

<h1>BRIEFING</h1>	TO:	Health and Wellbeing Board
	DATE:	25 th September 2024
	LEAD OFFICER:	Ruth Fletcher-Brown Public Health Specialist, Public Health, AC, Housing and Public Health 01709 255867
	TITLE:	Update on Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan
1. Background		
1.1	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.	
1.2	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.	
1.3	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.	
1.4	Rotherham Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) signed up to the refreshed Loneliness Action in September 2023.	
1.5	The Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan recognises that loneliness is experience across the life course and can only be tackled by actions from all Partners and the public.	
2. Key Issues		
2.1	Following the adoption of the refreshed action plan at the September HWB meeting, the Better Mental Health Group has been overseeing the implementation of this action plan. Members on this group include representation from the HWB partners. This group has been overseeing the implementation of the action plan.	
2.2	<p>The plan outlines four aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To make loneliness everyone's responsibility. - Improving how organisations and services in Rotherham connect people at risk of experiencing loneliness to support. - Make it easier for people living and working in Rotherham to access information about local community groups, activities, and support services for loneliness. - Spread good practice and encourage knowledge sharing on tackling loneliness across Rotherham. 	

2.3	Good progress has been made on the delivery of actions addressing these four aims and some of these actions are listed below:
2.4	Making Every Contact Count (MECC) has seen 119 staff trained since January 2024.
2.5	Public Health held focus group discussions with some inclusion groups to understand their thoughts on loneliness, the causes and triggers and what helped to mitigate against loneliness. Six group discussions were held with veteran, carers and neurodiverse adults. The information gained has been incorporated into the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) chapter on loneliness, used in MECC training and anonymised quotes has been used in Communication campaigns. Findings have also been shared with various Teams within the council.
2.6	Adult Care Launched an Early Intervention and Prevention small grants fund for voluntary and community groups. This fund was to assist groups to tackle loneliness of adults through activities, enablement and befriending. In total thirteen groups were awarded the grant, with implementation beginning from July 2024 and finishing in July 2025.
2.7	The JSNA Loneliness Chapter has been refreshed with a link to resources and it now includes qualitative data from the focus groups.
2.8	The Rotherham Adult Neurodiversity Support Service (RANSS) is an initiative aimed at supporting neurodiverse adults, including those with autism and ADHD. Over a year, 455 unique adults accessed support from RANSS, which organized 205 activities and events to help prevent loneliness.
2.9	Rotherham Befriending Providers Forum, meets bimonthly to share good practice and support each other. In this last year the group members have focused on the cost of living and the impact on loneliness.
2.10	Rotherham Federation, Citizens Advice, Laser Credit Union, and Voluntary Action Rotherham, have partnered to develop and deliver a coordinated response to support communities most affected by the cost of living crisis. This project deploys a Community Engagement team and Advisers to deliver Information, Advice and Guidance 'one stop shops' across ten areas. The support delivered has a strong focus on financial and social inclusion, empower communities with a foundation of support, and make better use of community assets. To date it has delivered 248 drop-in sessions (March 2025 target 400). A total 2173 people have attended the sessions (March 2025 target 2400) with 161 Socially excluded people engaged (March 2025 target 300).
2.11	RMBC Communications and Public Health produced social media postings in June as part of the national Campaign to End Loneliness. The social media posts were inline with the Say Yes campaign and encouraged everyone to think about their role in tackling loneliness.
2.12	The Humanitarian & Communities Group, is a partnership group which has involved since collaborative working during the Pandemic. This group has developed an action plan to help tackle cost-of-living related issues. It includes actions to tackle Loneliness & Isolation.
2.13	A Harms of Hate event was delivered to 154 pupils at New York Stadium in February 2024, comprising workshops on hate, extremism and violent behaviour (including online risks).

<p>2.14</p> <p>2.15</p>	<p>A wall calendar, with each month featuring a different Rotherham school's activity to tackle hate and division, was produced and circulated to schools and key partners in January 2024.</p> <p>Establishment of a new Rotherham Creative Health Board. A Creative Health Symposium was held with stakeholders in July 2024.</p>
<p>3. Key Actions and Timelines</p>	
<p>3.1</p> <p>3.2</p> <p>3.3</p> <p>3.4</p> <p>3.5</p> <p>3.6</p> <p>3.7</p> <p>3.8</p>	<p>Two further focus group discussions on loneliness to be held parents of children with neurodiverse conditions (September 2024).</p> <p>Training sessions for partners on using the JSNA- for Partners (Autumn onwards).</p> <p>Communication and engagement activities to be delivered throughout the year by all Partners, using the Five Ways to Wellbeing messaging (ongoing, with a specific focus in September, October and May).</p> <p>Ward plans to be completed and work to commence with Elected Members and local communities (October 2024 onwards).</p> <p>A partnership bid has been developed to seek funding from Arts Council England to support the development of a Children's Capital of Culture Creative Health programme specifically to support mental health and wellbeing among young people. The proposal includes two seasons of Creative Health activities in 2025 and legacy funding for 2026 to continue the programme beyond the festival year. If successful the proposals will be delivered through the recently established Rotherham Creative Health Board.</p> <p>Rotherham Creative Health Board needs to establish priorities (Autumn 2024).</p> <p>Further MECC and Loneliness sessions will be promoted in the Autumn (from October onwards).</p> <p>Update from Partners on actions within the plan is next due in the Autumn (October 2024).</p>
<p>4. Recommendations</p>	
<p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p> <p>4.3</p>	<p>The Board to note the progress made to date.</p> <p>Health and Wellbeing Board Partner organisations to continue to remain committed to the delivery of this action plan, reporting timely on progress and assisting with building intelligence and evidence to this theme area.</p> <p>The Board to receive an annual update on the progress of the Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan.</p>