

**The Loneliness Campaign  
North Yorkshire**

# **Be Social, Be Well**

**A strategic framework to build relationships  
and tackle loneliness and social isolation  
in North Yorkshire**

**2020-2026**

*“Good relationships keep us happier and healthier.”<sup>1</sup>*

*“People with stronger social relationships had a 50% increased likelihood of survival than those with weaker social relationships.”<sup>2</sup>*

*“Strong relationships, support networks, and a sense of belonging are associated with higher wellbeing<sup>3</sup> and social capital is linked to a range of benefits for society and individuals.”<sup>4</sup>*

# Foreword

The stories of people in North Yorkshire who have experienced loneliness, and who have been able to overcome that feeling, have inspired this Strategic Framework. By better understanding what caused those feelings, their consequences and how each person was able to help themselves, or be helped by others, it has been possible to suggest practical ways in which everyone can play their part to tackle loneliness in North Yorkshire.

54% of adults hardly ever or never feel lonely, but this means 46% do experience this feeling, whether it be occasionally (24%), some of the time (15%) or, in the worst situations, often or always (6% - known as being chronically lonely). Young people and children can feel lonely too.

Loneliness affects people of all ages and at any time in their lives.

Whilst North Yorkshire has a reputation for resilience, relatively high levels of happiness and good quality living compared to many other places in England, that does not mean that the county is as connected and as resourceful as it might be. *“Half of Yorkshire adults ‘do not feel part of their local community’ amid a loneliness epidemic.”*<sup>5</sup>

This is why it has been so useful to have the opportunity thanks to The National Lottery Community Fund’s ‘Building Connections Fund’ to imagine how, as a county, we might better use the assets we already have, to prevent and alleviate the feelings of loneliness, and overcome barriers that cause social isolation.

This Framework seeks to inspire everyone to tackle issues of loneliness for the long-term. We want individuals, neighbours, family, friends, relatives, volunteers, the media, GPs and organisations in the public, private, social and faith sectors to come together with their ideas, their kindness and their expertise. The evidence is extremely clear - if you have stronger relationships in your life, you will increase your likelihood of longer life expectancy and higher levels of wellbeing. This means feeling happier, healthier and more connected to the place you live in and the way in which you feel a sense of belonging in the world<sup>6</sup>. This was a recurrent theme amongst the stories – a feeling of belonging and knowing how to make meaningful relationships.

The success of this Framework relies on many things, not least the will of ‘everyone’ to focus on the five strategic ambitions that are explained in detail later in this framework:

**1: Eliminate stigma**

**2: Make connection easier**

**3: Kindness in communities**

**4: Foster meaningful relationships**

**5: Build enlightened services**

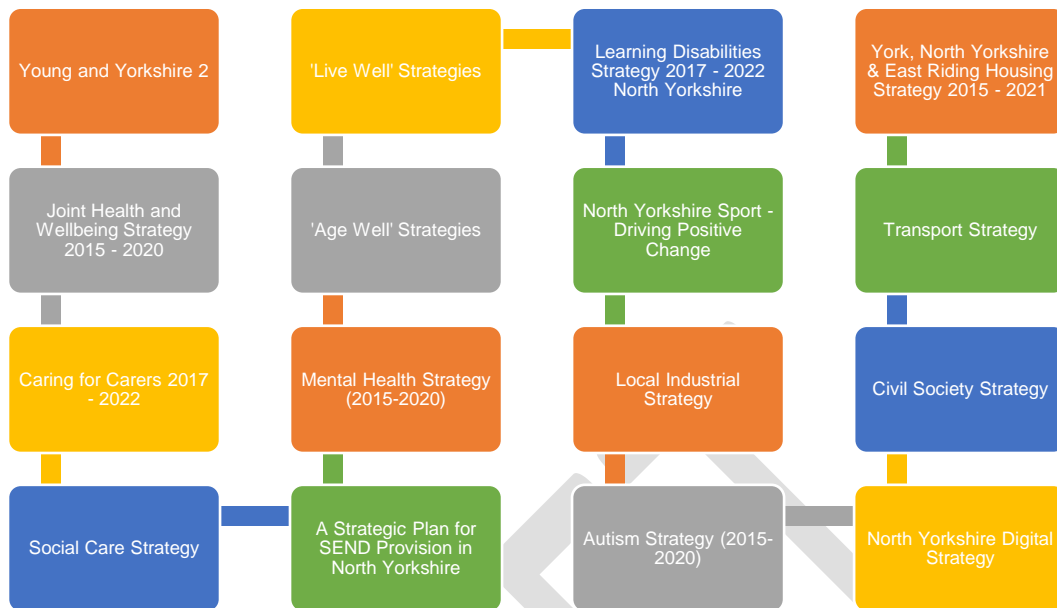
Embedding these ambitions within associated strategies and plans adds to the value of their potential impact and widens breadth of collaboration to take actions forward:

Whilst this Framework can raise the profile of this challenge for the county’s population<sup>1</sup>, the practical solutions for addressing loneliness and isolation are inevitably localised. Often it is about people noticing that someone on their street, or in their village or neighbourhood might be struggling or experiencing change affecting their behaviours. Those who need help are also the hardest to find. They can have multiple challenges such as caring responsibilities, disability, a long-term limiting health condition or be unemployed.

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<sup>1</sup> Aligned to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

The North Yorkshire Partnership website ([www.nypartnerships.org.uk](http://www.nypartnerships.org.uk)) brings together a range of information for partners across the county. Examples of current strategies include:



The Framework relies on having all the district and borough councils, as well as neighbourhood level structures and communities, support the five ambitions using their own assets to help reach, understand and collaborate to support those who are particularly at risk of social isolation. **Together, we can reduce loneliness in North Yorkshire.**

# Framework principles

## **1: Asset based, not deficit based**

Adopt an asset based approach recognising that everyone has strengths to help themselves and help others. Help people find answers for themselves. Ensure solutions are based on real lives and involve users in their design.

## **2: Connection**

Help people feel more connected through small changes and remove practical and emotional barriers that prevent people attending, engaging and participating.

## **3: Realistic and created with the community**

Action needs to be guided by what people and communities actually want, so ask 'what matters to you' and seek to support those needs with tools, support and assistance for different people experiencing loneliness and social isolation.

## **4: System-wide approach – everyone's responsibility**

Assume that delivery can, and should be, collaborative and system wide. The Framework should be embedded in existing services and practices, both rural and urban, and used to join up complementary investment.

## **5: Inclusive**

Address all age groups and, in particular, life-transitions but be prepared to focus resources to help those at greatest risk of or already experiencing chronic loneliness. Recognise also that needs may vary in different localities, especially urban and rural.

## **6: Evidence-based**

Commission interventions and / or develop activities and services that learn from best practice; and then add to the evidence base by using consistent measurement approaches to loneliness reduction.

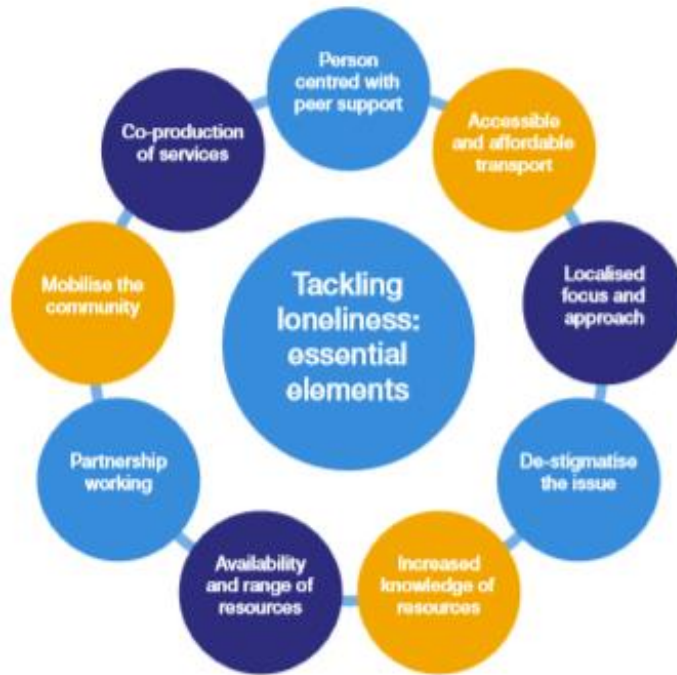
## **7: Prevention and alleviation**

The Framework requires both, with a preferred emphasis over time on prevention in order that longer-term societal and personal benefits can be achieved.

## **8: Normalise loneliness**

The Framework should ensure that people are not stigmatised or labelled as lonely or isolated, instead encourage population-wide awareness and understanding of risk and protective factors, and the pleasure of connecting with one-another.

**Learning from the national 'Connected Society' strategy the North Yorkshire Strategic Framework takes into account nine essential elements<sup>7</sup>:**



Learning from the work of Age UK, this document is also heavily inspired by the 'Promising Approaches Framework'<sup>8</sup> as a means of seeking to classify the range of services that are available to support people who are at risk of loneliness.

Finally, it is important that this Framework increasingly learns from and invests in, best practice early intervention and prevention services and activities as a means to encourage longer-term, cost effective outcomes.

Available evidence around the effectiveness of different interventions is still less than conclusive, but it is clear that certain things will work better for people feeling isolated compared to those who feel chronic loneliness.

Having the right understanding of a person's situation, and introducing them into the right pathway, is vitally important - whether that be one-to-one psychological approaches and / or community-oriented group activities. Common to all of these situations is making it as easy as possible for people to socially connect at their own pace and without fear of stigma or additional physical obstacles (e.g. a lack of transport).

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# Introduction

The North Yorkshire Strategy – **Stay Social Stay Well – A Strategic Framework to build relationships and tackle loneliness and social isolation in North Yorkshire** identifies the issues, collaborative actions and ambitions to encourage people, communities, VCS organisations, public bodies and employers to think about, talk about and act to help people engage and avoid feelings of loneliness.

## **Background**

Community First Yorkshire is working with voluntary, NHS, local authority partners and private businesses to develop a North Yorkshire wide, all ages, Strategy for Tackling Loneliness and series of campaigns. The overall project uses the recommendations from the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness and other existing national and local research.

The project grew out of conversations with VCS and public sector partners, which identified the far reaching potential of having a county-wide vision to shape and add to collaborative working to tackle loneliness across all ages. It is supported by the North Yorkshire Health and Wellbeing Board.

The project period is from January 2019 to December 2020. The project is supported through funding from the National Lottery Community Fund as part of the Building Connections funding stream, along with further funding from North Yorkshire County Council (Stronger Communities), Defra and Community First Yorkshire. Further in-kind support is being provided by steering group members.

## **Multi-agency Steering Group**

The project is supported by a Steering Group. They bring to the project multi-agency thinking and add to the awareness of the wider loneliness agenda, to shape the Strategy and delivery of the project activities. Members also provide links with work taking place through other Boards, partnership forums and their own organisations and networks, with the aim of increasing collaboration and joined-up working.

The Steering Group is chaired by Community First Yorkshire and the membership includes:

Age UK North Craven  
Dementia Forward  
Harrogate and Rural District Clinical Commissioning Group  
Harrogate Borough Council  
Joseph Rowntree Trust  
North Yorkshire Carers Resource  
North Yorkshire County Council  
North Yorkshire Police  
North Yorkshire Sport  
North Yorkshire Youth  
Two Ridings Community Foundation  
York, North Yorkshire and East Riding LEP  
York University

Our thanks go to Alan Graver, Skyblue Research Ltd, who researched, drafted and produced this strategy. If you would like to contact Alan, please email [alan@skyblue.org.uk](mailto:alan@skyblue.org.uk).

## Allan

*"I want to be with people, rather than sit in by myself."*

### What was Allan's situation?

Allan is member of the ex-Forces, in his mid-forties. He was always sociable and mixed with lots of people for the first 15 years of his marriage. His life changed when his wife's health seriously declined. He became her full time carer prior to her sadly passing away. Whilst a carer, he became increasingly isolated from former friends and colleagues; he retreated into himself.

### How has Allan's situation changed?

After becoming bereft, Allan moved to a new town. He found out about a local hospice offering support to those dealing with bereavement. Allan self-referred onto the charity's specialist support service and received support for two years including home visits by a matched volunteer. This volunteer shared Allan's humour and was a friendly face to chat to. This service was time limited, but it allowed Allan to connect with others and eventually, he took the initiative to access many other local services to ensure he did not feel isolated. Now, he feels he can get out and about, and is no longer 'rattling around at home'. He is in touch with various organisations and enjoys social activities such as day trips and events.

Allan has moved to another town again. He is appreciative of the level of support available to him now. Despite not knowing many in his new community, Allan became a volunteer at the local Men's Shed. Through this, he feels he is a real part of the community and has a core group of people which he can see on a weekly basis.

### What enabled the change?

- ✓ A decision to make a fresh start in a brand new place
- ✓ More positive thinking to find out, and reach out for support
- ✓ Localised, person-centred one to one support and regular contact
- ✓ A pathway to local group activity among people with shared interests.



## What is loneliness?

There are three types of loneliness experienced by different populations and in practice, people experience a mix of them:

**Social loneliness** refers to the perceived lack of quantity as well as quality of relationships.

**Emotional loneliness** describes the absence or loss of meaningful relationships that meet a deeply felt need to be recognised and ‘belong’.

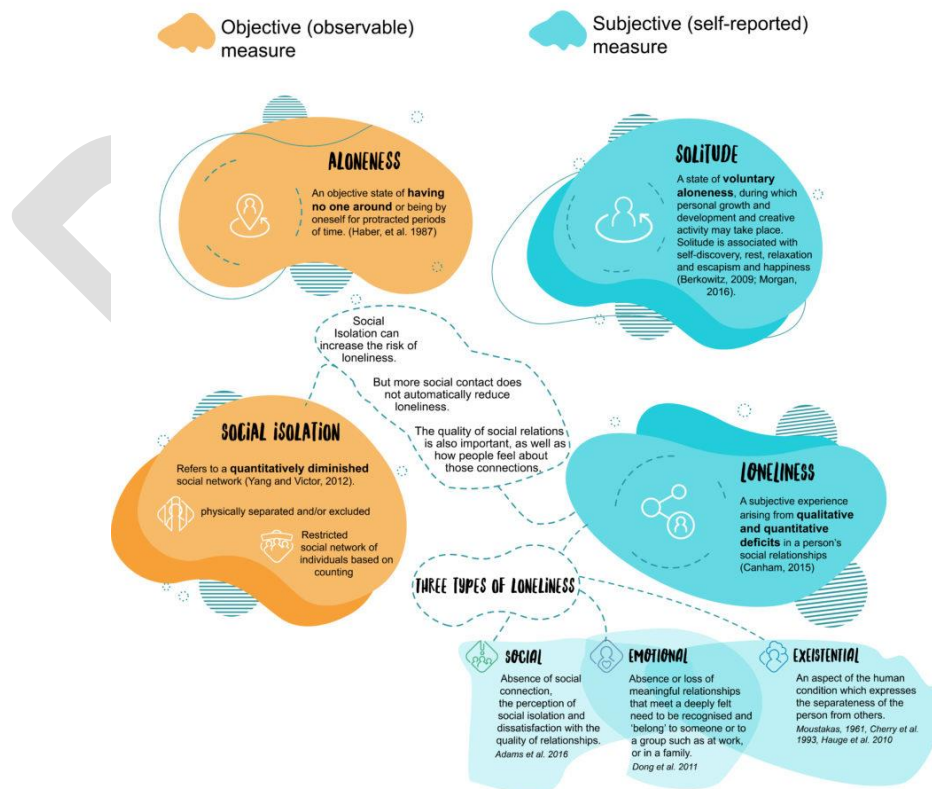
**Existential loneliness** refers to an experience of feeling entirely separate from other people, often when confronted with traumatic experiences or mortality.

Someone who is described as **chronically lonely** reports feeling lonely all or most of the time.

Loneliness is different from **social isolation**, **aloneness** and **solitude**. The element of choice when deciding how alone or not we want to be is important. It’s easy to overlook, when focusing on reducing loneliness, but solitude has been identified as important and positive in a number of studies.

Social isolation is objective and based on the number of people in our social networks. In comparison, loneliness is subjective and experienced. Although social isolation can increase the risk of loneliness, we can’t necessarily reduce loneliness just by increasing the number or frequency of social connections<sup>9</sup>. The quality of these connections also matters, and so do the underlying causes of loneliness. Conflating aloneness, social isolation and solitude with loneliness could lead to ineffective or stigmatising policies or projects<sup>10</sup>.

### THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LONELY, ISOLATED, ALONE AND SOLITUDE



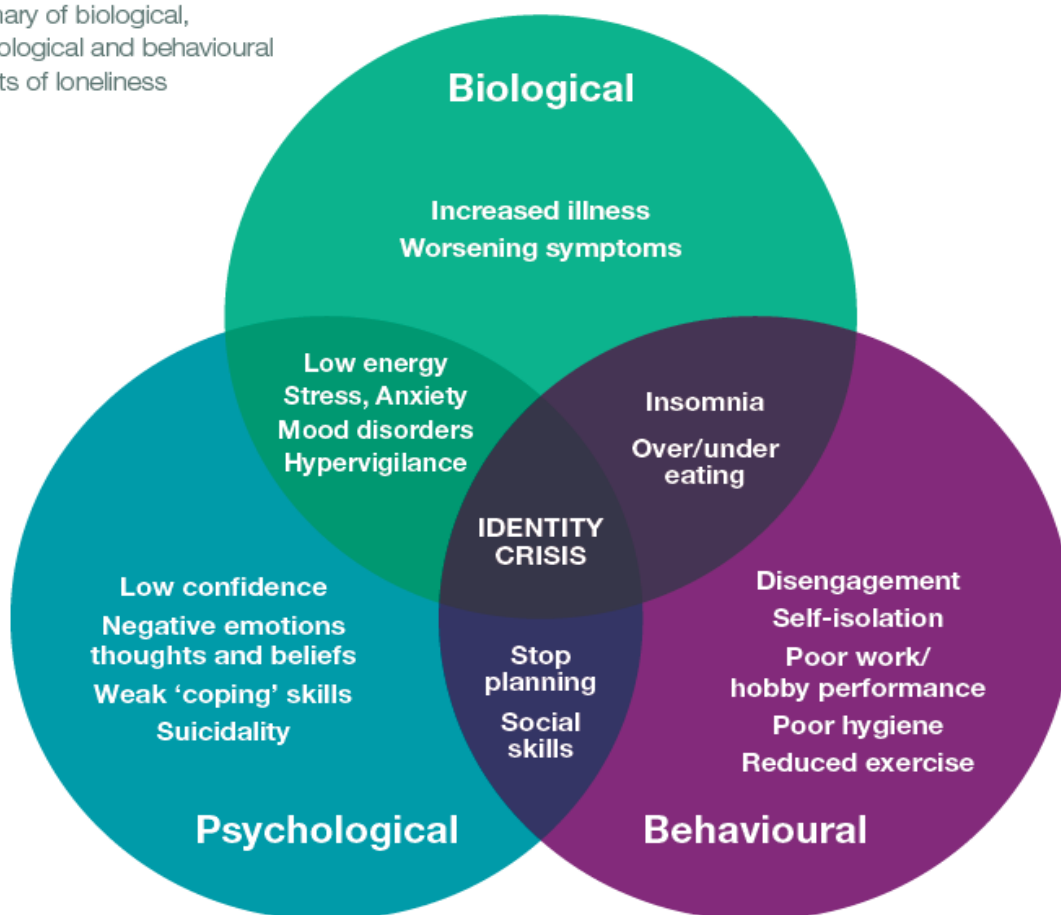
Loneliness occurs when there is a gap between our actual and desired social relationships and when the quality or quantity of these relationships does not meet our expectations.

## Why tackle loneliness?

Loneliness increases the likelihood of early mortality by 26%<sup>11</sup>.

Studies have found links between loneliness (or social isolation) and poorer health outcomes, such as early death<sup>12</sup>, higher rates of depression and cognitive decline. This may lead to higher costs in the public and private sector due to greater service usage, absences and productivity losses<sup>13</sup>.

Summary of biological, psychological and behavioural impacts of loneliness



Many studies have found links between loneliness or social isolation and poorer outcomes, principally in health; some have found that the effect may differ according to whether an individual is experiencing social isolation or loneliness. It is, however, difficult to prove causality on both counts. For instance, Shankar et al. (2011) found a link between loneliness and physical inactivity, but noted illness or lack of energy may lead to less social interactions, not the other way round<sup>14</sup>.

**“Lonely people have a 64% increased chance of developing clinical dementia<sup>15</sup>.”**

**“People with stronger social relationships had a 50% increased likelihood of survival than those with weaker social relationships<sup>16</sup>.”**

The Government’s Loneliness Strategy<sup>17</sup> describes some of the negative impacts that being chronically lonely may have:

- **Early deaths.** The health impact of loneliness is thought to be on a par with other public health priorities like obesity or smoking<sup>18</sup>.
- A greater **risk of inactivity, smoking and risk-taking behaviour**<sup>19</sup>.
- Increased risk of coronary **heart disease and stroke**<sup>20</sup>.
- An increased risk of **mental health problems including depression, low self-esteem, reported sleep problems and increased stress response**<sup>21</sup>.
- **Cognitive decline** and an increased risk of Alzheimer's<sup>22</sup>.

**Mental Health:** Feeling lonely isn't in itself a mental health problem, but the two are strongly linked. Having a mental health problem can increase the chance of feeling lonely. Some people may have misconceptions about what certain mental health problems mean, so they may find it difficult to speak to others about their problems which means having to deal with stigma. Other people may experience social phobia and find it difficult to engage in everyday activities involving other people which could lead to a lack of meaningful social contact and cause feelings of loneliness<sup>23</sup>. In 2010 a survey completed by the Mental Health Foundation suggested 11% of the whole population feel lonely 'often'. However, the number of people at risk of experiencing loneliness is likely to be much higher<sup>24</sup>.

