

**Councillor Dave Sheppard, Deputy Leader and  
Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion & Neighbourhood Working**

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<b>Ref</b>	<b>Direct Line:</b>	<b>Please Ask For</b>
DS/LH	01709 255948	Councillor Dave Sheppard

13<sup>th</sup> March 2025

Cllr Simon Ball  
Elected Member

Via email: [simon.ball@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:simon.ball@rotherham.gov.uk)

Dear Cllr Ball

**Question to Council – Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

Thank you for the question you submitted to Council on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2025. I have set out the question and my response below.

***While the council has implemented various programs to address loneliness, what specific metrics are used to evaluate their effectiveness, and can the Chair share any data that demonstrates a reduction in loneliness among Rotherham residents as a result of these initiatives?***

Whilst many Rotherham programs have an indirect impact on loneliness, there have only been two approaches in recent years that have been evaluated directly for their impact. The most recent fully evaluated program was in 2021/22 when the Council delivered the Better Mental Health Project funded as part of the Government's post pandemic recovery, which included a specific Befriending Project. This project engaged 835 residents across Rotherham and was evaluated using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) which was administered pre and post intervention. Evaluation of the project showed that the mean WEMWBS score at first assessment was 40.22, rising by 9.16 to 49.38 at follow up, which is classed as significant improvement to mental health.

Currently the Council has in place a Prevention and Early Intervention small grants scheme funded through the Better Care Fund and administered by Voluntary Action Rotherham to address loneliness and isolation in the borough. Grant funded projects are being delivered between 1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025, with small grants (up to £5k per element) awarded to 13 voluntary sector organisations in the borough. Elements include: befriending services, enabling activity, and activity groups.

Monitoring and evaluation of these programmes is set up to be proportionate and reflect the size of the grants, with groups using 4 loneliness questions, pre and post intervention to measure impact. The questions used are included below and follow best practise as developed by the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). They are: -

- How often do you feel that you lack Companionship?
- How often do you feel left out?
- How often do you feel isolated from others?
- How often do you feel lonely?

In terms of evaluation the results for the Small Grants programme will be available after the project ends in July, with a project report due for publication in October 2025.

I hope that my response is helpful.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Dave Sheppard  
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion & Neighbourhood Working