectives	Actions	Who will lead?	By when?	What do we want to see as a result?	Progress to date
Promote health, wellbeing and connectedness through arts and cultural initiatives.	Co-design Children's capital of culture with children and young people, with focus on improving their mental health and wellbeing and promoting connectedness	Head of Creative Programming & Engagement Culture, Sport and Tourism Service	March 2025	- Improved mental health and wellbeing of children and young people. - Children and young people feeling connected.	
RMBC Library service will actively seek to reduce social isolation and loneliness through the Library Strategy 2020-2022 and the RMBC Culture, Sport & Tourism service plan 2022/23	- Continue to make improvements to library buildings to make them more accessible, to create a warmer welcome and provide more advice and support services being delivered through libraries. - Training for staff on 'Making Every Contact Count' and 'Loneliness Training' - Organise reading groups and activities in which people can come together, both face to face and digitally e.g., 'Cuppa and chat' sessions, death cafes, menopause cafes etc.	All Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs Team Leaders.	Ongoing	- Libraries functioning as friendly and welcoming community hubs, freely accessible to all. - Libraries as spaces for people to share experiences and spaces that respond to specific health issues, including death, menopause, and dementia, and improve community resilience - Library staff to be able to identify individuals requiring support as first points of contact. Offer a service to those who are potentially lonely and vulnerable.	

Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

Objectives	Actions	Who will lead?	By when?	What do we want to see as a result?	Progress to date
	Work with the community hub to identify additional customers who would benefit from the Booklink and Home Library Service.				
Identify the levels of loneliness in Rotherham overall, paying attention to specific communities, groups and in relation to rurality.	- To include the new Public health outcomes Framework data on loneliness in JSNA. - To build on the initial needs analysis with older people, young people, and tenants, identifying other specific groups/communities to listen to. - To ensure that the JSNA makes specific reference to loneliness and its impact on specific groups/communities. - Partners of the HWB to make use of the JSNA data in their commissioning intentions and provision of services thereby	Neighbourhoods, PH with support from partners of the HWB.	March 2023	- JSNA data on loneliness informing commissioning intentions and provision of services. - Service providers and commissioners having a good understanding of the needs of vulnerable and at-risk groups.	

Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

Objectives	Actions	Who will lead?	By when?	What do we want to see as a result?	Progress to date
	ensuring that actions are not contributing to increased loneliness.				
To continue to apply the principles of Making Every Contact Count (MECC), to enable practitioners across Place to spot the signs of loneliness have meaningful conversations.	To roll out MECC and loneliness training across Rotherham.	PH working with HWB partner organisations including VAR.	Ongoing	- Number of staff trained in MECC and loneliness. - Case studies showing how people have been identified and signposted.	
Raise awareness amongst public sector, local businesses and communities of the causes, triggers, and impact of loneliness, using training and local campaigns.	- To incorporate this into MECC training. - To update training with any new information from the JSNA. - To use the Five Ways to Wellbeing as Rotherham's local campaign to promote the importance of good social connections.	PH working with HWB partner organisations	Ongoing	- Frontline staff aware of at-risk groups and trigger points for loneliness. - Increased knowledge used to identify people and signpost to appropriate support and give tailored self-help self-care information.	
Work with Primary Care Network (PCN) to raise awareness of loneliness.	To assist PCNs in understanding their local communities and the assets available which support good social connections.	PCN, PH and Voluntary Action Rotherham and HWB partners, Link Workers.		Reduction clinician time spent supporting people whose main issue is loneliness.	

Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

Objectives	Actions	Who will lead?	By when?	What do we want to see as a result?	Progress to date
				Improved wellbeing of people experiencing loneliness.	
Engage local businesses/employers in actions to combat loneliness.	- To co-produce with businesses suggested actions to combat loneliness. - To look to include loneliness as a theme within the Be Well@Work Scheme. (For example; allowing community groups use of premises, staff trained to identify people at risk, staff time to have conversations with vulnerable people).	PH working with colleagues across South Yorkshire and local businesses.		- Loneliness is an element within the Be Well@Work scheme. - Evidence of good practice from employers/businesses in their actions to address loneliness from both within the workforce and to the wider community. - Shared examples of good practice.	
Employers of the HWB to consider what actions they can take to encourage staff to have good social connections both in and out of work.	- To work with HR in HWB partner organisations to develop policies and working practices which outline responsibilities for employers, managers, and staff in maintaining good social connections. - HWB partners to consider the following:	HR Leads from HWB organisations working (linking into the Be Well @ Work) & VAR		- Specific policies and practices being implemented which support good social networks. - Evidence of initiatives where staff support each other. - Evidence of workforce supporting the wider community through	

Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

Objectives	Actions	Who will lead?	By when?	What do we want to see as a result?	Progress to date
	allowing community groups use of premises, staff trained to identify people at risk, staff time to have conversations with vulnerable people). Explore the potential for Potential ESV (employer supported volunteering) and development of developing bespoke volunteering opportunities, linking in with Befriender Network.			volunteering opportunities.	
Program of tenant health check to identify tenants suffering from loneliness	- Routine checks (once every 4 years) - Signposting and referring on	Head of Housing and Estate services	Ongoing	- Tenants receiving support and relevant signposting. - Tenants feeling settled and belonging within the local community.	
Recognise how loneliness and isolation contributes to vulnerability to crime and exploitation	Raising awareness with partners and the public around the signs of vulnerability in crime and exploitation.	Safer Rotherham Partnership – Protecting vulnerable Adults and protecting	SRP priority until 2025	Loneliness and isolation are considered as part of the vulnerability risk assessment process	

Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

Objectives	Actions	Who will lead?	By when?	What do we want to see as a result?	Progress to date
		vulnerable children.		Make appropriate referrals through individual support plans.	
To work in partnership with others to embed tackling loneliness into local policies and practices.	To work with Mayoral Combined Authority to explore opportunities that transport can contribute to tackling loneliness.	Consultant in Public Health-Healthy Communities	July 2023	Evidence of partner policies taking actions to address loneliness.	

Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

Aim 3 Make it easier for people living and working in Rotherham to access information about local community groups, activities, and support services for loneliness.

Objectives	Actions	Who will lead?	By when?	What do we want to see as a result?	Progress to date
To promote one directory of information for the public and practitioners to access. (GISMO)	- Partners of the HWB to agree to use and promote one directory of services in Rotherham- GISMO. - To ensure that this one directory is maintained.	VAR working with HWB partners.	Ongoing	- One directory of services which is used by all HWB partners. - Website advertised and promoted widely across the borough. - Directory updated regularly.	
Increase awareness amongst the public of opportunities to access free and affordable activities.	- Promoting the one directory (GISMO) and Rotherham council website to people who live and work in Rotherham. - All HWB partners to promote the activities/initiatives they deliver using the Five Ways to Wellbeing branding. - To ensure that organisations who	VAR, Comms Leads from HWB partners.	Ongoing	People living and working in Rotherham know where to access information on local activities.	

Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

Objectives	Actions	Who will lead?	By when?	What do we want to see as a result?	Progress to date
	engage with the public have access to update and relevant information for signposting.				
Support and empower community groups	- Deliver the tenant federation contract to support and empower community groups to deliver services within their local neighbourhoods. - Community development and capacity building for VCS- opportunity to map and do some targeted work	Housing Operations Manager VAR	March 2024 Ongoing	Supported individuals and increased activity provision.	

Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

Aim 4. Spread good practice and encourage knowledge sharing on tackling loneliness across Rotherham.

Objectives	Actions	Who will lead?	By when?	What do we want to see as a result?	Progress to date
Build up the evidence base of what works locally.	- To learn from and disseminate good practice at a ward & community level. - To consider holding network/ sharing events for practitioners and communities to come together and share good practice.	Neighbourhoods, PH working with HWB partners.		- Better communication about what works amongst partner organisations. - Better use of resources. - Strong local evidence base on which to build upon.	
Evaluation from COVID funded projects for the over 55s	Complete evaluation of over 55s programme to provide recommendations for future programming for this audience and reduce social isolation	March 2023	Head of Creative Programming & Engagement Culture, Sport and Tourism Service	Evidence from programme being used in future planning.	
Encourage communities/businesses to engage with national based initiatives.	Support local communities/employers to take part in national initiatives like The Jo Cox Great Get Together	Neighbourhoods, PH, HWB partner leads working with local communities, schools, colleges, universities, and local businesses.		- Reduction in stigma surrounding loneliness. - Greater community cohesion.	

Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

Objectives	Actions	Who will lead?	By when?	What do we want to see as a result?	Progress to date
				- Examples of national initiatives being implemented in Rotherham. - Positive media coverage.	
Counter the narratives that drive hate, division, and exclusion in communities	- Implement a programme of community engagement, working with partners, to promote dialogue and understanding, and challenge prejudice, stereotypes, and hateful narratives. - Engage with schools and young people to develop and deliver a range of educational activities and interventions on the Harms of Hate. - Raise public awareness of hate crime and sources of support.	Community Safety Team, RMBC – Chris Gaynor, Community Safety Officer (Safer Stronger Communities)	3-year priority to 31 March 2025	Build safer stronger communities by tackling the drivers of hate that can cause division and tension in communities that potentially could lead to social isolation.	

Progress Summary

Date of meeting	Actions Outstanding	Lead	Actioned By

Grey	Not due to start
Red	Not on target
Amber	Almost achieving target
Green	Achieving Target/ On track
Blue	Complete

Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025

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