**The review of North Yorkshire's Mental Health Strategy provides a significant opportunity for ensuring appropriate linkages are made with this Strategic Framework for tackling loneliness and isolation<sup>25</sup>.**

There are many sources of research we can learn from to help guide best practice interventions in North Yorkshire including, but not limited to:

- The House of Commons Library, Loneliness Briefing Paper Reading List<sup>26</sup>
- The What Works Centre for Wellbeing (Loneliness<sup>27</sup>)
- The Campaign to End Loneliness' Research Hub and references<sup>28</sup>.

## What causes loneliness?

It is difficult to provide a comprehensive guide to the 'causes' of loneliness because of its subjective nature. There are some common themes identified including **structural causes** i.e. changes to a community's social and physical infrastructure affecting the availability of activities, spaces, transport and services. This can make disconnection and social isolation with others more likely<sup>29</sup>. Causes also include, but are not limited to, health issues (physical and mental); mobility limitations; becoming recently bereaved / divorce / separation / empty nesters / retirees / becoming young parents<sup>30</sup>.

Many people who experience loneliness have at one point been connected, but have been affected by a life change, such as those above. These transitions, according to research can create a **loss of identity** and sense of self which makes people introspective<sup>31</sup>.

Research has found that the causes of loneliness are often complex, multi-layered and mutually reinforcing. Outside of the moments where life events affect the way people see themselves are factors related to who people are as individuals that diminish their ability to connect with others – things like: their sense of self; health; income; energy; confidence; emotions; and changed habits<sup>32</sup>. Some personalities may be more prone to feeling lonely, with some people better able to cope with, and respond to, their social situation than others. It has also been suggested that certain societal beliefs and norms may make loneliness more likely, such as the inappropriateness of talking to strangers, modern work/life balance, the stigma of loneliness and wider discourse which questions whether individuals are 'deserving of support'<sup>33</sup>.

Feelings of not belonging and discrimination can negatively impact feelings of being valued and safe, which can influence loneliness<sup>34</sup>.

New research into social media may suggest the internet is both the cause and remedy of loneliness in the UK<sup>35</sup>.

### I'm just trying to navigate a way through .....

I come from a big family. I live with my Mum, Dad, two brothers, dog and budgie, in a nice home by the sea. I have three older siblings, two brothers and a sister, that are all married with families of their own. We have a BIG FAMILY! I attend a good, local, Catholic secondary school, with approximately 600 pupils. I have participated in several school trips at home and abroad. Although many people will perceive we live a perfect life, we have had our share of family struggles and knock backs, but on the whole my life has been fortunate, with lots of opportunities, and experiences explored. However, hidden away I have always had this feeling of isolation, outside of my secure family circle; that vulnerability and lack of confidence has been with me since my earliest memories.

It hasn't always been 'doom and gloom', but I have always found it challenging, forming relationships and friendships. I have had so many feelings of insecurity leaving me withdrawn and remote, which has inhibited my ability to hold onto friendships, having been hurt and let down. It has left me less confident, knowing the only person I can truly trust and confide in is myself. So I stayed alone!

Rather than sharing my feelings I would keep them to myself, remaining friendless and detached. I didn't have faith in myself or understand what I was feeling, or how to express it correctly. Thinking there was nothing anyone could do. Intimidated by my weakness and frightened of being more hurt. It was easier on my own, which to the outside world must have made me appear moody, rude and anti-social, alien to friendship groups. Which in time made me not only a target, but also a victim of their constant intimidation, and bullying to a degree. Leaving me in a very lonely place. Over time, and with support, I have:

- ✓ Grown up and come to terms with loneliness being part of my life.
- ✓ I have limited the number of people I 'let in' and 'trust'.
- ✓ I have learned strategies to distract myself with busy family life and a small social circle.

✓ I have found the confidence to engage on 'my terms' that way I feel protected and safe.

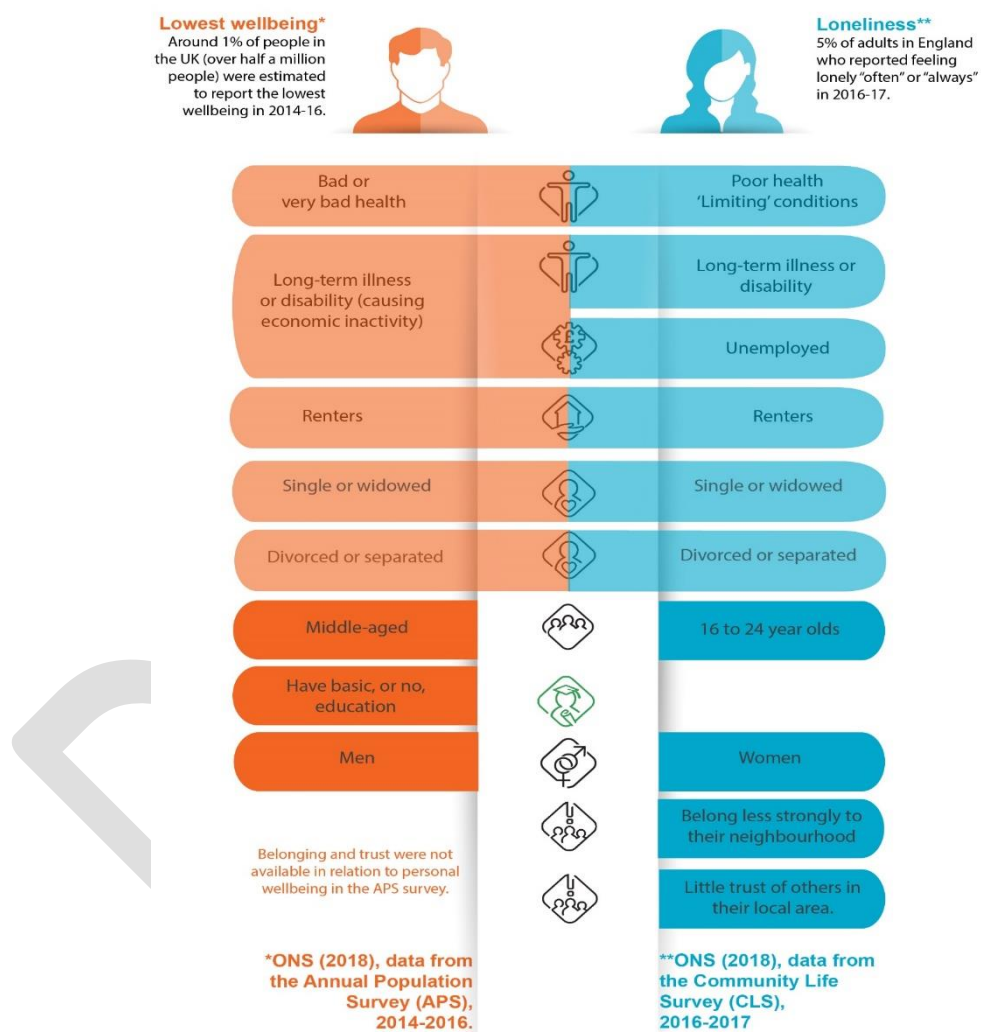
DRAFT

## Who is at greatest risk?

Until recently, becoming chronically lonely was only seen as an issue for older age. However, we know that loneliness can be a barrier to wellbeing at any age.

### Who is at risk of the lowest wellbeing and loneliness?

Loneliness affects most people, but chronic loneliness has been linked to poor physical health, mental health, and poor personal wellbeing. The visualisation provides a useful illustration of the determinants that are consistently associated with people experiencing the poorest wellbeing and loneliness.



All data is self-reported by participants who took the surveys. The visualisation draws on two separate datasets, and therefore direct comparisons are not possible.

Evidence continues to be gathered by academics, practitioners and policy-makers who are interested in understanding the risks of being lonely in diverse population groups<sup>36</sup> and whether transitions we go through at different life stages may be triggers for loneliness<sup>37</sup>.





The latest official figures suggest that just under half of adults in England experience loneliness occasionally or more often. The proportion of adults reporting that they often feel lonely (6%) shows little variation by gender or by region, but the data does suggest that younger people are more likely to report feeling frequently lonely. Certain groups are also associated with an increased risk of loneliness, such as those with a long-term disability, widowed homeowners, unmarried middle-agers, and young renters.

The Government’s Loneliness Strategy notes that people who report being lonely are likely to have at least one of several characteristics, including **being aged 16-24, being widowed, having poor health, having a long-term illness or disability, having caring responsibilities and being unemployed**. It also notes the important role of ‘wider cultural attitudes’ stating that ‘there is some evidence that members of some marginalised groups are more likely to feel lonely<sup>38</sup>’. Other characteristics that have been identified<sup>39</sup> as potentially linked to an increased risk of loneliness include:

- **Gender:** some studies have suggested that women are more likely to report feeling lonely. For instance **new mums** aged 18-24 have been found to be particularly susceptible to loneliness as they adapt to their new ‘identity’, leave employment, refocus their attention on their child and, potentially, have to cope with a changed relationship with their partner<sup>40</sup>.
- **Lower income<sup>41</sup>/socio-economic status.**
- **Work status:** unemployment and retirement have been associated with loneliness. Certain professions may also make socialisation particularly difficult e.g. members of the serving armed forces community<sup>42</sup>. It has also been said that leaving the armed forces, and the resulting loss of camaraderie and purpose, can also make it difficult to form relationships in civilian communities<sup>43</sup>.
- **Living arrangements:** living alone, particularly if used to a busier home (i.e. after children have left)<sup>44</sup>. **“People’s chances of becoming chronically lonely are greatly increased by the circumstances in which they live<sup>45</sup>.”**
- **Homeless** people have also been highlighted as at risk of loneliness, not only due to lack of contact and lower self-esteem, but also because a leading driver of homelessness is relationship breakdown<sup>46 47</sup>.
- **Relationship status:** singles, divorcees<sup>48</sup> and the recently bereaved have been identified as potentially at greater risk of loneliness. However, it has also been suggested that a poor-quality intimate relationship can engender loneliness<sup>49</sup>.
- **Disabilities and health concerns:** having a long-term illness or disability can limit an individual’s ability to socialise due to a variety of reasons such as accessibility problems, communication difficulties, anxiety and stigmatisation<sup>50</sup>. The Office for National Statistics (ONS)<sup>51</sup> confirms that health and disability are strongly

related to loneliness. A 2017 study shows that 67% of disabled people have felt lonely in the past year. The analysis shows that those with a long-term health condition or disability were 56% more likely to report loneliness than those without. Similarly, those who describe their general health as “fair”, “bad” and “very bad” were 88% more likely to say they feel lonely than those with “good” and “very good” health.

- **Carers:** of those with disabilities and health problems can also become lonely; a survey from Carers UK in 2017 found that 81% of carers had felt lonely or socially isolated due to their caring responsibilities<sup>52</sup>. Those who have caring responsibilities were found to be 37% more likely to report loneliness than those who do not. Research by Carers UK (2015) found that 57% have lost touch with family and friends as a result of their caring role, over a third (36%) feel uncomfortable talking to friends about caring, and 49% have experienced difficulties in their relationship with their partner because of their caring role; all three of these aspects have been highlighted as related to loneliness within this research.
- **Not being part of a social organisation:** it has been argued that volunteering, or being part of a community group, can reduce loneliness levels. Surveys have also highlighted that minority ethnic people are less likely to participate in the social activities they enjoy<sup>53</sup>.
- **Small number of friends:** it has been suggested that the greater the number of friends, in general, the less likely someone is to be lonely. However, this is not a straight-forward association; the frequency and quality of contact are also important and will depend on the individual.
- **Ethnicity and language:** being part of a minority ethnic group could be a risk factor for loneliness<sup>54</sup>. The Red Cross and Co-op Foundation have argued that this is due to various “barriers to belonging” such as discrimination and difficulties accessing services<sup>55</sup>.
- **Young people from BAME backgrounds:** research<sup>56</sup> found, not belonging can negatively impact feelings of being valued and safe, which can influence loneliness. 67% of respondents who felt they did not belong felt always / often lonely. 16% felt they did not belong.
- Research by the Campaign to End Loneliness (CtEL)<sup>57</sup> and others<sup>58 59</sup> also suggests that people within the **LGBTQ+** community are at risk of becoming lonely or socially isolated.
- **Social connections** are an important aspect of loneliness and the ONS results<sup>60</sup> clearly show that **communications with friends, family and neighbours, as well as feelings of belonging to, and satisfaction with, a local area** are associated with loneliness. Those who said they meet up with friends and family less often also reported higher levels of loneliness. Those who see friends and family less than once a month or never were 84% more likely to be lonely than those who meet up with friends and family daily. Additionally those who never chat to their neighbours were 43% more likely to feel lonely than those who do.



## What are the common risk factors?

**Lisa** worked until she was 79 at the local shops. She loved speaking to customers, travelling and putting on food demonstrations. She had friends at the store, but since being retired and becoming a carer for her husband with dementia, Lisa misses the interaction she once had with others. *“I miss the customers.”* She has yet to overcome her feelings of loneliness.

The key triggers or risk factors that can cause loneliness include:

- Living alone (particularly if it used to a busier home i.e. after children have left<sup>61</sup>).
- Suffering a recent bereavement.
- Suffering from an illness (people with particular conditions, including HIV, dementia<sup>62</sup> and cancer and those who move into a care home, have been cited as at increased risk of loneliness<sup>63</sup>).
- Are immobile.
- Are suffering from a sensory impairment (perhaps hearing or sight loss).
- Do not regularly leave the house.
- Do not have close family living nearby<sup>64</sup>.

**Becoming a carer.** There is clear evidence that carers are at greater risk of experiencing loneliness. Carers report less social interaction and fewer friendships. And this is largely due to their relationship with the person they care for and the effects of caring on social and family life<sup>65</sup>.

**Discrimination and language barriers**<sup>66 67 68</sup>e.g. individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds are more likely to experience health, social, and economic inequalities, thereby increasing the risk of social isolation<sup>69</sup>.

**Unemployment:** *“Loneliness goes hand-in-hand with unemployment.<sup>70</sup>”* and *“Not being able to work or volunteer restricts social contact and can lead to chronic loneliness and social isolation<sup>71</sup>.”*

Various factors have been found to increase **older people's** risk of experiencing loneliness and isolation:

- **Personal circumstances:** living alone, being single, divorced, never married, living on a low income, living in residential care
- **Transitions:** bereavement, (especially recently bereaved), becoming a carer or giving up caring, retirement (and certain professions may also make socialisation particularly difficult including those in the armed forces)
- **Personal characteristics:** aged 75 plus, from an ethnic minority community, being gay or lesbian
- **Health and disability:** poor health, immobility, cognitive impairment, sensory impairment, dual sensory impairment (and what this leads to e.g. giving up driving)
- **Geography** i.e. living in an area with high levels of material deprivation, in which crime is an issue.

Age UK specifically reports risk factors including being childless, suffering bereavement, being in residential care, having poor physical health and mental health (including sensory loss and loss of mobility) and physical loneliness<sup>72</sup>.

The Campaign to End Loneliness cites wider societal risk factors for older people too: a lack of public transport; physical environment (e.g. no public toilets or benches); housing; fear of crime; high population turnover; demographics and technological changes<sup>73</sup>.

Risk factors identified for **young people** include:

- Going through difficult situations
- Having weak social networks
- Having high expectations of their social networks
- Not having the skills to cope with difficulty<sup>74</sup>
- Not being in education, employment or training<sup>75</sup> (NEET).

***‘Young people don’t generally actively seek help for loneliness, either through not identifying it themselves or not wanting to admit it.’<sup>76</sup>***

## People at risk in North Yorkshire

The previous section identified people who are at higher risk than others of feeling lonely more often. We have extrapolated national data sourced from the 2017/18 Community Life Survey<sup>77</sup> and applied it to the North Yorkshire population. Caution should be attached to this data as the Community Life Survey is a relatively small national sample and the experience in North Yorkshire may be different to that in the rest of the UK. As such, while applying national percentages to North Yorkshire gives a feel for the size of the problem, there is a high level of uncertainty in these estimates. Nevertheless,, it is possible that:

- 6% (approximately 30, 000) of residents aged 16 and over may currently experience chronic loneliness in North Yorkshire<sup>2</sup>
- 39% (approximately 198, 000) adults may experience temporary loneliness<sup>3</sup>
- Whilst 54% (approximately 274, 000) adults hardly ever or never experience feelings of loneliness<sup>4</sup>.
- In addition there are children and young people (under 16) experiencing loneliness, but the metrics are not in place to measure this group with the same confidence as adults.
- Children accessing free school meals report nationally that they experience a much higher rate of loneliness than peers who do not<sup>78</sup>. This is an area requiring further investigation in the county.
- Children and young people experiencing bullying are thought to be at greater risk of isolating themselves from others. Between one in four and one in five children in North Yorkshire report being bullied at or near school, or felt afraid of going to school because of bullying at least sometimes<sup>79</sup>.

In terms of thinking about how potentially to focus effort on supporting those at greatest risk of loneliness there may be merit in considering how to reach, understand and support:

- 29, 000 residents in poor health or who have conditions they describe as “limiting”
- 105, 000 (17.5%) of residents diagnosed and living with a health condition or disability
- 39, 000 (7.9%) residents who have been widowed
- 132, 490 (26.8%) residents who are single
- 12, 836 (2.15%) residents who are unpaid carers i.e. people who provide substantial unpaid care (50+ hours)
- 5, 000 residents aged 65 and over who are moving into care / living in a care home with or without nursing
- 52, 000 young adults aged 16 to 24 years (8.5% of the population) who report feeling lonely more often than those in older age groups
- People who are in rented accommodation, nationally report feeling more lonely than home owners. In North Yorkshire there are 28, 647 people (11.1%) in social rented accommodation and 43, 000 people (16.8%) privately renting.

In terms of identifying people who fit with the characteristics of those people most at risk, more work needs to be done in North Yorkshire through research and engagement activity to quantify:

- People who feel that they belong less strongly to their neighbourhood reported feeling lonely more often.
- People who have little trust of others in their local area reported feeling lonely more often.
- Widowed older homeowners living alone with long-term health conditions.
- Unmarried, middle-agers with long-term health conditions.
- Younger renters with little trust and sense of belonging to their area.

Transitions through the life course have also been identified as often being triggers for loneliness. Some of these are quantified in the next table. All of these moments provide opportunities for intervention, but again more work would be needed in North Yorkshire to work out how best ‘enlightened services’ might be organised around such moments.

<sup>2</sup> 6% of 508, 000 adults aged 16 or over in North Yorkshire, 2017 population estimates

<sup>3</sup> This comprises 15% of 508, 000 adults (76, 000) saying they feel lonely sometimes and a further 24% (122, 000) saying they feel lonely occasionally

<sup>4</sup> This comprises 31% (157, 000) saying they hardly ever feel lonely and 23% (117, 000) who say they never feel lonely

**Transitions associated with risks and feelings of loneliness**

Starting school	Number on roll primary school	51, 811
	Number on roll secondary school	43, 340
Moving to another country or city	Long-term international migration	Inflow: 2, 342 Outflow: 1, 589
Moving home	Internal migration (within the UK)	Inflow: 27, 838 Outflow: 25, 546
Becoming a parent	General fertility rate (aged 15-44)	Rate: 62.7 per 1, 000 Count: 5, 712
Children leaving care	Children who ceased to be looked after	Count: 184
Homelessness	Statutory homelessness, rate per 1, 000 households	Rate: 1.2 per 1, 000 households Count: 323 individuals
Bereavement	Number of deaths by usual area of residence	Count: 6, 546
Employment	Number in employment (16-64)	Proportion: 78.4% Count: 275, 700
Retirement	Number retired	Proportion: 21.7% Count: 14, 700

**'Place'**

Research, such as that completed to help inform Scotland's Strategy to tackle loneliness, found associations between loneliness and social isolation experienced by under-represented demographics who often face multiple triggers including, socio-economic disadvantage, poor access to transport and a lack of places and spaces that encourage connectedness and foster belonging.

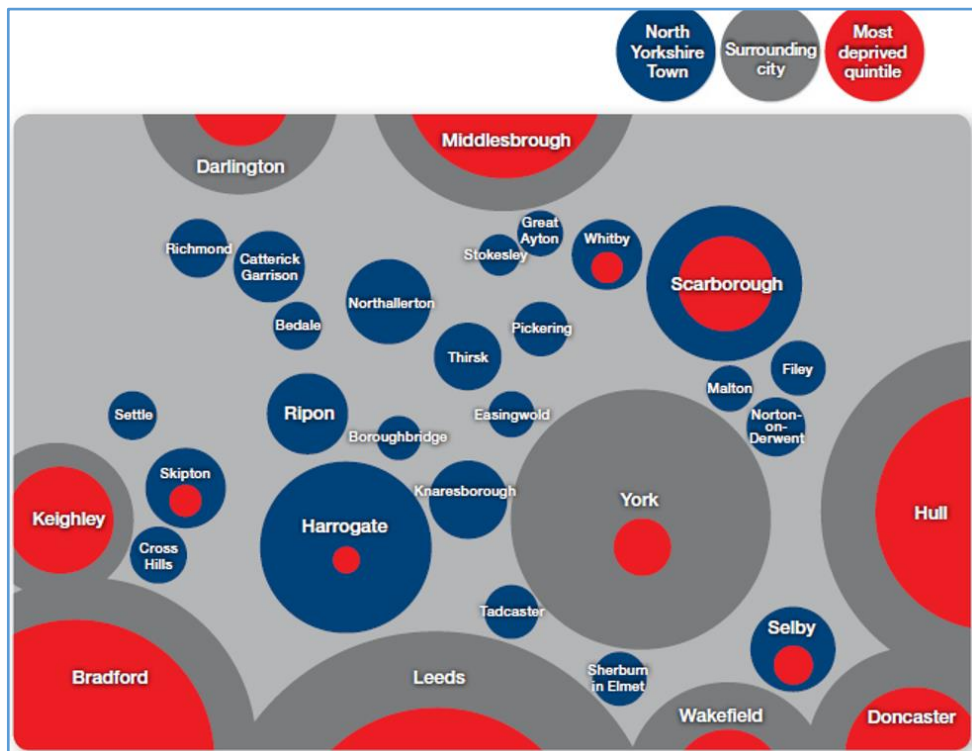
The study found that loneliness and social isolation is often triggered, exacerbated and maintained by the social and economic circumstances in which people live including the level of resources such as financial power, knowledge and social capacity that are available to them.

Those who are already at risk of being marginalised have a greater likelihood of experiencing chronic loneliness and social isolation and the associated mental and physical health outcomes<sup>80</sup>. Places and spaces are central to tackling loneliness and social isolation as they encompass both the physical environment where social contact occurs such as our homes, streets, public areas, natural spaces and the mobility of people across these - as well as the social environment that is the relationships, social contact and support networks that exist within a place.

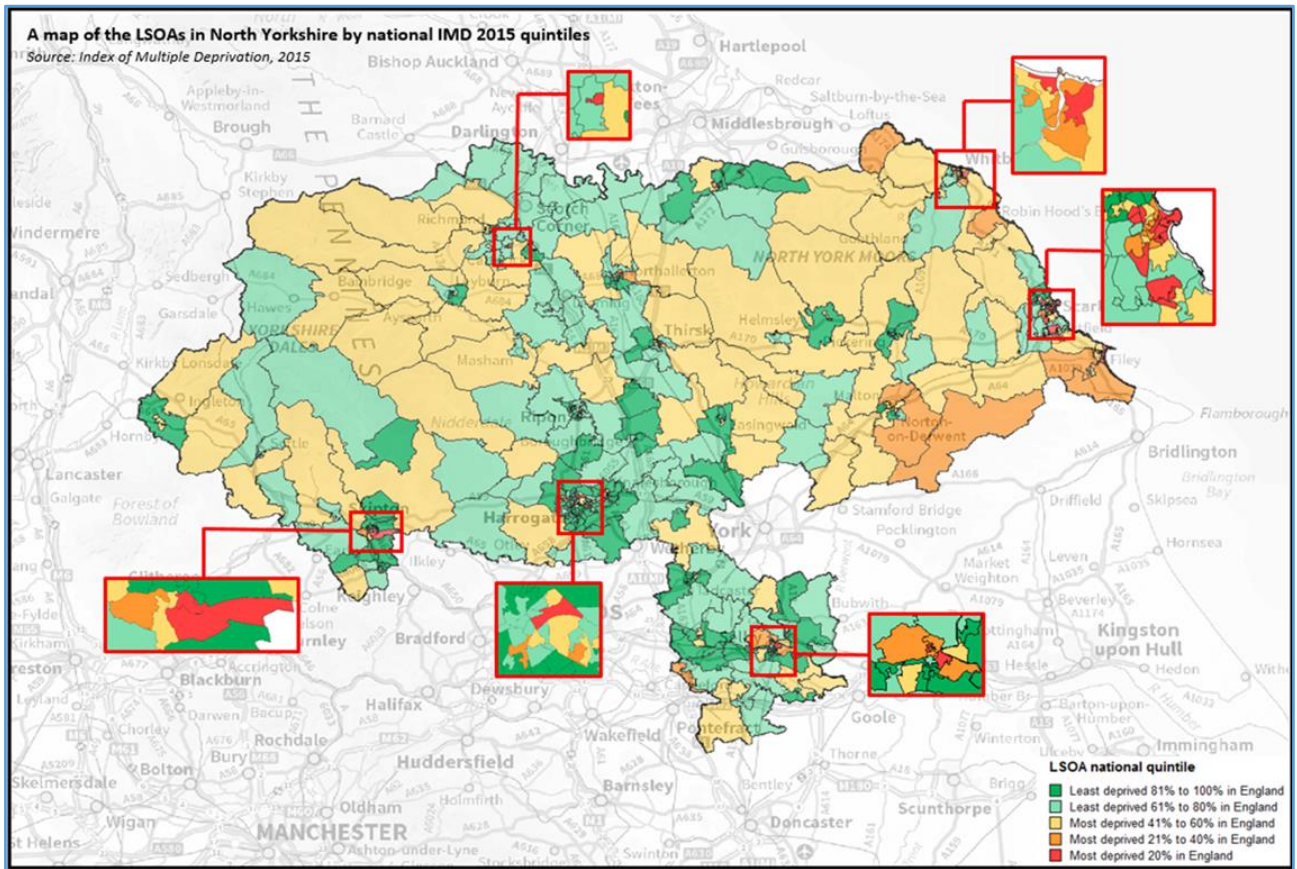
Places, spaces and the links between them that are well-informed by those that will use them, well designed, maintained and resourced, are key to nurturing quality relationships and developing a sense of belonging and purpose<sup>81</sup>.

More work will be required in North Yorkshire to understand the most effective ways of developing local, place based strategies and support that will tackle loneliness and social isolation.

These maps<sup>82</sup> illustrate some of the locations that are defined as being the most deprived in the county, and whilst it is always valuable to understand what challenges exist in each community (i.e. the different levels and types of deprivation), it is equally important to recognise the strengths that each community has. This Framework therefore advocates an **asset based approach** to any future conversations that take place to develop meaningful, community-owned action.



The relevance for loneliness, explain representatives of North Yorkshire Public Health, is that we know that (a) rurality and transport is a risk factor for isolation and (b) that children entitled to free school meals report much higher levels of loneliness nationally (27.5% compared to 5.5%) and this infographic<sup>83</sup> (below) identifies where the most deprived communities live. (Note that the key in the bottom right-hand corner explains that the green areas fall into the least deprived 20% of communities nationally, while the red areas illustrate the most deprived 20%.)



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## Jane's story

Jane lives in a small village in Ryedale with her husband Tony. She used to like many things, including walking, horse-riding, badminton, football but sadly she feels unable to participate in these activities any more. Most of all she loves her two dogs, Dusty and Amelie.

***"If I didn't have dogs I'd be in pyjamas all day"*** she explains.

Jane was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis two years ago. She battles with physical, mental and learning challenges every moment of her life. She forgets things and cannot judge time too well which means she daren't go to places on her own as she might forget where she is and not know how to get back somewhere safely.

***"I used to like cooking and baking, but when I try these days I burn the cakes!"*** she laughs.

Behind the conversation is a personal struggle with anxiety, depression and feelings of low mood on a daily basis, ***"... particularly mid-afternoon, when I've finished the dog walk, had my nap to get my energy back and there's nothing good on telly,"*** she explains.

Despite this reality for Jane, her outlook is remarkable. Joining in the Cake and Cuppa event on Yorkshire Day at Slingsby Methodist Church Hall, Jane used this opportunity to talk to people she knows in the community and be brave enough to talk to strangers.

You wouldn't know her suffering to listen to her talk so positively about wanting to get out there and do the things she can do rather than look back at the things she can't.

***"I'd really like to get to Emmerdale Studios, I just need access to a car that can take my wheelchair and someone who can drive me who also wants to go. I'd be able to sleep on the way so I'd have enough energy to get round. I'd like to get to Castle Howard but I don't think they cater for wheelchairs."*** Jane couldn't be sure of this fact but the perception of this barrier is enough to get in the way of making this wish a reality for her.

### What would improve Jane's life?

Access to a PIP (Personal Independence Payment) car would dramatically change Jane's life. More support to deal with the experience of filling in forms for the PIP assessment would have been welcome too as this created a great deal of additional stress at that time of 'identity shock'.

Looking ahead, having someone else to share time with doing things of a common interest would also help those low moments in the day whilst she waits for Tony to come home and have tea together.

***"That's the best bit of the day for me, the bit I really look forward to."***

Beyond the regime of clinical support from the nurse that visits her at home, Jane wasn't aware of other ways in which she could be supported, to develop meaningful relationships with others. The support is available to her if only she knew where to find it, for example by visiting the North Yorkshire Connect website or exploring volunteering opportunities.

When she's not reading her Kindle, she enjoys doing a jigsaw.

- With a little help from those around her maybe Jane can start a small jigsaw club at the Church Hall?
- Perhaps someone will accompany her down there to meet Margaret, her friend, who also went to the Cake and Cuppa event, who said she also enjoyed jigsaws.
- If someone would bring Margaret down in her wheelchair she said she'd do a jigsaw with Jane.

Perhaps we will see the start of a new club, and a new friendship between Jane and Margaret. As others join in maybe they will bring cakes, whether burnt or not, to share together.

**What can we learn from this story?**

There has been a stigma for Jane to admit to herself and those closest to her that she feels lonely almost all the time. More needs to be done to join up accessible transport options that make it easier for her to get out of her village and access activities to support her wellbeing. The welfare and benefits processes are less than empathetic at times of chronic stress. More must be done to provide person-centred support.

**Who is least lonely?**

Married homeowners in good health living with others are the least lonely, with only 15% reporting that they feel lonely occasionally or more frequently compared with 46% of the overall adult population in England. Their characteristics are:

- Living with a partner in a marriage or civil partnership
- In better general health
- Own their own home
- Do not live alone; are aged 35 years or older (though skewed more towards 65 years and over)
- Have a strong sense of belonging to their neighbourhood.

**What are the protective factors?**

*“Living in the midst of good, warm relationships is protective.”<sup>84</sup>*

Preventing people from feeling frequently lonely requires an understanding of how individuals and communities can work to protect themselves in the future. This means encouraging **resilience** in as many contexts as possible from as young an age as possible and throughout the life course. Raising awareness of the wide variety of resources and tools that are already available, often for free, and embedding these so that they can be accessed in schools, workplaces and in people’s homes will help people prevent, and / or manage feelings of loneliness when they arise; and hopefully, discourage their escalation.

A technical term that might best describe the overall strategy for this is **salutogenesis**. This is a health approach that highlights factors which create and support human health rather than those which cause disease. It focuses on resources and capacities which impact positively on health and aims to explain why, in adverse circumstances, some stay healthy and others don’t<sup>85</sup>. Individuals and communities should work together to normalise (rather than pathologise) loneliness with this key concept in mind and Public Health partners can help lead approaches accordingly.

**Friendly, kind, caring communities** that enable a sufficiency of activity (including volunteering and other social action opportunities) for people to engage in some or all of the [Five Ways to Wellbeing](#) can play an important contribution to preventing feelings of loneliness:



*“Shared spaces for people to meet and socialise are vital for tackling loneliness and helping communities work together to address local challenges<sup>86</sup>.”*

**Intergenerational relationships<sup>87</sup>** are also seen as a positive way of preventing feelings of loneliness and encouraging different types of relationship and new connections to be formed.

## Self-support

**Staying Social, Staying Well**<sup>88</sup>

'Staying Social, Staying Well' is a fun, free and practical self-completion online quiz. It helps people approaching retirement, or who have recently retired (typically aged 50-65) think about their risk of loneliness in later life. The quiz offers practical ideas about how to stay connected with people around you, get involved in your community, keep active, keep learning and give back.

<http://bit.ly/2xR6fOa>



The BBC Loneliness Experiment<sup>89</sup> suggests nine ways to protect yourself from loneliness and social isolation:

1. Find distracting activities or dedicate time to work, study or hobbies
2. Join a social club or take up new social activities and pastimes
3. Change your thinking to make it more positive
4. Start a conversation with anyone
5. Talk to friends or family about your feelings
6. Look for the good in every person you meet
7. Take time to think why you feel lonely
8. Carry on and wait for the feeling to pass
9. Invite people to do things without fearing rejection<sup>90</sup>.

**Solitude.** This is a state of voluntary aloneness, during which personal growth and development may take place. It can be associated with self-discovery, rest, relaxation, escapism and happiness<sup>91</sup>. This Framework encourages campaigns that promote the positive and nourishing aspects of solitude, mindfulness and restoration time.

*“For some, it could be reframed as a precious gift rather than something negative. This is a line of enquiry we should be interested to understand more about.”* (TLC Steering Group member, North Yorkshire)

**Social media**<sup>92</sup> - mixed evidence

A study on adolescents aged 15-17 years old was conducted to improve our understanding of the relationship between Facebook use and loneliness. It revealed that peer-related loneliness was related over time to using Facebook for social skills compensation, reducing feelings of loneliness and having interpersonal contact. Similar research<sup>93</sup> conducted in 2014 established that the Internet may be the cause of and the remedy to loneliness in the UK.

Evidence from YouGov' Social Media Week report, suggests that while some platforms are mainly used for keeping in touch with family and friends, others are seen as tools for keeping up with news or sharing content:

- 26% of Facebook users say they are using the site more than they were a year ago and this is because their friends and family are using it more
- data also shows that those who are not members of any social media site are much more likely to say they never feel lonely<sup>94</sup>.



## Stories of simple kindness

**Samuel** moved to Selby six years ago. He didn't know anyone in the area particularly so he decided to go on a training course to meet new people. The learning was secondary; the most valuable experience for Samuel with being with others. *"This meant I would recognise people in the street who would say hello."* Samuel now makes the effort to be friendly to new people. His friends still visit and chat over the phone, they check in with him to make sure he is ok and this is something he really values.

**Terry** fights off feelings of loneliness by taking part in his neighbour's monthly coffee mornings. He enjoys being around friendly people and has recently been on a trip on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway. He knows that life is better when he is amongst friendly people.

**June** has learned that getting involved is a good way to feel less isolated. "I volunteered time at some local church groups, I love singing and feel part of the dog-walking community!" It helped that others were friendly and embraced her.

**Ivy** now lives on her own, but a neighbour nearby will call around each night to check she is okay. They have good chats and exchange things like milk. These simple connections mean a great deal to Ivy.

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## Prevention and intervention

*“There’s no prescription or formula for tackling loneliness effectively but prevention is at the heart of our funding.”*  
The National Lottery Community Fund

Evidence<sup>95</sup> suggests that **three key mechanisms are involved in projects that help reduce loneliness**. These are:

- Building meaningful connections between people
- Reducing the stigma around loneliness
- Tailoring approaches to individuals or groups.

**New Philanthropy Capital (NPC)** has also completed a review of evidence<sup>96</sup> to support the **Building Connections Fund partners**. They found that for any intervention to work, the following must be at the heart of each plan:

- To involve users
- To build new relationships
- To reduce stigma
- To reduce barriers to access.

The review led to the identification of ten tips to help projects reduce loneliness (see diagram right).

The **Campaign to End Loneliness (CtEL)** reports<sup>97</sup> that there are three broad characteristics of a good loneliness intervention:

- Start with individual – their interests, the type of experience they are facing: isolation or loneliness?
- Involve each person in shaping the activity
- There is more academically-robust evidence that group interventions work at present, yet individual activities should still be tried and tested further.

### 10 TIPS TO HELP YOUR PROJECT REDUCE LONELINESS



<b>Tip 1</b>	Think about how to involve users	
<b>Tip 2</b>	Consider working with volunteers	
<b>Tip 3</b>	Build on local assets and strengths	
<b>Tip 4</b>	Make sure group activities are based on shared interest	
<b>Tip 5</b>	Ensure one-to-one connections feel genuine	
<b>Tip 6</b>	Be careful with your language	
<b>Tip 7</b>	Remain age-positive	
<b>Tip 8</b>	Focus on the neighbourhood	
<b>Tip 9</b>	Try to facilitate transport	
<b>Tip 10</b>	Harness digital technology—carefully	







**The What Works Centre for Wellbeing’s systematic review in 2018 concluded that:**

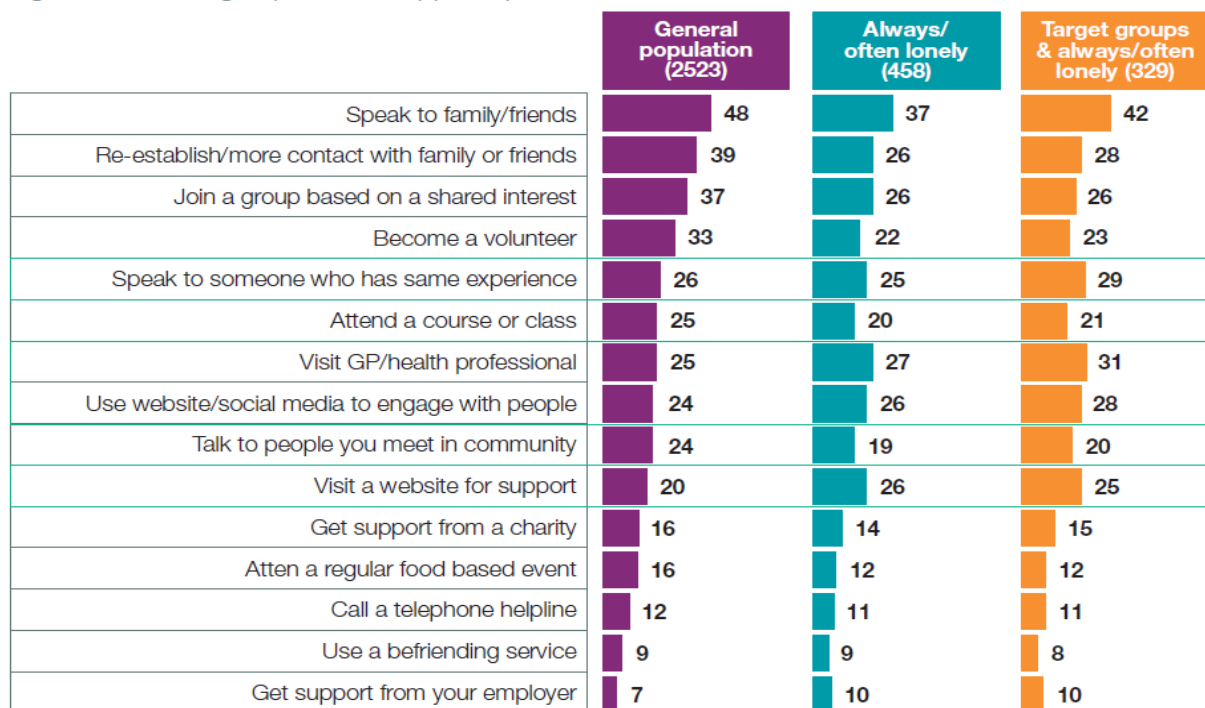
There is no one-size fits all approach to alleviating loneliness *in older population groups* and tailored approaches are more likely to reduce loneliness. It is not clear what approaches are effective in alleviating loneliness but several mechanisms were identified, such as:

- tailoring interventions to people’s needs
- developing approaches which avoid stigma or reinforce isolation
- supporting meaningful relationships.

The evidence about the effectiveness of group-based interventions versus those delivered in one-to-one settings was inconclusive<sup>98</sup>.

One example of evidence<sup>99</sup> to help develop a deeper understanding of preferred support options is given below. Emerging evidence from Public Health is also helping to build a picture of the different effects of group compared to one to one interventions.

Figure 12. Ranking of preferred support options



Some organisations, such as the Campaign to End Loneliness, have argued that a strategy incorporating all levels - individual, community and society – will be most effective<sup>100</sup>.

Age UK has also argued that communities need to be strengthened with **“the social and physical infrastructure that can help build resilience.”**<sup>101</sup>

Why is this important for us in North Yorkshire?

- The What Works Centre for Wellbeing’s systematic evidence review finds that the terms ‘loneliness’ and ‘social isolation’ are often used interchangeably.
- Alleviating Loneliness was often not the primary outcome for interventions and has been measured alongside other related concepts like social isolation, social support, social networks, and health outcomes including anxiety and depression.
- The evidence base is inconsistent, hard to compare and there is much less known about what interventions are effective for reducing loneliness at earlier life stages (young and mid-life adults) compared to later life (55 years and over).

- Few of the published studies reported details about how interventions worked to alleviate loneliness in different population groups, and what processes are needed for a successful intervention. However, some unpublished evaluations, which explored loneliness interventions for different groups including LGBT groups, men, and vulnerable adults suggest positive findings reported in reducing loneliness in these groups.
- Building on existing community assets and networks to reduce loneliness was a key feature in a number of the interventions in the unpublished studies. These interventions used an Asset-Based Community Development approach to tailor services and reconnect people to their community.

This Strategic Framework in North Yorkshire can learn from the evidence reviews and commit to contribute to the growth in the national evidence base through consistent measurement and evaluation of different interventions invested in for different populations and circumstances, and delivered across a network of multi-agencies. In turn, confidence to co-design solutions and undertake long-term joint commissioning in North Yorkshire will increase.

## Promising Approaches Framework

The Campaign to End Loneliness (CtEL) has set out a loneliness framework<sup>102</sup> which, it states, “...presents the full range of interventions needed in a local area to support older people experiencing this very individual problem.” It is centred around four types of interventions that focus not just on interventions tackling an individual’s loneliness, but also the wider community:

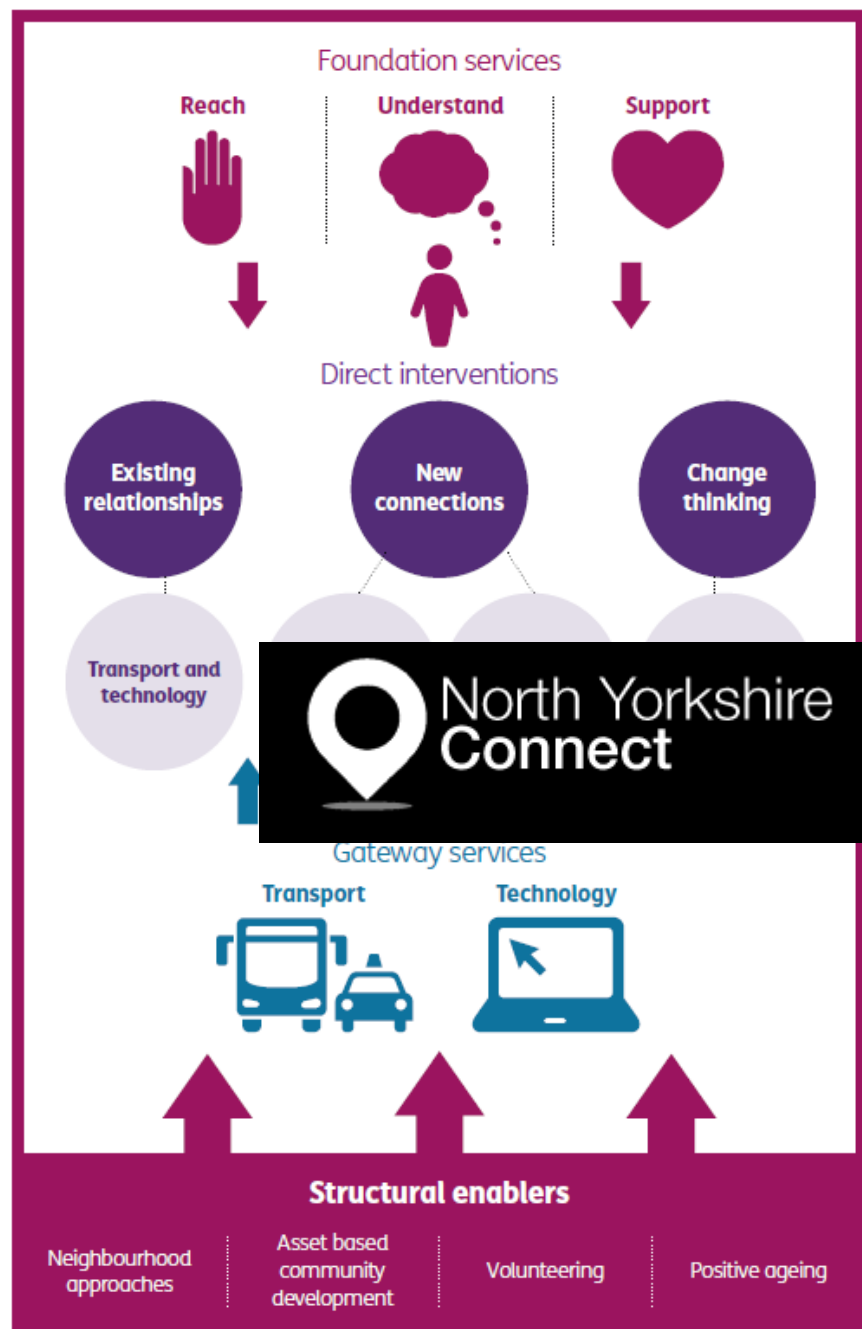
**Foundation services** – services to reach and understand the specific needs of those experiencing loneliness.

**Direct interventions** – a menu of services that directly improve the number or quality of relationships older people have.

**Gateway Services** – improving transport and technology provision to help retain connections and independence in later life.

**Structural Enablers** – create the right structures and conditions in a local environment to reduce those affected by, or at risk of, loneliness.

Although CtEL’s Promising Approaches Framework was designed with older people in mind, and presented before the government’s commitment to embedding social prescribing



in the ten year NHS Long Term Plan, it is a valuable Framework around which to develop conversations in North Yorkshire. The ambition to understand whether we have a sufficient types of intervention for those people most likely to be at risk of becoming lonely is embedded in the thinking of 'Be Social, Be Well'. What follows on the next pages are just some examples of the kinds of intervention already happening in North Yorkshire that relate to the different descriptors seen in the diagram.

A more comprehensive 'audit' developed over time with the public, private and social sectors working in unison would enable more strategic conversations about planning and commissioning services for the future. It is strongly recommended that any information collected about services and activities offered by the VCSE sector is uploaded to North Yorkshire Connect in order to build a comprehensive and easily accessible database for practical use by all residents in the county.

## North Yorkshire's approach

Just like the national picture, different approaches are being used to alleviate loneliness in older adults, but the extent to which there is enough approaches to meet different people's experiences across the life course, including younger people and mid-life, is as yet unknown.

Similarly, whether we have an appropriate mix of foundation services, direct interventions, gateway services (that are affordable and accessible) and structural enablers in place is something that needs to be discovered through partnership working over the lifetime of this Framework.

The following pages present only a sample of information about services, activities and projects that have been identified, but there are many, many more example than have not been listed.

One of the challenges we have in North Yorkshire, is knowing where to find out about all of the different things that are available for people to help themselves or others.

Key word searches for 'lonely', 'loneliness' and 'isolation' in August 2019 returned only a small number of matching activities on North Yorkshire County Council's main community directory – North Yorkshire Connect – whilst in reality we know from Community First Yorkshire's VCS survey work in March 2019 that one in two voluntary and community organisations prioritise 'loneliness and social isolation' through their work, followed by 46% with a focus on provision for older people and 40% with a rural isolation focus<sup>103</sup>. This is partly to do with the fact that VCOs do not promote their activities as 'overcoming loneliness'.

One of the most practical things that could come from the development of this Framework is a joint agreement to populate this North Yorkshire Connect with as much relevant activity as possible so that the information available for adults, children, families, young people, parents, carers and professionals working with them is increasingly comprehensive.

### Harrogate District – a local approach

In 2019 a stocktake of community health assets was undertaken by Harrogate and Ripon Centres for Voluntary Service<sup>104</sup> (HARCVS). It identified local socio-economic issues, gaps in provision, examined the assets at the district's disposal and investigated the role of online community directories. Consultation with community anchor organisations, CAB, voluntary sector, community organisations and statutory services, community venues, GP practices and others (e.g. Harrogate Borough Council, Ways to Wellbeing York, Community First Yorkshire and North Yorkshire County Council) identified that **loneliness is the number one issue affecting local people**. The results confirmed also that it was not just older people affected by loneliness and transport issues. There was a feeling that lack of services, transport, digital exclusion, families living at a distance and general less community cohesion is leading to an increase in loneliness.

**Gaps in provision.** Although specific gaps in provision to tackle loneliness were not identified, it was suggested by some GPs and other referrers that in terms of one-to-one support it is very challenging for an isolated individual to

access social activities on their own if they lack confidence; and that access to specialist health services in rural areas can be tricky. Wider barriers included a lack of public transport links in some areas and cutbacks to funding provided by some charitable services meaning that they no longer run activities. Deficits in youth workers, a youth centre and mental health prevention services were also seen as challenges for the District.

**Assets.** The audit found a good mix of physical and social assets. 81% of community anchor organisations offer social activities but just 22% offer transport. The area was said to offer ‘a vibrant, but ageing, volunteering sector’ with good referral systems between one another; including some GP practices. The study examined the awareness and use of the ‘HARCVS Where to Turn directory’ and concluded good usage by GP practices but less so by community health workers.

A number of recommendations have been made to strengthen these local assets and to build on the Where to Turn Directory. It may be useful for connections to be made between these local recommendations and the ambitions for North Yorkshire Connect at a county level and nationally any linkages that can be made to the Power to Change community asset map in order to avoid any duplication of effort and resources.

### A strategy and action plan for loneliness and isolation for the Harrogate district

Using the information from the asset mapping processes and a wider review of the literature about loneliness and social isolation, Harrogate district has been developing a local strategy and action plan. This is something that all districts may wish to consider doing in the coming years if not already under way. It is hoped that the ambitions of local districts will relate to those described in this North Yorkshire Framework and vice versa.

**H&R CVS** Harrogate & Ripon Centres for Voluntary Service

**How would they like to see loneliness and social isolation addressed over the next two years?**

**Themes**

- Collaborative working
- Promotion/conversations
- Funding
- Asset based development
- Social prescribing
- Increasing activities
- Reaching more people
- Volunteers
- Transport

*Collaborative working – not just talking, but doing!*

*We need to be able to have skilled conversations*

*Developing a genuine sense of community through more grassroots projects*

*More funding to reach more people. If funding activity, make sure it has real impact*

Suggested actions to be consulted on locally include:

1. Setting up a Loneliness Forum
2. Consistent measurement of loneliness
3. Collection of data and building on research
4. Providing information and promotional material
5. Media campaign to ‘start a conversation’ (helping tackle stigma)
6. Where to Turn Directory updates and using the health asset mapping
7. Placement of promotional material through organisations, events, forums
8. Transport-related actions
9. Technology-related actions
10. Training for loneliness conversations skills
11. Embed policies to address loneliness into organisations.



## Different solutions available in North Yorkshire

A national review of evidence in 2019<sup>105</sup> identified six approaches, typically delivered in care homes and other forms of residential accommodation or out in the community and in people's homes.



These approaches, along with other types of activity, service delivery and intervention, are being delivered in North Yorkshire but the full extent, focus, reach and impact of them is as yet uncertain. What follows over the next pages are just some examples, aligned to the Promising Approaches Framework where it has been possible to classify them as such. In an ideal situation, there would be an optimum mix of services and interventions to meet the needs of those already feeling lonely and or at greatest risk of loneliness in future.

### Foundation Services – services to reach and understand the specific needs of those experiencing loneliness

#### ‘Safe and Connected’ Whitby Post Service pilot ‘

Based on a project started in Jersey called ‘Call and Check’, the Government wanted to test a scheme in which postal workers reached out to isolated older people (over 65) to help strengthen their social connectivity. A set of questions would help the local authority or volunteer sector professional to direct those at risk of loneliness to friends, family, neighbours or local voluntary services.

One of the resultant ‘Safe and Connected’ pilots was run in Whitby between September 2018 and March 2019<sup>106</sup>. Postal workers called on (45) participants twice weekly and asked five questions about their welfare.

Participant experience of the trial was on the whole positive, and the scheme has the potential to impact on wellbeing and social connectivity but, in its current form, is unlikely to impact loneliness as this as seen to be a much broader, more complex issue and for many the trial set-up questions asked didn’t identify the problem.

The scheme hints that if participants feel able to make longer term changes, there would be a reduction in feelings of loneliness. For example befriending schemes have the potential to impact loneliness more broadly – strengthening wellbeing and social connectivity should encourage individuals to build up meaningful relationships within social circles. But there remains a challenge in how to tailor ‘connectors’ in a scalable way.

#### Community Organisers (more first line responders in North Yorkshire)

**‘We know that where Community Organisers are at work, people feel a stronger sense of belonging to their neighbourhood, they feel more valued, and they become more likely to team up and improve their area<sup>107</sup>.’**

Community organising is the work of bringing people together to take action around their common concerns and overcome social injustice. Community organisers reach out and listen, connect and motivate people to build their

collective power. When people are organised, communities get heard and power begins to shift creating real change for good.

The government's Civil Society Strategy recognises the importance of community organising to build relationships and inspire communities to deliver positive social and political change led by residents. Between 2017 and 2020, another 3, 500 people will be trained in community organising through the national network of social action hubs and partnerships with public and social sector organisations<sup>108</sup>.

**Opportunity for North Yorkshire:** There is an opportunity for more community organisers to be recruited and trained up in North Yorkshire as part of this wider national commitment; and to unify them, where appropriate, with other 'first responders' that might play a valuable part in helping reach, understand and support people feeling lonely or at greatest risk of feeling loneliness in future. These community organisers could also be Making Every Contact Count (MECC) trained if the investment case was felt appropriate.

### North Yorkshire Police

Currently there is no statutory requirement for North Yorkshire Police to tackle loneliness. However, they can and do play an important role in many ways that are important to this Framework including but not limited to:

- Their relationships with many different stakeholders, the wider VCS sector and the general public in all communities and how they can contribute to safer places. This helps people feel they can get out of their homes with confidence rather than stay indoors and feel isolated
- The connections between the role of the police and mental health community support
- Their involvement in Lived Experience groups
- Their engagement in pilot programmes e.g. North Yorkshire Police: Community Connectors aimed at reducing demand on the police created by issues around social welfare and low level crime. This pilot project recruited a number of volunteers who provided mentoring, support and a form of companionship to people in the community who were vulnerable, socially isolated or disadvantaged. Community Connectors would attempt to help these individuals to take control of their lives, make better decisions and develop social networks in their communities. Training for the Community Connectors covered many topics including the role of the befriender (and befriending development tools e.g. life coaching steps), mindfulness, the benefits of positive social networks and identifying signs of neglect<sup>109</sup>.

A representative of the Steering Group for this Framework suggested that future activity in this area needs to join up all the ambitions of the numerous strategies across mental health, dementia and others in the county.

Linked to this is the opportunity for alignment with the work of the **Local Resilience Forum** (which involves the chiefs of ambulance, police and fire services) along with community organisations and local authorities to roll out training across communities to support those who are isolated and need support. With this in mind there may be merit in developing links with the 'Make Every Contact Counts' training option in North Yorkshire.

### Making Every Contact Count (MECC)

MECC is an approach to behaviour change that utilises the millions of day-to-day interactions that organisations and people have with other people to support them in making positive changes to their physical and mental health and wellbeing.

The MECC approach enables health and care workers to engage people in conversations about improving their health by addressing risk factors such as alcohol, diet, physical activity, smoking and mental wellbeing. MECC uses brief and very brief interventions (VBIs), delivered whenever the opportunity arises in routine appointments and contacts. VBIs take from 30 seconds to a couple of minutes. The person is encouraged to think about change and offered help such as a referral or further information.

A brief intervention involves a conversation, with negotiation and encouragement, and may lead to referral for other interventions or more intensive support.



- Since 2014 there have been 906 MECC Online Learning completions by North Yorkshire County Council employees (mostly from the Health and Adult Service directorate) and two foster carers.
- Since 2015, there have been 2, 122 MECC Classroom Training participants, again mostly from NYCC's Health and Adult Services directorate.
- In addition to the above, NYCC has delivered some training to external partners including Scarborough & Ryedale Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) (20 staff) and North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue service (20 staff)
- Additionally, [MECC Link](#) is a simple but flexible Very Brief Intervention (VBI) and signposting tool that is available.

**Opportunity for North Yorkshire:** Could MECC training (a blend of classroom and online) be delivered so that we have a more consistently trained, larger 'first responder' workforce across local authorities, emergency services, voluntary and community sector, community organisers, link workers and other people who are more likely to be 'where lonely or isolated' people live or go (for food, health, hygiene essentials)? Current training content covers loneliness and isolation when discussing mental health but there is opportunity to incorporate a greater emphasis too if required<sup>110</sup>.

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# Examples of direct interventions in North Yorkshire

There were 38 projects awarded to the voluntary and community sector via the Inspire grant in North Yorkshire by the Stronger Communities Programme between April 2018 and March 2019. Here are just a sample but you can view more at [www.northyorks.gov.uk/stronger-communities](http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/stronger-communities)



## Reach More: Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Society Hambleton & Richmondshire Group

- Access and receive information about support, services and activities available locally and nationally for coping with multiple sclerosis
- A chance to state what services are needed; socially, personally, financially etc.
- Be one of ten to trial a new exercise intervention for people with different levels of MS.



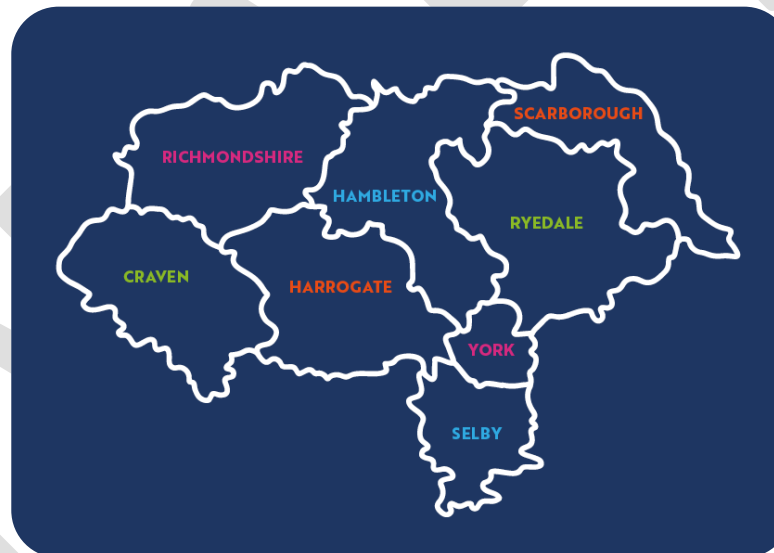
## The Good Old Days: Revival North Yorkshire CIC

- Monthly meetings to discuss and share memories around a selected theme for example old fashioned sweets
- Particularly effective for elderly people or those with memory problems and those who are find chatting to other people difficult
- Access and handle a large personal collection of vintage memorabilia and photographs
- Bring in own objects and photographs to share with the group.



## Cultural Festival (British Gurkhas and Nepalese Community Catterick)

- Enjoy access to food, drinks, community buildings and transport
- Feel respected and create a legacy of respect for the future generation
- Attend an event bringing together those near and far
- Contribute to the overall ethos of the community.



## Living with Sight Loss Courses: Sight Support Ryedale

- Two 2-day course offering practical support to people adjusting to living with sight loss
- Informal and interactive sessions enabling participants to share their personal experiences
- Emotional support offered by a counsellor to discuss concerns and fears
- Door to door transport and a healthy lunch provided.
- 



## Skipton Community Wellbeing Café: Pioneer Projects

- A weekly mental health focused community-based support session at St Andrews Church Hall
- Take part in creative wellbeing focused activities delivered by volunteers
- Help to increase community focused mental health support in a town where provision is limited.



## Starbeck Men's Shed: Claro Enterprises

- Access local purposeful activity through Starbeck Men's Shed
- Learn basic woodworking techniques
- Enjoy refreshing old skills, learn new ones and engage in banter with like-minded people
- Particularly effective for men over the age of 50.



## Barlow Stay & Play Group

- Meet weekly for a chat and enjoy social interaction
- Available to parents and carers of pre-school children
- Visit the local primary school to plan future of child.

**More direct interventions – a menu of services that directly improve the number or quality of relationships that people have**

**Living Well in North Yorkshire** – according to criteria, 50% of referrals to the [Living Well](#) Team were due to feeling lonely, or for being, socially isolated, making it the second most common reason for being referred to services<sup>111</sup>.

Living Well in North Yorkshire aims to improve the health, wellbeing and independence of adults and reduce their use of formal support services, including emergency admissions to hospital. Living Well Co-ordinators in North Yorkshire work with individuals to find ways to avoid being isolated, to take steps to improve their health and to discover opportunities to develop more interests. They provide help with practical and emotional issues. This is a free, time limited service for those people who are eligible<sup>112</sup>. Living Well can support people who are bereaved or have lost a support network; people who have had a recent loss of confidence; people who are lonely or are socially isolated and people who need help with finding information, advice and guidance. They help adults who need a little extra help to overcome some of life’s challenges and changes; people who have a caring role, who are frail or are physically disabled, people with a learning disability or autism, people with mental health problems or sensory impairments.

Co-ordinators spend time with individuals on a one-to-one basis to identify what is important to them. Some types of support that they have provided include: support to build self-confidence, support with practical advice and skills, advice on healthy living and signposting to lifestyle services such as stop smoking or exercise, help to get online either in the home or using a universal / community service, help to become a volunteer or to access the community, helping a person to be connected to, linked with or signposted to a voluntary agency for support or involvement for a specific support e.g. befriending, shopping, transport and / or advocacy.

**My Neighbourhood**

The prevention and wellbeing service has been commissioned by North Yorkshire County Council and delivered in partnership by Scarborough & Ryedale Carers Resource and Ryedale Carers Support. My Neighbourhood Workers support people every day who are lonely and isolated by referring and signposting them to other organisations and taking them to groups that may benefit the individual. Workers assess need and match individuals to a service / group that may offer best support. Service users tend to increase their emotional wellbeing about their care, social and physical lives and sometimes even increase income.

This model relies on community groups being available, and having access to North Yorkshire Connect and other sources to find out about what is on offer, and staff to support people that are lonely. My Neighbourhood is focusing on:

- Initial conversations with service users (including the completion of a simple wellbeing check) to establish desired outcomes from the service. Where appropriate, offering information, advice and signposting to ensure challenges and barriers are being addressed
- Supporting people to be more socially connected; helping them to become more engaged and access existing community and social provision. Where there is no appropriate opportunity, My Neighbourhood workers will help people to develop their own self-interest groups/activities if they would like to do this.
- Where there are clear gaps in social activities, groups and provision, the service will work with the local community (and appropriate providers) to support the development of sustainable activities / groups that meet an identified need

**Victoria is 64 and lives alone in Selby since she was bereaved two years ago. She misses her husband very deeply and suffers from depression. She often feels isolated, lacks confidence and suffers from feelings of low self-worth.**

**Through the Living Well service, Victoria has been given the time and space to talk about her bereavement. She has been introduced to a volunteer befriender who visits her fortnightly and takes her for occasional outings and craft activities. This has given her the confidence to be more social and to re-ignite her passion for music.**

**Victoria now feels more confident and has more motivation to get out and do new things. “I had no idea that there was so much available, and as for Living Well, I think everyone should know about it”.**

- Developing a strong and successful befriending service across Scarborough, Whitby and Ryedale. Befriending will include regular contact with an appropriately matched volunteer – fostering a relationship that offers friendship and low level practical support

#### Other examples across the districts

The following information was identified through internet research in 2019 and is subject to change. The authors cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions and readers are advised to visit websites to check the accuracy of details used for exemplar purposes only in this document:

- Contact the Elderly invites 75+ aged residents living alone in Selby to join a monthly social gathering. Guests are picked up by volunteer drivers and taken to a host's home for tea, cake and conversation.
- Yorkshire Rural Support Network supports a lunch club for farmers.
- Opening Minds were offered training to cover costs for lunch and learn sessions where people with multiple disabilities get together to share good practice regarding accessibility with other organisations.
- Richmondshire Community & Voluntary Action were given funding to provide sessions with a Nepalese speaking Gurkha development worker for a community of veterans and dependents with a view to reducing loneliness and isolation.
- Musical Memories were funded to enable older people in rural communities to run singing sessions across four venues in North Yorkshire. The sessions have been aimed at older people and support improved health, wellbeing and aim to reduce isolation.
- Support Older People aims to alleviate loneliness and isolation experienced by older people living on their own in Harrogate and Knaresborough through home visiting, telephone befriending, tea and talk sessions, outings, an over 60s singing group and lunch club.
- Primetime is a Hambleton District Council initiative led by an Inclusive Sport Officer which uses low intensity sports such as Boccia and New Age Curling as a way of encouraging people of all ages and abilities to come and play together.
- The Harrogate Easier Living Project offers a befriending service for the elderly and people with disabilities
- Age UK - Darlington, North Yorkshire and North Craven run a project that matches people who have self-referred or been referred into the service with a volunteer 'Good Friend' based on their needs and interests who can help with a range of issues.
- The Haven Project is aimed at local people aged between 20-30 who are experiencing feelings of loneliness and isolation. Every week, Craft Aid International help differently-abled adults escape their lonely and isolated lives by providing craft sessions. Participants gain self-confidence and make friends they wouldn't ordinarily have met. Volunteers are crucial to helping members to grow in confidence, skills and experiences. Participants tell the organisation that they see a huge difference in their behaviour as a result of having more purpose and joy in their lives. They now have somewhere to be.
- One approach in Hambleton has used 'cake' for drop-in events during Safeguarding Week, with activities and information sessions on safeguarding to inform and answer people's questions.
- Take That Step, the adult weight management programme of NYCC creates opportunities for connections being made through the project across many districts.

North Yorkshire was one of the first areas in the UK to agree an armed forces community covenant, a voluntary statement of intent between a civilian community and its local armed forces community, encouraging local communities to support the armed forces community in their areas, and vice versa.

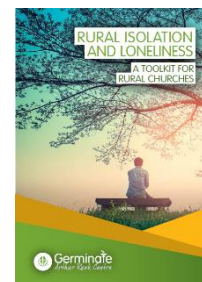


Founded in 1983, the Third Age Trust provides support and advice to U3A's across the UK. Each U3A varies in size from 30 to 3,000 members and comprises learning groups which are chosen, led and developed by member participants. In 2018 nationally there were over 420,000 members participating in 3,000 learning groups and locally in North Yorkshire there are 11,626 members participating in over 1,129 learning groups covering a diverse range of topics from art appreciation to zoology. Supporting new U3A members is critical to success, and this is evident during the many welcoming events that regularly take place at the Spa Hotel in Ripon to ensure all new members of the Ripon and District U3A are

encouraged and supported to join any one of the 45 learning activities on offer. According to Jean, one of the 600 U3A members, many people like her "... just need something to get you out of the house when your partner dies. I joined a few things at first until I found out what I liked doing and then I started to make new friends again."

### Faith organisations – spotlight on rural churches

It is estimated that there are 20,000 rural churches in the UK. Although some have a small attendance. They have a unique opportunity to respond to issues of social isolation, as they often provide key community facilities and social interaction in rural communities. In many rural areas, the only buildings available (if any) which enable local people to meet socially and / or provide community activities are pubs, village halls and church buildings. Often, church members have good links with the wider community and, along with other residents, can be a lifeline to identify and support those with limited mobility.



### Conversation Starters...

“  
**HOW EASY IS IT FOR YOU TO TRAVEL IN YOUR AREA?**  
 Imagine if you did not have your own transport how would it affect you?  
 ”

“  
**HOW MANY PEOPLE DO YOU SPEAK TO EACH DAY? WHERE DO YOU FIND THEM?**  
 ”

“  
 We can all have times when we feel lonely, maybe we have moved to a new house, job or school. Until we make new friends in our new situation it can be easy to feel lonely. What does loneliness look like in your own community?  
**THINK FOR A MOMENT, HAVE YOU BEEN LONELY? WHAT DID IT FEEL LIKE? WHAT WOULD HAVE HELPED YOU?**  
 If you feel comfortable discuss that with others in the group only sharing what you are happy to.  
 ”

### Churches and faith communities

Churches can play a key role in helping an individual feel a sense of belonging to a community. In a survey study of Faith Action members, 82% said that loneliness and / or social isolation was a key issue for their community. Churches often work to tackle loneliness by offering hubs and homes – they supply friendly meeting spaces or drop-in centres in the heart of communities. Churches also offer holistic pathways to belonging for individuals experiencing loneliness.

Faith communities can provide a space for communication and connection: a social marketplace. More often than not, the faith groups themselves are players in such markets, providing not only religious services that are often open to all, but also more social opportunities such as parent and toddler groups and lunch clubs. Also, food, youth clubs and more.

Churches can play a great role in being welcoming and affirming with the ability to befriend<sup>113</sup>. A high proportion of Black African respondents (46%) reported that they would go to their local place of worship to help alleviate feelings of loneliness – higher than all other ethnic groups<sup>114</sup>.

The Church of England’s Church Urban Fund has undertaken significant work on the issue of loneliness. Research<sup>115</sup> has found that 64% of Anglican church leaders reported loneliness and isolation to be the most significant problem in their parishes in 2015.

### Project ideas:

- Messy church and godly play: parents / carers and children can have fun and support as well have an introduction to faith
- Toddler groups can be a very effective way of engaging with parents / carers with young children and providing means of social support
- Family fun days / holiday clubs



- Film night for young people – using a popular suitable film which can be shown in church or village hall
- Detached youth worker – the church could support this post to run a regular session in the community and engage with the young people where they are e.g. on the street or in a bus shelter
- Occasional trips – providing transport to events e.g. nearby towns<sup>116</sup>.

**Vineyard Community Centre, Richmond<sup>117</sup>:** The Vineyard Community Centre is a charity in Richmond offering practical and spiritual support to combat loneliness and isolation, in an area that is characterised by areas of extreme wealth contrasted by pockets of severe deprivation. The Centre is a hub for the community – with services ranging from a food bank to a coffee bar under the ethos of ‘Help in a crisis, hope for life.’ The coffee bar is open to all – to chat and connect with others.

### **Gateway Services – improving transport and technology provision to help retain connections and independence**

Isolation can often be alleviated by practical steps: improved transport links, increased use of the internet and localisation of services and resources<sup>118</sup>.

This section of the Strategic Framework will benefit from more insights from partners within the county council and district councils who have oversight on these important physical infrastructural issues.

North Yorkshire County Council’s Technology and Change team have described a number of Gateway Services developments such as North Yorkshire Superfast broadband initiative, North Yorkshire Connect and a variety of digital inclusion projects being developed in and with communities (e.g. in Sleights). There are also examples of different digital opportunities for people to connect if they are feeling that they are lonely or needing connection e.g. ‘shout’ for young people which offers a 24-hour helpline for those in crisis (see [www.giveusashout.org/](http://www.giveusashout.org/)). The marketplace of apps that can support this kind of connection across the different age groups and circumstances may be a useful landscape to consider for this Framework.

A number of representatives from district councils have also provided information about how they and their local communities work together to enable essential services to be provided, and how the floods in the Upper Dales in 2019 for example remind us just what happens when physical connectors – such as roads and bridges – are temporarily removed, and their impact on local people and their feelings of isolation. Whilst the picture is slightly different in each district, a number of views were put forward:

- Transport services have been severely cut, particularly for more remote communities, making it very difficult for people to get to hospital appointments or work. This affects young, working age and older people alike. The lack of a regular and reliable bus service, rather than cost, was seen to be the limiting factor. The withdrawal of a community bus in one area had impacted negatively on attendances by people who used to come together to connect.
- However, new community transport schemes have emerged in other areas, sometimes serving very remote communities and / or supporting people with mobility issues, physical and mental health needs.
- One community transport CIC has been helping young people to access training, education and work; and other solutions have included a wheelchair accessible vehicle service, group travel minibus service and ‘wheels to work’ moped loan scheme. Demand for these services often exceeds availability and, in this example, the scheme has successfully recruited 48 volunteer drivers.
- Another scheme in a district organised 80 trips per year for people with disabilities through their transport scheme, as well as activity groups and outings on a specially designed canal boat. Overall, this service provides over 15, 000 journeys per year.

There is more scope for engaging with Housing Associations in the development and implementation of this Framework too as there are examples where their Community Development Officers provide support especially for young people in rented residential accommodation. This connects importantly with ABCD approaches (see later in

this document) and the role of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) on estates where Housing Associations are active. One Housing Association, in association with Age UK, has developed a project that has people volunteering to phone people up, during the day and evenings, for conversation. MECC training might also be something to consider across the wider Housing Association frontline workforce.

**Structural Enablers – create the right structures and conditions in a local environment to reduce those affected by, or at risk of, loneliness**

### **Stronger Communities Programme**

North Yorkshire County Council's Stronger Communities team was established in 2015 to support communities to help themselves and create local solutions for service provision at a time of significant financial challenge for the authority. Built around the principles of enabling social action, the aim is to encourage communities to work together, identifying local solutions and actions in order for all communities in North Yorkshire to have greater collective control of their own wellbeing.

Recognising that loneliness and social isolation have a major impact on people's physical and social wellbeing and the importance of ensuring opportunities are available for people to stay connected to each other and the communities they live and work in, the Stronger Communities programme works with local residents, community groups and other partners from the public and private sectors across North Yorkshire, identifying opportunities to co-design or produce a range of local support and services aimed at reducing inequalities, and improving the wellbeing and social connectedness of people of all ages.

Support available includes small 'Inspire' grants for community led initiatives that help to reduce loneliness and build community wellbeing; investment in the voluntary sector and specialist support to build strong and sustainable organisations; and a number of place based projects under the 'Achieve Together' programme – collaborative and with a long-term focus, the Stronger Communities Programme brings together a range of existing assets within localities with the aim of building community capacity and resilience.

### **Sleights Connected Communities**

Sleights is a rurally located village in North Yorkshire, with a population of 1,655 people. Since 2017, the Stronger Communities Team has engaged with residents and organisations in the village to understand what matters to them; and to encourage a range of positive activities – often with technology as an enabler - that drive social connectedness.

As a consequence of a local 'Sleights Steering Group' being set up, a range of developments and activities have happened. These include: local celebration events to promote what is happening in Sleights; the installation of two information screens at the surgery and the community centre with a rolling display around health and wellbeing messages and community activities; coverage of activities in Valley News and on Radio Scarborough; Memory Lane Lunches and monthly 'Good Old Days sessions' encouraging conversations attended by 25 people including some with dementia, their carers and people previously isolated; the Safe and Connected pilot with Royal Mail; the creation of a Sleights Youth Shed and links to support the development of the new football team; support for a digital hub at Briggswath Methodist church with four volunteer digital buddies; intergenerational sessions with Beyond Housing residents and Sleights primary school; digital sessions from the Digital Hub at Carers Coffee morning; a local food delivery project supported by local voluntary organisations and businesses; and links to the Esk Valley Railway's plans for a dementia-friendly train.



As a result of all the engagement work since 2017, the community is coming together and indications in 2019 are that the levels of social isolation are reducing; and the feelings of belonging are on the rise.

### ABCD in Craven (aka Nurturing Neighbourhoods)

Asset based community development (ABCD) means working with communities through an asset based lens; discovering community strengths and seeking out individual gifts that can be shared. A key principle of ABCD is that communities should, as far as possible, be encouraged to identify and utilise their assets before asking for additional support from outside agencies. This approach increases community confidence, connections and trust. An equally important principle is to include and connect in those people who are marginalised or excluded, recognising that everyone can make a contribution. ABCD is not a time limited project, but an approach that strengthens, connects and empowers communities through a sequence of deliberate and nuanced steps.

In Craven, relationships and trust have been developed over the last four years with citizens and organisations to provide a platform upon which ABCD can be built and developed in four communities locally:

- **Bentham** – a proactive group of local people had formed following a world café style event held by the Stronger Communities Development Manager in June 2018 and are now working together to engage other residents and build momentum.
- **Settle** – residents are building on a Centre for Ageing Better project that trained volunteer community researchers to find out about the formal and informal contributions made by ‘older’ (50+) people in the area.
- **Sutton** – was identified by the ‘Loneliness Heat Map’ as the place likely to have proportionally the highest number of lonely people, based on a set of data. However, exploration with Sutton residents has led to discovery of a lively community with many strengths, and a determination to celebrate their village. They have a ‘Celebrating Sutton’ Facebook page and a number of exciting community activities planned!
- **Greatwood and Horseclose** – the ward South Skipton falls within the 20% most deprived in England on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation. For years a multi-agency partnership has attempted to address the identified ‘deficits’ through various initiatives, with little progress. The SCDM chaired a health & wellbeing group and gained some resident participation. The residents have responded very positively to an appreciation of the many strengths of their estate, and gradually more people are engaging with Nurturing Neighbourhoods.

The SCDM has seen evidence that people want to get more involved in creating positive change in their community. Attendance by local people has been high at ABCD training events, and enthusiasm expressed for the approach. The last nine months have focused on creating fertile soil on which ABCD could flourish. This period has provided an opportunity for conversations exploring differing views about ABCD, and clarifying the roles of agencies. Two part-time community builders have recently been appointed to help local people take ABCD forward.

‘Looking out for our Neighbours’ is a new campaign that aims to help prevent loneliness in our communities by encouraging people to do simple things to look out for one another. The campaign has been co-created with over 100 residents in West Yorkshire and Harrogate, drawing on their neighbourly experiences. As part of the campaign launch 30,000 households across the area will receive a hand-delivered ‘neighbour pack’ that will include a range of different resources to inspire and encourage residents to champion togetherness in their area and look out for a neighbour in need. The pack will focus on the simple acts of kindness that will make a huge difference to the people around them – such as meeting for a cuppa, offering a lift or even just saying ‘hello’.



**The Say Hello** campaign which is to be held annually in November sets out to emphasise how even the small act of saying hello to someone can make a difference to their day. A series of community events in the Scarborough area will encourage people to come together, enjoy themselves, try something new and meet people. These range from music with local bands aimed at young people, a volunteering fair

showcasing the social benefits of volunteering at Scarborough library, an adult games event, a family fun day by Scarborough YMCA and North Yorkshire Youth, and café socials co-ordinated by Yorkshire in Business to encourage people to feel comfortable chatting to new people in a safe, welcoming environment. It will also give an opportunity for groups and organisations that run existing activities to open their doors to members. There will also be events in Filey and Whitby.



### Joseph Rowntree Foundation Neighbourhood Approaches to Loneliness Programme

This three year participatory action research programme looked at reducing loneliness in four differing areas (across York and Bradford), working with residents, recruiting community researchers, and in partnership with local organisations. It aimed to help people talk about loneliness in themselves and in their communities, what caused this, and what solutions they might identify and implement.

The programme team worked with existing community networks, widening the pool of volunteers through creative approaches. The programme also worked in partnership with service providers, volunteer and residents' organisations, and other stakeholders. These included front-line workers, community service managers and senior third sector and service staff. Community researchers said they had greater insight into loneliness, in others or themselves.

Participation increased their self-belief, motivating them to develop skills for work or for life. Several reported improved wellbeing. Many community researchers experienced considerable personal development. They received training, took on unfamiliar tasks and gradually assumed more responsibility. Some took up free training signposted through the programme; others moved into higher education. Practical features boosted participation. These included: free childcare, accessible venues, good quality catering and a family-friendly approach. Residents found the community research approach empowering.

Many learning lessons of good practice have been shared since this programme finished which could yet inspire approaches in North Yorkshire for the future<sup>119</sup>.

### Volunteering

*'Not being able to work or volunteer restricts social contact and can lead to chronic loneliness and social isolation'<sup>120</sup>.*

Volunteering is a proven tonic in the fight to reduce loneliness and help to tackle social isolation. In a recent study of widows featured in the Journals of Gerontology: Social Sciences, it showed that volunteering for two hours a week helped to reduce the loneliness and social isolation amongst participants. The benefits of volunteering are plentiful, allowing volunteers to give time, energy and resources to organisations and causes that they have a passion for is an important and well understood aspect of volunteering. In addition to this though, there are huge benefit to the volunteer themselves. In the same study it showed that Volunteering helped to build participants self-esteems, which in turn allowed the volunteers to build and establish friendships and connection which helped to reduce the loneliness report by participants. Volunteering creates the perfect environment, a ready built community that a volunteer is welcomed into, allowing for the volunteer to meet new people, establish connection and friendship that can sometime pervade the parameters of the volunteering opportunity itself and turn into lasting friendships.

In NVCO recent report Time Well Spent (2018) it suggests that 'volunteering can create connectedness and potentially reduce loneliness' alongside highlighting the fact that both young and old can feel the effects of loneliness and social isolations. In its findings it lists the eight benefits of a quality volunteer experience which includes Inclusive and Connected. A good volunteer role will provide the volunteer the opportunity to be accepted for who they are, welcomed and found a place in amongst that community, the host organisation will also encourage and help to forest connection. Volunteering in a quality volunteer role helps to combat loneliness and seeks to reduce social isolation by valuing the individual volunteer, helping them to find their place in the organisations to build self-esteem and find connection.

*"Supported volunteering is an important part of helping people connect with others."*

Community First Yorkshire recently created an online quiz designed to help people in North Yorkshire consider things they might do to reduce their risk of becoming lonely after they retire. It highlights the benefits of volunteering in making new social connections and keeping active. See [www.communityfirstyorkshire.org.uk/projects/tlc-north-yorkshire/](http://www.communityfirstyorkshire.org.uk/projects/tlc-north-yorkshire/)

## Social Prescribing

Tackling loneliness is about more than medicine and that is why we are launching our action plan. We need an action plan to ensure GPs and their teams are able to work with the wider community to provide the most appropriate care to lonely patients.

### Action Plan



It can be hard for people who are lonely to know where to turn for support. That's why we want every GP surgery to be able to access a "social prescriber", so that people who are lonely or are at risk of becoming lonely are supported to make the right connections.



To help make the right connections we want to see local authorities, the voluntary sector, and GPs working together to ensure that there are directories of voluntary sector projects and schemes which highlight opportunities that could benefit those who are suffering from loneliness. Where provision of such schemes is limited, efforts should be made to fill these gaps.



We need to make sure lonely people don't get lost in the cracks of our services, so we need the NHS, local authorities and others to develop better information sharing protocols to ensure that concerns are followed up, and to make connections with services that can help lonely and potentially lonely people.



We will engage our members in tackling loneliness by providing educational and professional development resources for GPs, meaning that people at risk of becoming lonely are identified earlier, and better supported before they become chronically lonely.



As this is about so much more than medicine, GPs and practice teams can't beat loneliness on their own. We need a national public health campaign to raise awareness of this issue, and encourage everyone to take action to tackle loneliness by checking on their neighbours and getting involved in their local community.

Social prescribing is described in the 'Connected Society' Strategy as something that enables organisations to refer people to a range of services that offer support for social, emotional or practical needs. This could include feelings of loneliness, as well as debt, employment or housing problems, or difficulties with their relationships. Social prescribing aims to connect people to community groups and services, often through the support of a link worker. Such schemes might employ individuals who take referrals from local agencies (e.g. GPs) and work to produce a plan to meet the person's wellbeing needs, although models differ throughout the UK. Whatever model is used, social prescribing is a potential means of helping people to overcome feelings of loneliness by connecting them to activities and support within their local area.

In North Yorkshire, there has been a county-wide service in place for a number of years, which is akin to social prescribing. The Council provides a 'Living Well' service, offering people on the cusp of requiring formal social care, social prescribing-type support to prevent, reduce or delay their need for social care. There are also examples of more local social prescribing type services, such as community navigators, community connectors and care co-ordinators. More recently, as a result of the NHS long-term plan, local NHS organisations have been provided with funding to employ social prescribers. GPs across North Yorkshire have formed into 16 Primary Care Networks with each exploring how it will commission social prescribing services. It is crucial that initiatives such as Living Well and

social prescribing services commissioned by Primary Care Networks link with community development and community building organisations including Stronger Communities, Community First Yorkshire and TwoRidings Community Foundation to ensure the voluntary, community and faith sector services that social prescribers are linking people to is well funded, vibrant and meets the needs of people directed to it. It is also important that social prescribing does not medicalise loneliness and disempower recipients. A possible way of protecting against would be to ensure all services are underpinned by an asset-based approach.

The national Loneliness Strategy recognised that more evidence is required on the impact of social prescribing but highlighted that preliminary evidence that in some areas of the UK, such as Frome, it is associated with fewer Accident and Emergency attendances. Some academics feel that social prescribing may be a good fit with the evidence<sup>121 122</sup> on interventions tackling loneliness and social isolation because:

- It helps with reaching lonely individuals through GP practices
- It lets the individual decide for themselves i.e. it enables the client to choose what they prefer (an important concept that aligns with the wider personalised care<sup>123</sup> operating model)
- It provides understanding through the role of the Link Workers
- The Link Worker (tailor made support) focuses on what happens before referral
- It supports the individual through flexible support (group / one-to-one; a variety of activities in the VCSE sector) which can tackle social isolation and loneliness.

However, it is important to consider the following:

- The role of the Link Worker (in-depth rather than light / soft)
- The sustainability of the voluntary sector to meet demand and offer choice)
- Engagement of target group in the design of the intervention<sup>124</sup>.

Other evidence emerging on this topic is found within Public Health England's [Evidence Synthesis series](#) produced to support public health professionals and other groups in local health needs assessment and commissioning of public health services.

Within North Yorkshire, there are 16 Primary Care Networks (PCNs). North Yorkshire County Council's approach to social prescribing is through delivery of an in-house Living Well service.

Across the county, PCNs are currently considering which provider will best meet their requirements; and it expected that there will be a range of models operating across North Yorkshire; including health and VCSE providers and direct PCN employment.

[Parents4Parents](#) is a registered charity run by and for parents from military and civilian families in North Yorkshire. The *Take Our Words For It!* project brought together parents to write about their experiences of what it's like looking after children or being an expectant parent, while living through difficult life experiences. The project resulted in a book, *Dirty Linen*, which has had a powerful impact on audiences across North Yorkshire.<sup>125</sup>

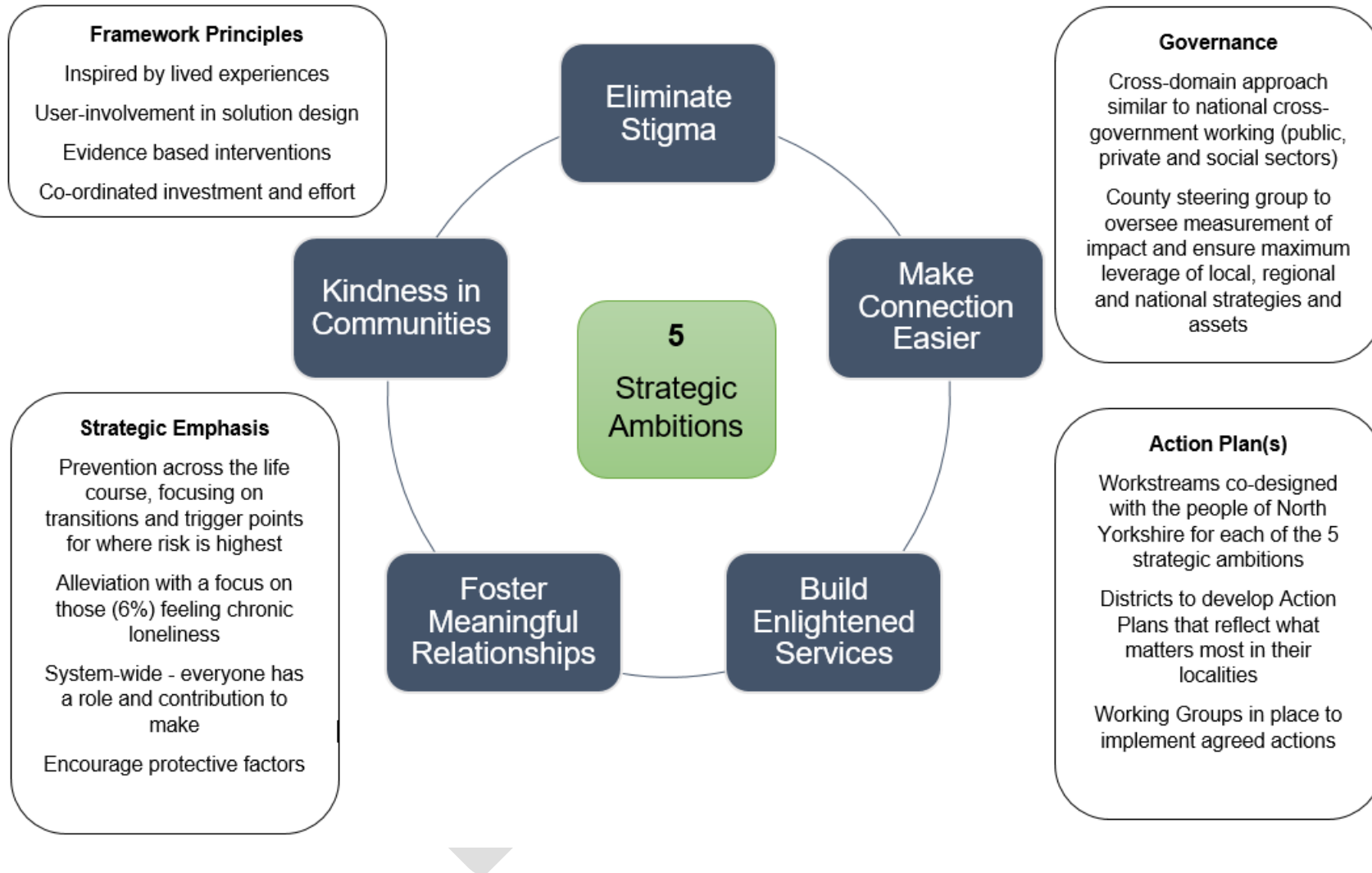
By Kirsty Heaton

#### Lost at Sea

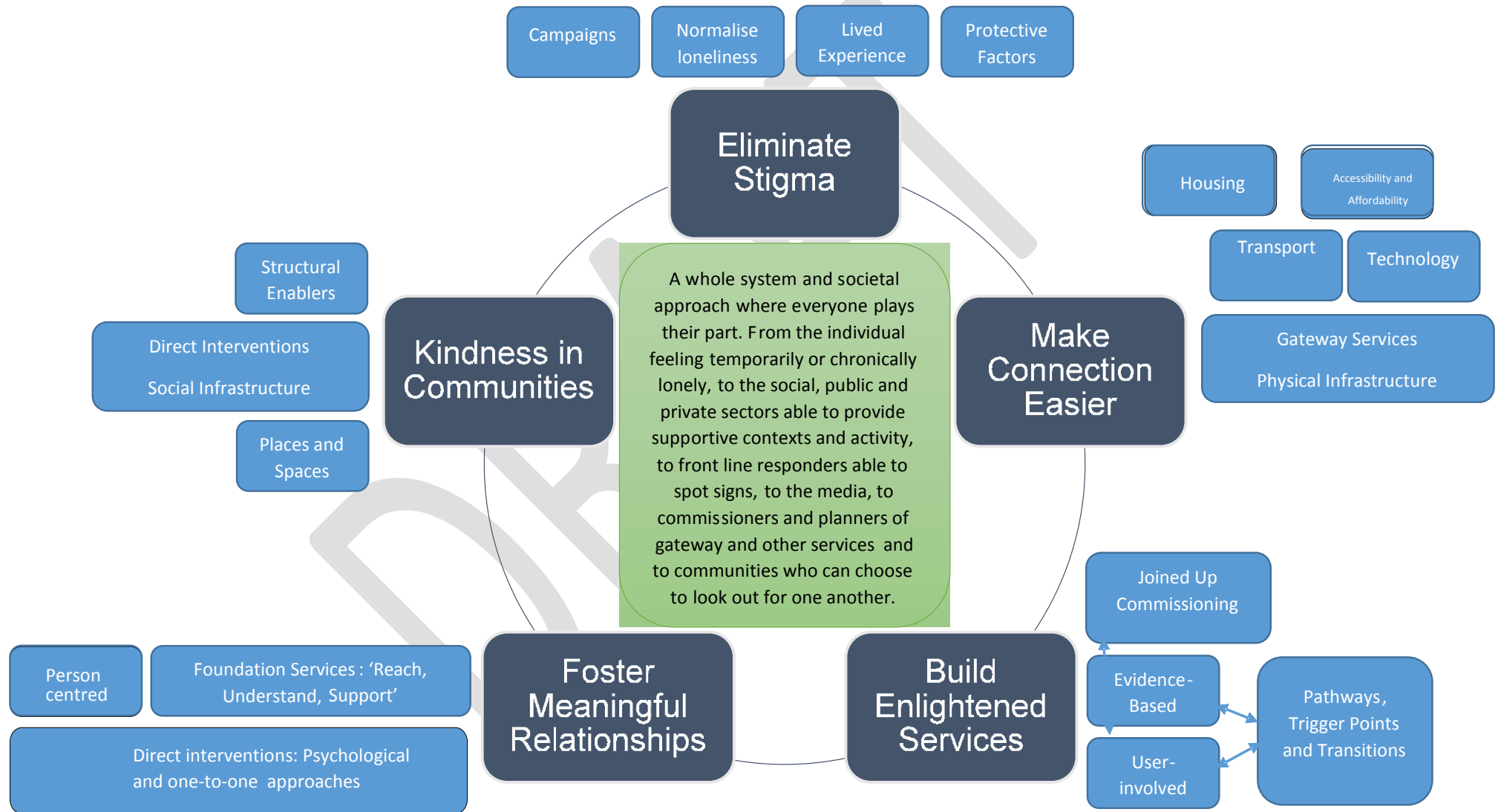
“Alone  
panic  
holding on.  
The coast is far.  
Got to tread water  
or I’ll sink.  
The dark sets in  
it’s pointless.  
Light in the distance  
got to tread water  
while the waves are tame.  
That little light  
got to tread water  
got too many counting on me  
got to swim  
to that little light  
Hope it saves me.”

Having considered the research, evidence, personal stories, population characteristics, different service support examples and Steering Group steer provided to inform this Framework, the following five strategic ambitions have emerged. It is hoped that they provide enough breadth and scope for any person, organisation or community to think about how they can play their part over the coming years. The Framework has not been designed to tell people what to do, rather to encourage the right conditions whereby everyone can decide for themselves what they feel they can contribute. As has been reported by the national cross-government strategy Loneliness Action Group in September 2019, it is astounding how much can be achieved if everyone does a little bit towards some common areas of purpose.

## The five strategic ambitions



This diagram seeks to demonstrate some of the main themes of focus that could easily align with the five proposed Ambitions. For example, each ingredient of the Promising Approaches Framework fits quite neatly across the areas suggested. These themes have helped prompt consideration about the kinds of priorities that might help translate the Strategic Ambitions into practical actions. These suggested actions follow later in the document.



DRAFT



## Eliminate stigma

### Why is this important?

***“Loneliness has a stigma attached to it. To tackle it, you must first be comfortable in talking about it.”***

***Joseph Rowntree Foundation***

People feeling lonely do not often declare this to anyone. There is a view that even the national surveys collecting data about levels of loneliness are likely to under estimate the true picture owing to people not admitting this in the research process.

- 30% of people surveyed said they would be embarrassed to say they felt lonely making it more difficult for people to seek support<sup>126</sup>.
- The Campaign to End Loneliness 2017 research found more than half of British adults (56%) say admitting to loneliness is difficult, but that over three quarters of over-65s (76%) would find it hard to admit to feeling lonely because they do not want to be a burden<sup>127</sup>.
- A YouGov poll<sup>128</sup> shows that not wanting to burden others is the main reason people avoid reaching out to seek help when feeling isolated, with 75% of people saying they didn't tell anyone despite having someone they could count on.
- Previous research shows nearly three quarters (74%) of people said when they felt lonely, they didn't tell anyone despite most having someone they could count on<sup>129</sup>.

Stigma affects young people's willingness to talk about the issue too<sup>130</sup>:



***“There is much to do to overcome loneliness. The huge stigma surrounding it is clear, which is slowing down efforts to combat it.”<sup>131</sup>***

The BBC Loneliness Experiment found that when the word loneliness was not used in the questions, 30% of respondents move from the 'never' to 'sometimes' lonely groups, showing people may not like to admit feeling lonely. Feelings of shame related to loneliness were higher among respondents who reported feeling lonely, with women feeling even more shame about feeling lonely than men. Feelings of shame surrounding loneliness went down with the age of the respondent<sup>132</sup>.

*“We’ve talked about this huge societal stigma that people won’t talk about [loneliness] because there’s so much shame about it. Which there is, but actually it’s not coming from the outside world, it’s something the individual is feeling, probably as part of their experience of loneliness<sup>133</sup>.”*

The Zubairi Report<sup>134</sup> highlights that some participants of the research noted the self-inflicted nature of the isolation. “Stigma related to a physical or mental health condition, or a change in your socio-economic condition can lead many people to make a personal choice to isolate themselves – they don’t want to be labelled or pitied so they withdraw into themselves”.

***'There is stigma as loneliness is associated with failure, some do not ask for help due to pride; you need to use 'positives' i.e. friendship networks<sup>135</sup>.'***

**Who feels stigma most?** Studies appear inconclusive<sup>136</sup> about precisely who feels stigma the most and more may need to be done in North Yorkshire to develop population-wide and / or targeted campaigns. Lonely people were found to have difficulties in self-disclosure and in establishing social ties and support<sup>137</sup>.

An association between suicide and loneliness amongst young people was found by the Samaritans who reported that tackling stigma is critical to improving help-seeking for loneliness<sup>138</sup>.

Research suggests that people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds may be more vulnerable to loneliness and experience discrimination, barriers and stigma<sup>139</sup>. Large proportions of all ethnic groups in the survey worried what people would think if they told them they were lonely.

## Connections

The Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness noted that the stigma surrounding loneliness needs to be challenged. The Government has subsequently made a number of commitments aimed at building a national conversation to raise awareness and reduce the stigma around loneliness.

- Loneliness would feature in guidance content for Relationships and Sex Education due to be introduced to schools' curriculum by 2020.
- Public Health England would incorporate loneliness into their upcoming mental health campaign. The Every Mind Matters campaign was piloted in the Midlands in October 2018 and will be launched England-wide in October 2019.
- Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) would encourage employers to support employees' wellbeing, including loneliness, through the Employers Pledge. This is part of the campaign Time to Change, led by the charities Mind and Rethink, more can be read on the [Employer Pledge website](#).
- [Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport \(DCMS\)](#) would also explore how to spread the message that social wellbeing is important. In June 2019, DCMS' 'Let's Talk Loneliness' Campaign was launched<sup>140</sup>.

This Strategic Framework acknowledges that there are a number of pre-existing campaigns that can help eliminate stigma around loneliness and wider related issues, and it will be important to make connections with the new Mental Health Strategy for North Yorkshire (2020) and district council plans to maximise impact:

- The Government's new [Let's Talk Loneliness Campaign](#) (launched June 2019)
- [Time to Change](#) (mental health campaign launched in 2007)
- [#BeMoreUs](#) (Campaign to End Loneliness)
- [#1MillionMinutes](#) (Good Morning Britain / Age UK, 2017)
- [#AskingForAFriend](#) (Bumble BFF celebrating the power of friendship amongst women)
- [#BrewMonday](#) (Samaritans)
- [#WeAreUndefeatable](#) (Sport England, mental health)

Localised campaigns elsewhere can also inspire<sup>141</sup> us and in North Yorkshire there are a variety of campaigns and events aimed at encouraging conversations to build on, including but not limited to: **'Looking out for our Neighbours'** and **Say Hello** (see earlier in this report).

**BBC Radio York Cake and a Cuppa** started as an initiative to tackle loneliness and isolation in North Yorkshire, sparked by a presenter who had just moved to the area and did not know anyone. There have been two annual events, both taking place on 1 August (Yorkshire Day) and in each year around 50 separate gatherings registered. Some are attended by just a few people, others by hundreds. The Acting Editor explained that the radio station had heard lovely stories of people finding new friends and meeting neighbours for the first time.



**The Great Get Together**, led by the Jo Cox Foundation, over 21-23 June weekend 2019, communities up and down the country came together to celebrate kindness, respect and all we have in common. More than 720, 000 took part in over 11, 000 events with a variety of observed positive effects<sup>142</sup>. The Foundation confirms that **2, 000** of these events were hosted in Yorkshire demonstrating the strength of our people to get involved. They appreciate the efforts made and hope that even more will be achieved in 2020 and years to come.

Community First Yorkshire will be developing appropriate campaigns, social toolkits, case studies, videos, posters and online content with partners to support the implementation of the Strategic Framework as part of The National Lottery Community Fund’s Building Connections Fund project to encourage people, communities, public bodies and employers to think about, talk about and act on loneliness.

As a response to this Strategy, and as part of the North Yorkshire Building Connections Fund project Community First Yorkshire will be leading campaigns to encourage people, communities, public bodies and employers to think about, talk about and act on loneliness. The three campaigns at concept stage are:

- Nowt But a Brew – to get people thinking about loneliness and easy things they can do to help themselves and others. If you do nowt but make a brew for someone you are probably taking a step in the right direction.
- Social Pension Planning – to encourage people close to retirement to think about a social pension alongside a financial pension so they consider their future social health. Comprehensive retirement planning should include finances but also ill health prevention, mental and emotional resilience, and social connectedness through volunteering and lifelong learning. (This was launched in 2019)
- Stay Connected – helping people of all ages connect with others on a daily basis, by profiling opportunities to do both in real life and online. From a Men’s Shed to Teens Time cafes use what’s there or create something new tailored for you; find a volunteering opportunity or learn new digital skills to stay in touch online.

Support materials including toolkits for taking forward social action to tackle loneliness, case studies and videos, posters, chat mats, badges and online content will also be developed through workshops and collaborative working with VCS organisations and public bodies. For example, a social pension planning work book and training package or a toolkit for setting up a Good Neighbours Scheme.

## Clare

### What was Clare's situation?

Clare is fifty, married for 25 years with two children both now at university. Her husband works away, her family lives two hundred miles away and she finished her part-time job two years ago. She was always social and enjoyed going out for meals and drinks but didn't actively seek to replace her work colleagues with other friends when her job ended. She started to stay indoors more in a large, empty nest. She was too proud to speak to anyone about how lonely she felt, and slowly withdrew. She barely ate because there was no motivation. What started off as a nice drink turned into a crutch and a dependency.

### How has Clare's situation changed?

Neighbours noticed Clare didn't come out much anymore, not even into the garden to speak over the fence. When Clare was emptying the bins and doing the recycling the neighbour asked how she was doing. Clare was involuntarily shaking and her communication was slightly slurred. Clare looked relieved to open up a little. The neighbour passed on some information to her about a local cognitive behavioural therapy wellbeing course available locally should she choose to see her GP or self-refer. The neighbour's daughter also noticed changes in Clare, and carefully let Clare's daughter know – through social media messaging – that she was worried about her Mum. Six months on, Clare's family are more aware of what she has been feeling. They are more regularly at home and being supportive. Clare has also stopped drinking excessively.

### What enabled the change?

- ✓ A conversation with a neighbour who could spot the signs of distress
- ✓ Information to help Clare decide if she wanted to talk to experts
- ✓ The peer to peer contact between the two daughters
- ✓ A family that was motivated to pull together seeing their wife and mother struggling and a husband who thanked the neighbours rather than treat them as interfering do-gooders.

## Make connection easier

### Why is this important?

*‘A lack of, or inappropriate, physical infrastructure, such as **housing, transport and nearby community facilities**, can also make it more difficult for someone to interact with others. This can be a particular issue in sparser rural areas of the UK where the number of over 85s is due to grow faster over the coming years<sup>143</sup>.’*

Research has found that loneliness increases the likelihood of death by 26%<sup>144</sup> and the chance of developing dementia by 64%<sup>145</sup>. In considering these findings, English Rural<sup>146</sup> asserts that rural communities are suffering worst of all because: digital investment is behind towns and cities; healthcare innovation and support to vulnerable individuals increasingly focuses on an enhanced online interaction; the continued close of rural shops, pubs, schools and services causes problems for the very young and very old, those at highest risk from isolation; and the problems of ‘waiting for a bus that never comes’ means that socialising becomes an issue for those that don’t drive. English Rural suggest that building well designed affordable homes can play a part in reducing rural isolation and loneliness. These would help keep family and friend support networks together and boost diversity by offering homes for mixed age groups and income earners, which itself promotes the inter-generational support that used to be the bedrock of village life.

*“Self-help styled neighbourliness is still an important feature of village life, but busy lives and increasingly fragmented communities mean that this can be relied on much less than in years gone by.” Martin Collett, CEO, English Rural*

English Rural emphasise the role of housing associations, whose mission is based on a social purpose, to play a bigger role in tackling these issues and recommend partnering with the community, to recognise local concerns; allocating homes sensitively to help reduce isolation and build diverse communities; and getting involved in campaigns run by the [Plunkett Foundation](#) that promote ideas for more social interaction.

Although English Rural have focused on the rural context, making connection easier is equally important in urban environments. While research evidence indicates that social isolation is a bigger challenge in rural areas, it also suggests a higher proportion of urban residents experience loneliness. The role of housing, transport and technology is a key factor in both contexts.

The House of Commons ‘Tackling Loneliness’ (2019) Briefing Paper offers useful insights about the important of housing, transport and technology:

#### Housing

- For older and disabled persons, benefits have been identified from moving post-retirement to more suitable housing, such as **extra care or specialist retirement housing schemes** which offer a ready-made community. Erosh, a membership organisation for professionals in the sheltered and retirement housing sector, published a guide which contains advice and case studies demonstrating the role sheltered and retirement housing organisations can play in preventing and addressing loneliness and social isolation<sup>147</sup>.
- A recognised challenge is the lack of attractive housing options for older and disabled people. The National Housing Federation (NHF) identified the following requirements for successful developments: accessibility; space and attractiveness; safety and security; age-friendliness; offer of freedom, choice and flexibility; the option to have help at hand; provision of flexible, personalised support and the ability for residents to socialise and feel included<sup>148</sup>
- There is growing interest in **cohousing projects** as a solution<sup>149</sup>.

#### Transport

- Where there is no viable commercial market for bus services, community transport (delivered by third sector organisations) can be encouraged to step in to provide door-to-door services from volunteer drivers, minibus travel for specific groups (particularly the elderly and disabled) and community bus services<sup>150</sup>.
- Access to rail can also help tackle loneliness and social isolation and in some parts of England community rail lines have been set up to fill gaps in services linked to the Government’s Community Rail Strategy.

- **Driving** can be an essential transport option for older people, particularly in rural and more remote residential areas. Traffic, poor road conditions, inadequate street lighting and poorly-positioned signage can be barriers to confident city driving, particularly for older people<sup>151</sup>. Having accessible, affordable transport for people who are less mobile or visually impaired is critical to tackling social isolation. Many day-to-day problems for disabled people stem from confusion over the rules, poor or insufficient communication, inadequate training, and / or a lack of enforcement.

### Technology

Technology features as a key ‘gateway service’ in the Promising Approaches Framework.

- The national Loneliness Strategy emphasises the need for digital inclusion and suggested that the Government would ‘maximise the power of digital tools’ to connect people.
- It would do this, by making loneliness a criterion in the £400, 000 Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund, through which the Government is supporting three pilot projects aimed at addressing the digital exclusion of older and disabled people.
- Since the Strategy was published (2018), a new ‘Tech to Connect’ Challenge has been established, ran by Nesta with £1 million of Government funding.
- The Strategy also stated that the Government would consider loneliness in the consultation on internet safety, run by the Home Office and DCMS<sup>152</sup>. Internet Safety Strategy Green Paper, which was published in May 2018, said that the Government would ensure that links between internet safety and the loneliness strategy are “appropriately reinforced”<sup>153</sup>.
- The Online Harms White Paper that followed in April 2019 did not make specific reference to loneliness, although it did contain a section on empowering users generally to understand and manage risks online.
- The Government’s broader approach to supporting digital inclusion through building digital skills is set out in the March 2017 Digital Strategy<sup>154</sup> (Section 2). This includes plans to “introduce an entitlement to full funding for basic digital courses from 2020, similar to the entitlements already in place for maths and English<sup>155</sup>.”

### Connections

North Yorkshire Connect is North Yorkshire County Council’s community directory and this is just one tool that could help people connect with activities and groups they might share interests with. More broadly, there are a number of digital inclusion and community projects being developed in North Yorkshire that aim to use technology as a tool for improving people’s lives – whether it be overcoming issues of mobility and access to get hot meals, shop or access healthcare in a cost effective way. Other directories also exist at a local level, such as the [Where to Turn](#) directory run by Harrogate CVS.

District councils have a vitally important role to play to help ensure the physical infrastructure – housing, neighbourhood design, transport and technology / digital inclusion work in people’s favour to help them connect as easily as possible to one another and services they need.

#### Angie

Angie is a suburban woman in her late 60’s. Since being bereaved, Angie stayed in her house, never leaving. Angie was introduced to a games afternoon at her local church hall, and is collected by another attendee in her car which allows her to get out of the house every day. Angie now seems more open, and is smiling

#### What enabled the change?

- ✓ A friend looking out for Angie making her aware of local activity
- ✓ A venue with appealing classes and events supported through fund raising and locally skilled volunteers and experts

#### Tom, 53



Tom is recently divorced and has been moving house, something he has been finding very stressful. On top of this, Tom rarely interacts with work colleagues, because despite working in a team, the environment in which he works is naturally very isolating, Tom sees his colleagues maybe once a week. He has many acquaintances but feels lonely as his main source of contact is his two cats at home. He will nod to those he passes in the gym or visit his family members once every so often but recognises this feeling of loneliness. Since feeling this way and realising others in his community (including one of his friends) feel the same, Tom decided to host a social group, he has been doing so for a year. This is a group that brings people together to chat and create art once a month.

## Kindness in communities

### Why is this important?

The Government believes that social value flows from thriving communities. These are communities with strong financial, physical and natural resources, and strong connections between people. This includes public funding, private investment, buildings, and other spaces for a community to use. It also includes trust and goodwill, and the organisations and partnerships that bring people together.<sup>156</sup>

As well as having a strong physical infrastructure that enables people to connect more easily via good housing design, transport and technology, people need places and spaces to go where they can share conversations and do activities together. The Civil Society Strategy announced guidance would be revised to help community groups take local assets into community ownership and said that Department for Culture Media and Sport and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government were looking at how to improve the sustainability of community hubs and spaces.

***“Shared spaces for people to meet and socialise are vital for tackling loneliness and helping communities work together to address local challenges.” Jim Cooke, Head of the Co-Op Foundation***

In addition, those places and spaces need motivated volunteers and people willing to help others. England has a great record of people helping others. Almost 25% of the population formally volunteer at least once a month, and many more do so informally. Almost two thirds of the adult population give their time to a social cause at least once a year<sup>157</sup>. Among young people, 40% take part in meaningful community action<sup>158</sup>.

The National Lottery Community Fund’s Building Connections Fund explicitly seeks to encourage a culture where ‘playing a role in the local community becomes the new normal.’ This Framework supports the important aspect of supporting grassroots opportunities to strengthen local social relationships and community ties.

Supporting community organisations will also be key to meeting increased demand from social prescribing and other signposting or introductions.

The Government is continuing to build an evidence base for what works by testing and enabling the development of initiatives that have an impact, based on work with Nesta through the Centre for Social Action, the Enabling Social Action programme and the #iwill campaign and fund.

It is also committed to unlocking the potential of underutilised community space and maximising green spaces in rural and urban areas which have been shown to be highly beneficial to health and wellbeing and provide space for people to meet<sup>159</sup>.

***“While isolation and loneliness are not the same thing, practical measures to reduce isolation can also help to tackle loneliness. Good community infrastructure is vital to this<sup>160</sup>.”***

Having a strong physical and social community infrastructure can, therefore, promote protective factors for people who might be at risk of feeling lonely more often.

### **Age Friendly Communities**

Led by the World Health Organisation (WHO), there are eight domains which cities and communities can use to ensure communities are a supportive environment to age well in. These comprise: outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication and information, and community support and health services. This initiative is supported in North Yorkshire, and nationally the Centre for Ageing Better has a range of practical tips about how communities can work to tackle loneliness and isolation through more age friendly communities<sup>161</sup>.

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## Kindness in communities

Carnegie UK Trust has been leading projects in Scotland to explore the practical implementation of kindness in both communities and organisations. They have shared practical examples of ways to create the conditions for kindness, however, they note the barriers to relationships within organisations, and argue that radical kindness requires rethinking the systems and structures that currently govern our institutions<sup>162</sup>. Their report found that while levels of kindness are relatively high, people are less likely to experience kindness from public services than they are in their community. This growing body of research suggests that kindness is a key element in tackling social isolation and loneliness.

It's a bold claim but according to U3A's Learning Not Lonely report<sup>163</sup> "the solution to loneliness could cost just £20 a year?" Their 'learning model' is based on peer-to-peer learning. Each person contributes to the process and each contribution is equal in value and relevance. Each U3A branch is self-funded with each participant contributing an average of just £20 per year, enabling the movement to remain resilient and continue to grow even during a time of reduced external funding for the sector.

The 2018 report examined the positive impact of participation in U3A activity and the stand out benefit highlighted was the opportunity to make new friendships and feel supported. The social support provided by the movement was evident with a strong link to improved confidence, feeling valued and still having something to offer in life. The collective impact of memberships also resulted in a perceived strong connection to a community in a geographical area.

The U3A research revealed the importance of the movement to those facing unanticipated circumstances in their lives, for example retirement, bereavement, divorce and moving to a new place were times when the mutual support provided by the groups was seen as extremely beneficial?

## Connections

There are many organisations that can come together to support the ambition of creating even kinder communities across the County. Harnessing all the different resources, philosophies, frameworks, strategies and plans towards this ambition to tackle loneliness and reduce social isolation has merit particularly if it leads to:

- An appropriate mix of direct interventions comprising one-to-one, group and psychological approaches that are designed around the person experiencing loneliness or at risk.
- An improved approach to evaluating the impact of interventions, what works and what perhaps does not work so well, and sharing the evidence to inform the commissioning of more enlightened services in future.
- The development of local activities that matter to people in those areas and encourage the maintenance of existing relationships and forging of new relationships.

## George

### George's situation

George has just reached 70 years of age. He is friendly, warm and very creative, he paints and makes bookmarks to sell for charity.

George was until recently a carer for his dear friend Marjorie who he had met through their common love of dancing when both their partners had been alive.

When they became widowed the two continued dancing together at their local dancing group but as Marjorie developed Dementia, they no longer attended the dancing group they had been to for years, and instead found a new group which offered dance activities that could be done sitting or standing, more accessible for Marjorie.

George was with her most days of the week, although not living together. Sadly, when Marjorie passed away, and George became suddenly bereaved, he had lost his friend and felt he had lost all the things he used to do for and with her.

### How George's situation changed:

The staff of the dance group Marjorie and George attended in her later years, kept in touch with George after he'd lost Marjorie, sending sympathy cards and phoning him from time to time. With continued encouragement from the group, George came back to attend six weeks after Marjorie's death. The group had shown George concern, made him feel welcome and wanted to come back and enjoy dancing with the group again.

Some have now started going to lunch together after the group session finishes, either to a village café or a pub which makes for a very sociable day out for George. The group has given him a place to meet and talk, sessions help him fill his week, and it was the acceptance, friendship, kindness and concern shown both in words and by actions that made it possible for George to keep going and to enjoy his life.

## Foster Meaningful Relationships

### Why is this important?

This ambition whilst relevant to anyone, is particularly aimed at those already feeling chronically lonely or who are at greatest risk of becoming chronically lonely. Work by the ONS suggests these might include people who are **disabled, have a long-term limiting conditions and carers** who should be prioritised in this Strategic Framework in North Yorkshire.

#### Wider Evidence (disability)

- From a survey of 1, 004 disabled people - 45% working age disabled people say they always or often feel lonely and 85% of young disabled adults feel lonely<sup>164</sup>.
- Sensory deprivation, especially severe hearing loss, depression and cognitive decline can all create physical barriers, meaning that isolation experienced by older people in group settings can be just as severe as for those living on their own<sup>165</sup>.
- The BBC Loneliness Experiment (2019) found that if people are made to feel that they are different in a negative way, levels of loneliness are higher. Those who filled in the version of the survey for people who are blind or partially sighted reported slightly more loneliness, particularly if they felt discrimination was high<sup>166</sup>.
- 50% of disabled people will be lonely on any given day<sup>167</sup>.

#### Wider Evidence (caring responsibility)

- Eight out of ten carers have felt lonely or isolated as a result of looking after a loved one<sup>168</sup>.
- There is clear evidence that carers are at greater risk of experiencing loneliness. Carers report less social interaction and fewer friendships. This is largely due to their relationship with the person they care for and the effects of caring on social and family life<sup>169</sup>.

Research with men highlighted how caring for a loved one often meant they couldn't meet up with friends like they used to, and they missed time spent with friends over a meal or in the pub<sup>170</sup>. One of the biggest challenges is that those who are lonely are often 'hidden away' from the wider community either because of geographical factors or by physical or psychological restrictions. Those experiencing the most extreme levels of isolation or loneliness will not be attending community events, church services and activities or be widely known to local residents. Therefore, their identification has to be undertaken proactively.

This is where 'Foundation Services' are so important, to 'reach, understand and support' people already experiencing or at greatest risk of frequent loneliness. It also means having a co-ordinated approach to training and mobilising 'first responders' (see 'Making Every Contact Count') in all our local communities.

The way in which front line staff such as in the fire and rescue service, police force, voluntary and community organisations, GP surgeries (see 'social prescribing'), community nurses, local authorities, post office / shop / supermarket staff act 'as one' to identify and signpost on to appropriate pathways of support will be vital in developing an approach that means over time fewer people will be 'hidden' or referred to inappropriate activity.

**Rural Church Network:** A toolkit for rural churches<sup>171</sup> points to the opportunities for them to use their assets and their web of networks to help identify people that may be at risk or feeling lonely. Church members living locally will know a considerable amount about their neighbours and the infrastructure in terms of employment, schools, shops, pub and social activities. The toolkit suggests using this local knowledge and includes these tips:

- \* Consult church members; have they noticed anyone who appears to be lonely or isolated? Who do you see in church, but never during the week? Do you know why?
- Talk to the people who run the shop or pub, or who organise the community events. Who do they know who might be isolated?
- Are there parents of young children or carers for older people at home who may not see another adult during the day?
- Set up some community events; coffee mornings, afternoon teas, barbeques or other informal events which bring people together.
- Is there a Neighbourhood Watch scheme in the community? This provides a network of people on lookout who also meet on a regular basis. Who do they know who might be lonely or isolated?

Individuals that need most support may not recognise this within themselves either, and could be facing a number of complex physical and mental challenges. It will be important therefore to ensure that this Framework, and any actions that emerge as a result, dovetail as far as possible with other strategies in North Yorkshire to maximise their impact including but not limited to:

- Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2015 - 2020<sup>172</sup>
- North Yorkshire's Mental Health Strategy<sup>173</sup> which will be refreshed for March 2020 and based on the principles of the mental Health Concordat
- Learning Disabilities Strategy (2017-2022)<sup>174</sup>
- North Yorkshire's Carers Strategy (2017-2022)<sup>175</sup>
- North Yorkshire Autism Strategy (2015-2020)<sup>176</sup>
- 'Live Well' related strategies (alcohol, drug, suicide prevention)<sup>177</sup>
- 'Age Well' related strategies (dementia, winter health)<sup>178</sup>.

## Personality and characteristics

Psychiatric research shows that lonely people often share certain characteristics: 'Lonely people tend to have more of a history of loss, trauma, inadequate support systems and negative, critical and harsh parenting.'

Loneliness brings feelings of anger, sadness, depression, worthlessness, resentment, emptiness, vulnerability and pessimism. People who are lonely feel that they are disliked, are often self-involved and lack empathy with others. These characteristics keep others at a distance. People may close themselves off from others because they fear rejection or heartache and then feel lonely<sup>179</sup>.

Within the BBC's 2018 Loneliness Experiment, individuals were asked a series of questions on social empathy - how sorry they would feel for someone who had not been invited to a party or had just split up from their partner. It was found that people who feel lonely seemed to have a greater understanding of what it might be like to experience these things. They also had lower expectations of friendship, so perhaps they feel they have been let down in the past.



## Jim

### What was Jim's situation?

Jim is in his early 80s. He was feeling very low after losing his wife. Despite living in a village with lots of amenities and social activities, Jim was reluctant to leave the house other than to do his weekly shopping and was starting to become socially isolated.

### How has Jim's situation changed?

Jim's son, Chris, got in touch with a local befriending organisation. They contacted Jim and Chris, firstly asking about Jim's interests and life in general. After understanding what it is that helps Jim to enjoy his life, a lady working at the organisation gently encouraged Jim to attend a befriending group that met in a local tea-room. To make it easier for Jim to connect, the lady offered to pick him up and take him in. She also stayed with him for the few sessions so that he didn't feel awkward. Eventually Jim grew in confidence to attend unaided. He now thoroughly enjoys meeting with the group every week saying his life has changed for the better since making new friends. Jim is feeling less lonely and looking forward to life again.

### What enabled the change?

- ✓ Having access to someone with transport and willing to drive him to the venue where the group activity was taking place
- ✓ A caring chaperone to help build confidence during the early stages of socialising and reconnection.

## Paul

Paul is in his early 60s, and was interested in taking up a new hobby or revisiting a past hobby but had no-one to go with. Paul came across a leaflet for a local Programme designed for people over the age of 50 that matches the individual up with a University student to write letters to one another. Paul has been taking part in this cross-generational letter writing project and now writes to a student in her early twenties. This has provided a two-fold benefit to reduce loneliness for both Paul and his matched writing partner.

## Build enlightened services

### Why is this important?

By learning from evidence about what prevention and interventions work best to reduce loneliness and social isolation (see *earlier chapter*), and joining up the thinking of those in a position to commission services, there is a great likelihood of achieving impact at scale across the County. Care should be taken to recognise the diverse needs of communities in North Yorkshire, for example a measure to tackle loneliness in an urban area may need adapting if it is to be successful in rural communities.

**The cost of loneliness:** Evidence continues to grow about the costs of loneliness. The most quoted studies include one that suggests **the cost to UK employers of loneliness is £2.5 billion a year**<sup>180</sup>

Further research<sup>181</sup> has uncovered that the financial price on what has been branded an ‘epidemic of loneliness’ estimating that it **costs £6, 000 per person in health costs and pressure on local services**. One study estimates an individual may cost commissioners £12, 000 or £60 million for a cohort of 5, 000 older lonely people<sup>182</sup>.

**Social Return on Investment (SROI):** In terms of return on investment in preventing / tackling loneliness and social isolation, The London School of Economics study of older people says **for every £1 spent in preventing loneliness there are £3 of savings**. This is an increase on the Jo Cox Commission research in 2015 that suggested, for every £1 invested in tackling loneliness, society saves £1.26<sup>183</sup>.

The Reconnections Social Impact Bond (SIB) aims to directly reduce loneliness and isolation for 3, 000 people over the age of 50 in Worcester. This is the first SIB in England aimed at reducing loneliness and social isolation. The improved health and wellbeing of beneficiaries is expected to deliver more than £3 million worth of savings to the public sector over 15 years<sup>184</sup>.

### Connections

There are a multitude of connections to be made if North Yorkshire partners agree to the ambition set out in the Strategic Framework and work together to plan, design, commission and deliver enlightened services that prevent and alleviate loneliness and social isolation in future. A few recommended actions are mentioned here:

- Maximising the Promising Approaches Framework so that we get a better understanding if we have an appropriate mix of services
- Using the wide range of resources provided by the Campaign to End Loneliness and the LGA<sup>185</sup> that can help commissioners and local authorities think about how best to use their resources to tackle these challenges
- Making use of Lived Experience Boards where they exist and better still committing to ‘user’ involvement in the co-design of any interventions that emerge from this Framework, whether young, old or at different triggers points or life changing moments
- Committing to evidence based commissioning and particularly taking note of the What Works Centres (e.g. Wellbeing; and Early Intervention Foundation) that produce useful topic summaries, and who are committed to filling evidence gaps and doing further research
- Making the very most of the learning that emerges from the national Loneliness Action Group and Loneliness Stakeholder Forum to leverage it to the benefit of the County on an ongoing basis
- Using learning from other UK pilots and projects (e.g. Reconnections Worcestershire) to help establish whether innovative approaches and model (e.g. social impact bond investment) is transferable or not
- Keeping a watchful eye on the emerging evidence about the role of social prescribing to help tackle these challenges
- Making particular effort to ensure the voice of under-represented demographics are heard in North Yorkshire and to ensure they can influence the services and activities put in place for people like them
- Consider whether interventions need differentiating by locality, whether rural, urban, coastal and at community and neighbourhood levels

- Joining up County and District strategies, policies and plans to effectively ‘loneliness proof’ each one and together develop interventions at a scale that will create maximum impact over time.

### Lauren

#### What was Lauren’s situation?

Lauren is in her mid-fifties. She is a former teacher, and after becoming suddenly bereaved, found herself needing contact with her wider community. She noticed that there were social groups to join during the week but little to do on Saturdays and Bank Holidays which were a particularly vulnerable time for her.

#### How has Lauren’s situation changed?

Lauren is a ‘doer’ and because of the noted gap in activities and groups, appealed to her local community by submitting a piece to a Magazine asking individuals to join her for a coffee at the pub in the Main Street. The Editor of this local Magazine felt this was important and published Lauren’s article. Lauren has since worked on setting up a regular coffee group. Successfully, Lauren now sees on average 18–24 people weekly, some are widowed, but there are also several couples joining in.

#### What enabled the change?

- ✓ Lauren was self-motivated; the idea has been driven by her
- ✓ She had local insight to confidently develop an idea
- ✓ A receptive and perceptive editor, also well connected in the community through her other civic participation roles, willing to lend a hand
- ✓ The means to get a message out to others wanting connection.

### Lucy

#### What was Lucy’s situation?

Lucy is a young renter in Craven. She is in her mid-20s and has autism. She successfully completed her college course and was at university with life going well in some regard, however Lucy was facing each evening mealtime alone. Over time she started to feel increasingly lonely.

#### How Lucy’s situation changed?

Lucy was aware of a service that aims to tackle social isolation and loneliness and approached them directly for support. Together, they came up with the idea of ‘Come Dine with Us.’

They hired a community room, devised a menu, cooked, designed posters, put an ad out on Facebook and asked people to book, charging £5 for a three-course evening meal. On the first night, 18 people came along. Since that time 30 individuals have engaged.

Lucy, now feels like she matters and that someone cares enough to listen and act. Her confidence has increased as has her sense of self and wellbeing because as a result of this small act, Lucy began to interact more with others at University and eventually began inviting friends home for tea. Lucy no longer feels the need to come to the group as her life, and identity, has improved so much.

#### What enabled the change?

- ✓ Someone at a caring organisation who would listen and show belief
- ✓ The skill to co-design a ‘service’ that would meet a local need
- ✓ A willingness to take risk, to innovate and to contribute together

✓ The group-culture that emerged, a belief that people can do things for themselves together without relying solely on statutory services.

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## The Framework

This section provides details on possible actions for each of the five ambitions. The Framework is intended as ‘checklist’ against which to appraise current activities, planned activities and help to identify gaps and duplication. Its value is to use as part of developing cross team and multi-agency working, to join up services, build closer team working and collaborate on planning, commissioning and funding. The listings are not intended to be comprehensive and colleagues will want to add to the Framework their own priorities and particular focus.

### Eliminate stigma – *to enable anyone feeling lonely to talk about their feelings without fear of judgement or discrimination*

**This ambition recognises that for as long as there is stigma, individuals will be unable to talk openly to others about their feelings of loneliness. There is much to learn from ways in which the stigma surrounding mental health has been addressed.**

Suggested Priority Actions	Prevent	Alleviate
1. Understand who experiences stigma the most and involve them in solution design (e.g. through research, ‘voice’); making best use of existing (or new) Lived Experienced Boards / groups to ensure that ‘what matters most’ to people at risk of or already experiencing loneliness are in a position to better help themselves over time.		
2. Seek to learn from the way in which stigma is being reduced around mental health and align to North Yorkshire’s new Mental Health Strategic Framework due for publication in March 2020; support the growth of the Time to Change (North Yorkshire) Champions network.		
3. Work with employers to encourage positive attitudes <sup>5</sup> towards, and understanding of mental health and the particular challenges faced by people feeling lonely to encourage opportunities for placements <sup>6</sup> , jobs and careers. Encourage more employers in North Yorkshire to recognise loneliness and support their employees’ social wellbeing <sup>7</sup> .		
4. Identify and align with campaigns that drive awareness of the importance of social wellbeing / strong social connections <sup>8</sup> and how people can be encouraged to take action through easy-to-understand messages and information <sup>9</sup> .		
5. Raise awareness amongst the wider population of useful self-support resources (e.g. BBC Loneliness Experiment <a href="#">nine Ways to Feel Less Lonely</a> ) that can help people deal with the way they feel about themselves and making connections and relationships with others.		
6. Build County-wide and local conversations to raise awareness and eliminate the stigma surrounding loneliness e.g. identify, align with then grow and develop the penetration of initiatives that engage mass-participation conversations such as ‘The Great Get together’ and ‘Cake and a Cuppa day’ to help tackle social isolation. Grow these events so that there is a presence in all <a href="#">731 parishes</a> of the County ideally led by the communities themselves.		

<sup>5</sup> Encourage employers to sign the Time to Change campaign pledge in North Yorkshire and use the advice and guidance provided to support this ambition

<sup>6</sup> DfE will work with the National Apprenticeship Services to encourage employers to offer work placements and apprenticeships to young people with special educational needs or disabilities

<sup>7</sup> DBEIS has developed an Employer’s Pledge to support this ambition and will be working with the CtEL to expand the network of signatories.

<sup>8</sup> A new Public health England mental health campaign will highlight this ambition to encourage people to look after one’s mental health. The campaign will highlight loneliness as a potential risk factor for poor mental health. Sport England will also be launching a major national mental health campaign with similar goals.

<sup>9</sup> For example, align with existing campaigns to tackle the stigma of loneliness (e.g. letstalkloneliness and Time to Change); and co-ordinate any new campaigns being conceived more locally that should all have the emphasis of normalising (rather than pathologising) loneliness. Align campaigns to the concept of salutogenesis (a medical approach focusing on factors that support human health and wellbeing, rather than on factors that cause disease (pathogenesis). More specifically, the “salutogenic model” is concerned with the relationship between health, stress, and coping). Promote a positive reframing of loneliness e.g. to help people embrace the positive aspects of solitude; and / or to be resilient when faced with feelings of loneliness.

7. Learn how to harness social media to positive effect that can reach across generations and provide supportive online communities that are safe and protective for those who prefer this medium of connection in their lives <sup>10</sup> .	8.	9.
8. Support national initiatives within schools to eliminate stigma e.g. loneliness will feature in guidance content to ensure teaching about the impact of loneliness, particularly on mental health; and plans for teaching resilience in schools.	9.	10.

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<sup>10</sup> The Home Office and DCMS are producing a white paper on internet safety that can support this ambition.



## Kindness in communities - to help tackle social isolation and help those who feel temporarily lonely

This ambition aims to build on the assets of the people, places and spaces found in North Yorkshire's communities and to strengthen the social infrastructure according to local needs and choices.

Suggested Priority Actions	Prevent	Alleviate
1. Promote social connections that help maintain existing relationships and encourage protective factors in communities (e.g. group activities, get together, activities that bring people together with a common interest and enthusiasm).		
2. Support the voluntary and community sector to provide grassroots activities that will help particularly drive new relationships between people in communities of interest and place (e.g. inter-generational activities) so that local social relationships and community ties are strengthened over time.		
3. Increase the range of participation in local and/or ICT activities through the imaginative use of places and spaces in communities e.g. helping schools open up as accessible spaces <sup>11</sup> ; helping businesses to explore how they can provide community space out of business hours <sup>12</sup> ; exploring the role of libraries <sup>13</sup> , places of interest such as leisure centres and business such as estate agents involved in periods of change affecting people's lives		
4. Leverage national funding that is expected to support the creation of more sustainable community hubs and spaces <sup>14</sup> (e.g. Space to Connect) to the benefit of communities in North Yorkshire.		
5. Co-design and collaborate to deliver modern volunteering opportunities across the public, private and social sectors with a broader appeal across North Yorkshire		
6. Encourage asset based community development and neighbourhood approaches that help develop local social infrastructure and resilience <sup>15</sup> .		
7. Leverage national funding aimed at tackling loneliness within particular populations or via specific types of intervention (e.g. sport and physical activity <sup>16</sup> , learning, arts and culture <sup>17</sup> ) to the benefit of North Yorkshire communities.		

<sup>11</sup> The Department for Education is publishing guidance to support this ambition.

<sup>12</sup> This is an initiative between DBEIS, CTEL, British Red Cross, the Association of Convenience Stores and others.

<sup>13</sup> DCMS is working with the Arts Council to support this ambition, including how they can bring focus on their 'space' and the issues of loneliness and wellbeing during 'Libraries Week'.

<sup>14</sup> Further to the announcement in the Civil Society Strategy the government has committed to creating more sustainable community hubs and spaces. DCMS will be devoting up to £1.8million to helping local communities build social connections through unlocking the potential of underutilised community spaces. In June 2019 'Space to Connect' was launched as a competitive application process and there may be more of these kind of opportunities in future <https://www.coopfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Space-to-Connect-Enhance-guidance-final.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Hope, Control, Choice: North Yorkshire's Mental Health Strategy 2015-2020. Resilience is defined as 'individuals, families and communities supported to help themselves.'

<sup>16</sup> For example, Sport England will be making new grant award from its Active Ageing Fund which specifically tackle loneliness through sport and physical activity for people over 55.

<sup>17</sup> The Arts Council, supported by the organisations it funds will work with public health providers to provide arts and cultural programmes as part of the planned expansion of social prescribing.

## Foster meaningful relationships – *to support those who are at greatest risk of becoming, or already feel, chronically lonely.*

This ambition recognises that people less able to trust others, less able yet to connect with groups of people or social activity, greater effort is required to tackle their personal situation and inequality with care and support. These people may have suffered a life event or identity shock, face daily challenges with mental health, disability or have a long-term limiting condition or have significant caring commitments. They are the least likely to reach out, ask for help or sometimes even recognise they need it. Their pathway to reconnect with others will be different to those who feel temporarily lonely and therefore require a more focused approach that demands

Suggested Priority Actions	Prevent	Alleviate
<p>1. Recruit, train and mobilise ‘front line responders’ to help reach those at greatest risk, understand their situation, needs, motivations and preferences and then make relevant introductions to appropriate services, activities or pathways. For example, train first line responders in different contexts (extend MECC<sup>18</sup> training and raise awareness of MECC Link with anyone that visits peoples’ homes such as Royal Mail workers<sup>19</sup>, bin collectors) and / or people who are working in places that the most lonely people are likely to go (e.g. shops, supermarkets); and training for work coaches in job centres. Mobilise the MECC community that have been trained in recent years; along with Community Organisers and Community Connectors and staff involved in the DWP ‘Tell us Once’ initiative’ in North Yorkshire to unify approaches.</p>		
<p>2. Unite the power of ‘data’ (e.g. public health) and human networks (e.g. fire and rescue service, police, home visitors) to identify those households / neighbourhoods where people feeling chronically lonely (and are most vulnerable) are most likely to be found<sup>20</sup>.</p>		
<p>3. Establish an effective link between the primary care networks of GP practices, the voluntary and community sector and communities via social prescribing and local area co-ordination (or equivalent) to support individuals through person-centred introductions to relevant support, services and activities i.e. better, joined up introductions (referrals) and working alongside people relative to their needs.</p>		
<p>4. Ensure a sufficiency of psychological services and targeted support services across all contexts with a focus on individuals that are known to experience loneliness most often; and align with any plans for investment via the new Mental Health Strategic Framework (2020).</p>		
<p>5. Ensure a sufficiency of long-term one to one direct intervention services across North Yorkshire enabling those who are not ready to connect with groups to take their first confident steps back towards building trusting relationships with others and feeling a sense of belonging over time.</p>		
<p>6. Consider the population analyses completed by Public Health North Yorkshire in support of this Framework and other evidence about the topic to agree proactive support for those people identified as being at greatest risk of loneliness and suffering from poor wellbeing, specifically carers, individuals with disabilities and long term health / limiting conditions.</p>		

<sup>18</sup> Making Every Contact Counts

<sup>19</sup> Learn lessons from the pilot in Whitby (2019) which demonstrated success in reducing social isolation (but not loneliness).

<sup>20</sup> This corresponds with the ‘reach’ aspect of the Promising Approaches Framework’s Foundation Services. Learn from pilots in Cheshire and Essex.

## Make connection easier –*physical and emotional barriers removed so more people gain as much social contact as they would like*

This ambition recognises that there are often practical barriers that mean people cannot get out, around, to places or to see people or join in activities as often as they need or would like. It seeks to encourage innovative thinking regards housing (design), transport (public and community) and technology (gateway services) to help the residents of North Yorkshire connect with places and people confidently, safely and affordably.

Suggested Priority Actions	Prevent	Alleviate
1. Technology: Agree an ongoing programme to populate the County’s main community directory – North Yorkshire Connect – with activities and services, such as transport and other access support, that will make it easier for people feeling lonely or isolated to connect with something that is local, affordable and attractive to them <sup>21</sup> .		
2. Technology: Leverage national funding expected to encourage digital inclusion and innovation as a means to tackle loneliness <sup>22</sup> .		
3. Housing: Translate and support national initiatives by MHCLG who are funding research into innovative community-led housing and co-housing projects to understand how these can help to tackle loneliness and support local connections <sup>23</sup> . Specifically, support or initiative industry events, conference and seminars to promote the role of design in wellbeing, including tackling loneliness <sup>24</sup> . Developments should include community place and spaces for connecting people.		
4. Transport: Ensure that transport is fully represented in the County’s governance structures for tackling loneliness and social isolation. Translate, support and leverage all national government commitments relating to transport <sup>25</sup> including, but not limited to: DfT’s partnership building activity between transport providers and community groups to develop how transport can be used as a means to help tackle loneliness, and use of industry-wide forums to promote ideas and initiatives; putting the need for inclusive transport <sup>26</sup> at the heart of the ‘Future of Mobility Grand Challenge; making sure that our future transport system works to overcome problems like loneliness and social exclusion; integrating local and more distance transport and types of transport into on public and community transport planning approach; making sure DfT’s forthcoming Community Rail Strategy will help support community groups wishing to make use of unused or underused railway property.		
5. Consider how to help fund transport to events organised for people by the VCSE sector is funded as part of grant giving schemes and commissioning in the County.		
6. Work with Defra, <b>Action with Communities in Rural England</b> (ACRE made up of Rural Community Councils which includes Community First Yorkshire) and the Rural Loneliness Stakeholder Forum, along with networks such as rural churches, to understand better the particular barriers that need to be overcome to address rural isolation.		
7. Lifestage changes. For people moving home, into a new area for the first time, work with local businesses and intermediaries (such as estate agents) to make it easier for these people to connect to their neighbourhoods and communities more quickly through the provision of simple, practical information about the area, what’s on and how to become involved.		

<sup>21</sup> Simultaneously seek to learn lessons from the four national data pilots between DCMS, the LGA and the voluntary sector which aim to find ways to make sharing information more efficient, accurate and sustainable to help people find relevant local activities, services and support

<sup>22</sup> For example, DCMS features loneliness in criteria for bidding in its new £400, 000 Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund.

<sup>23</sup> MHCLG are also working with LGA and the National Association of Local Councils to explore an effective means of sharing learning and good practice.

<sup>24</sup> The County’s Project manager for Loneliness can share best practice, case studies and evidence via attendance at the national Loneliness Action Group.

<sup>25</sup> There are six commitments in ‘Connected Society’

<sup>26</sup> As an expansion of the new pilot announced in the Inclusive Transport Strategy, by 2020 the DfT will explore with seven mobility centres in England how they can help to identify signs of loneliness or lack of social connections

## Build enlightened services –user-informed services and solutions that will help more people improve their social wellbeing

This ambition recognises that there is a huge dividend in involving ‘users’ in the design of services and solutions to tackling loneliness and social isolation; and making those solutions practical and based on lived experiences. This is more than consultation of ‘increasing the voice of under-represented demographics’; it is about developing services and self-support that means everyone can play a part; and developing expertise to design and commission more early intervention and preventative action with confidence. It is also about joining up resources, investment and initiatives, nationally, County-wide, district and at neighbourhood level when it is sensible to do so. It is about more than removing barriers and blockers – it’s about achieving extraordinary results by working together, using assets we already have, and enhancing those assets where it is needed. Finally, it is about using evidence to focus the right kind of intervention and pathway based on an individual’s personal circumstances.

Suggested Priority Actions	Prevent	Alleviate
1. Embed consideration of loneliness and social relationships throughout the policy-making process in North Yorkshire (i.e. embedding the ambitions of this Strategic Framework in all relevant strategies, plans and commissions in North Yorkshire and its seven Districts).		
2. Sustain a ‘Loneliness Steering Group’ for North Yorkshire mirroring the national cross-government approach and develop appropriate working groups for the five strategic ambitions to translate them into action plans, commissioning and delivery plans to align new and sustaining existing services across agencies that can be monitored using cross agency measures, between 2020 and 2026.		
3. Host an evidence based commissioning event in North Yorkshire that will lead to more confident and routine approaches to co-design, user involvement and alignment with selected outcomes contained in the <a href="#">JSNA</a> .		
4. Consider investing in an ongoing programme of ‘what matters to you’ community / neighbourhood research to inform ways in which assets in communities can be optimised in future (this also links directly to the ‘kindness in communities’ ambition).		
5. Consider investing in a co-ordinated programme of (loneliness and social isolation project) evaluation <sup>186</sup> and evidence collection that can continually inform the way in which prevention, early intervention and chronic loneliness alleviation services are designed in future; recognising any differences required across rural, coastal and urban localities in the County.		
6. Leverage the learning from the national ‘Loneliness Action Group’, associated pilots around the country and research that focus on particular interventions to tackle loneliness amongst specific populations <sup>27</sup> , transitions <sup>28</sup> and / or risk factors and triggers; applying that learning to service design and delivery in North Yorkshire where appropriate.		
7. Identify any gaps in provision (as defined in the Promising Approaches Framework) that are linked to transitions, triggers / risk factors and seek ways of using collective resources to fill them over time.		

<sup>27</sup> For example the government is using £100, 000 for research to improve understanding of how to address youth loneliness through uniformed youth.

<sup>28</sup> For example DfE plans to review the mental health support needed for students in the transition into university, particularly in the critical first year.

<p>8. Support the VCSE sector to use consistent Government agreed measures for loneliness and social isolation in order that the overall evidence base grows in North Yorkshire as to the efficacy and effectiveness of different interventions (i.e. draw on the What Works Centre for Wellbeing official guidance; and take advantage of any existing national commitments such as DCMS masterclasses for evaluating libraries, and national evaluator appointed to support grantees).</p>		
<p>9. Support the health system to proactively commission services with a focus on both prevention and alleviation in primary, tertiary and secondary level services.</p>		

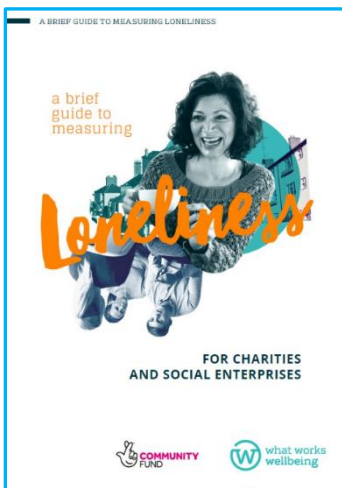
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## Research, evidence and evaluation

The North Yorkshire loneliness strategy Steering Group will consider and decide how it can best measure the success of the implementation of this Strategic Framework over time.

This is a central aim of the national Strategy and good practice is to encourage a consistent approach to measuring the difference that interventions make in respect of reducing loneliness and / or social isolation. The guide to measuring loneliness issued by the What Works Centre for Wellbeing has huge merit and it helpfully contains information about standardised questions that can be used by all organisations seeking to make a difference.

<https://whatworkswellbeing.org/loneliness/#guidance>



The guide includes a link to a questionnaire template that can be used to measure loneliness<sup>187</sup> entitled a Brief Guide to Measuring. The advantage of using this template is that ultimately the data being collected can align with the agreed Office of National Statistics (ONS) approach and over time it will be possible to contrast North Yorkshire project based data with national statistical series when they are published.

The ‘main’ loneliness question is as follows but there are others that are recommended to include as well if possible:

	Often / always	Some of the time	Occasionally	Hardly ever	Never
<b>How often do you feel lonely?</b>					

### Learning through continuous evaluation

At a national level evaluators are gathering evidence to be able to determine whether the Building Connections Fund overall has been effective and learning will doubtless emerge from that process.

At a North Yorkshire level, there may be advantages of thinking about forming an impact or evaluation working group to specifically measure the success of the implementation of this wider Framework over the next six years i.e. as this goes beyond the particular funding conditions of the Building Connections programme. This would include a role to ensure there is a proportionate approach to monitoring and evaluating the outcomes that are attributable to this Framework, sharing the learning and approaches that appear to create the most difference. An impact framework with appropriate indicators would help this process and may be something the Steering Group commissions as part of its approach.

### Filling gaps in the evidence

Allied to this objective, it is useful to consider if there are gaps in evidence that get in the way of North Yorkshire and District partners commissioning ‘enlightened services’ e.g. deciding which transitions or at risk populations, or localities to particularly focus on through a co-designed approach with local communities. This may, as was the case



in Scotland, lead to a desire to commission bespoke research that fills gaps to inform more confident decision-making about services and interventions across the County.

### **Loneliness proofing**

Similar to rural proofing, the idea of each policy and commission being proofed to see its potential impact on tackling isolation and loneliness is one idea that has emerged through the development of this Strategy. The Framework lends itself to be used to proof plans and strategies. One District Council suggested that loneliness could feature in Equalities Assessments being used for strategies in future.

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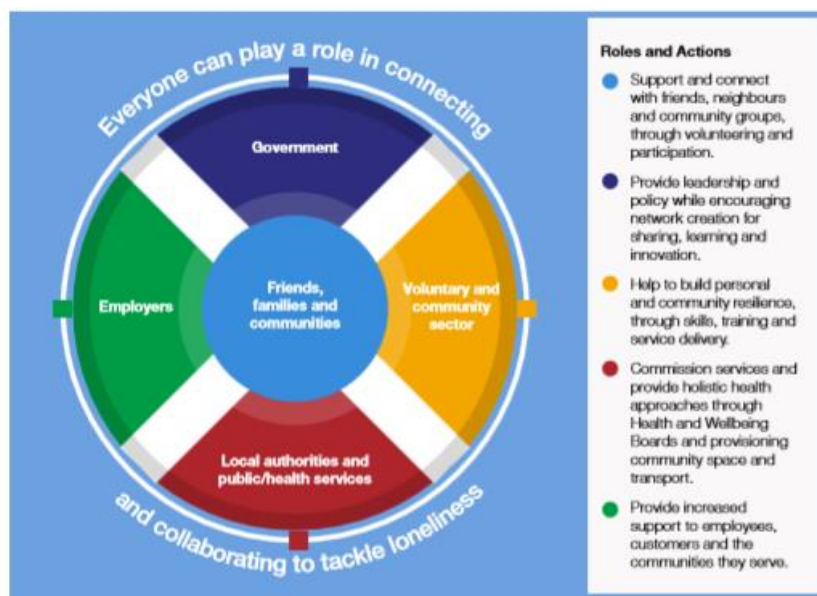
## Next steps

### What's your role?

How can you, your organisation, your business, your school, your community get involved?

Like the national Strategy, this North Yorkshire Strategic Framework recognises that everyone has a part to play in tackling loneliness and social isolation.

Part of the aim of this Framework which sets out the sorts of actions for each of the five ambitions, is to help you think more deeply about the role you want to play or could influence others to play.



The Framework seeks to build on the assets we have, not necessarily do lots of new things or seek out new pots of money; as there is already a vast amount of activity and effort being put in to tackle these challenges in North Yorkshire. However, collating all of this information and having it in a place that is easy to locate, that is appealing to people in different states of loneliness or isolation may be something to work on together. Developing campaigns that join up and maximise County and localised effort could also bring greater benefits. And becoming much better at reaching, understanding and supporting those at greatest risk or already feeling chronically lonely. These are the things we hope you might think about.

### Consultation

The Framework will go through a consultation phase in October/November 2019.

Amendments and improvements will then be made based on the responses received.

The Steering Group currently in place for the duration of the Building Connections Fund project will oversee the process led by Community First Yorkshire.

### Governance

Recommendations about the future governance to oversee the Strategy may be made subject to consultation feedback and there may therefore be opportunities for you and or your organisation to connect with different task and finish groups aligned to the proposed Strategic Ambitions or agreed activity workstreams once the Framework has been launched.

### **Local Action Plans**

As a minimum we hope that each District will decide how best to connect with the proposed Strategic Ambitions, and either enhance any existing action plan or develop one to help ensure that the ambitions are more consistently enabled and delivered across the whole County.

### **Communications Networks**

Community First Yorkshire are developing a communications plan to underpin future campaigns that may emerge as a result of the Framework's publication.

If you wish to discuss anything in this Framework please email [tlc@communityfirstyorkshire.org.uk](mailto:tlc@communityfirstyorkshire.org.uk).

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## Useful resources

To be updated prior to final publication e.g.

House of Commons Library. Loneliness: A Reading List

<https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-8632>

- Gov. comms campaign to tackle stigma (you can sign up and download a toolkit with assets/ messaging etc.): <https://letstalkloneliness.co.uk/>
- The youth campaign led by Co-op Foundation and DCMS, designed by young people themselves: <https://www.coopfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/We-are-lonely-but-not-alone-Research.pdf>
- The loneliness measures for surveys: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/methodologies/measuringlonelinessguidanceforuseofthenationalindicatorsonsurveys>
- And guidance for charities to adopt these in their evaluations: <https://whatworkswellbeing.org/loneliness#guidance>

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## Glossary

Differing uses of common terms and concepts create the potential for confusion and misunderstanding. This can cause problems as you consider what to measure, look to interpret evidence and results produced by others, and discuss best practices with each other and experts. The below glossary draws from the evidence we have cited, and is designed to facilitate communication.

**Loneliness:** 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.

**Transient/everyday loneliness:** Includes brief and occasional lonely moods. These experiences have not been of much concern to researchers or clinicians.

**Situational/transitional loneliness:** Involves people who had satisfying relationships until some specific change occurred, such as divorce, bereavement or moving to a new town.

**Chronic loneliness:** Occurs when a person has lacked satisfactory social relations for a period of two or more years.

**Social Isolation:** When isolation is observable. For example, we may look at how many relationships someone has or how often they speak to other people to help us understand whether someone is isolated.

**Loneliness risk-factors:** Defined by ONS e.g., renters, carers, 16–24

**Foundation services:** These include: reaching lonely individuals (e.g. data matching/heat map), understanding the nature of an individual's loneliness and developing a personal response, and supporting lonely individuals to access appropriate services (e.g., signposting/social prescribing)

**Structural enablers/disablers:** For example technology, transport, lived environment

**Neighbourhood approaches:** Working within the small localities with which individuals identify.

**Asset- or strength- based approach:** Focusing on 'what is strong' in an individual or a community and supporting them to mobilise, connect and build on those strengths to achieve their desired outcomes.

**Asset based community development (ABCD):** Working with existing resources and capacities in the area to build something with the community.

**Social capital:** the network of social connections that exist between people, and their shared values and norms of behaviour, which enable and encourage mutually advantageous social cooperation

**Volunteering:** Any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives.

**Age-positive:** Approaches that start from a positive understanding of ageing and later life as a time of opportunity— including Age-Friendly Cities, Dementia Friendly Communities, etc.

**Direct intervention:** These include helping support and maintain existing relationships, foster and enable new connections, and to help to change the way we think about social connections.

- **Group-based services:** For example, meet-ups, peer support or shared activities.
- **One-to-one services:** For example, befriending or mentoring.
- **Psychological approaches:** Help people change their thinking about their social connections.

**Gateway services:** Including transport and technology.

**Data matching:** Identifying people with risk factors for loneliness.

Source: [https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/insights/documents/10-tips-to-help-your-project-reduce-loneliness\\_NPC.pdf?mtime=20190703103457](https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/insights/documents/10-tips-to-help-your-project-reduce-loneliness_NPC.pdf?mtime=20190703103457)

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## Notes

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## “Be Social Be Well”

# A North Yorkshire Strategy for Tackling Loneliness

Leah Swain CEO Community First Yorkshire





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# Background

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- Community First Yorkshire has been working with voluntary, NHS, local authority partners and private businesses to develop a North Yorkshire wide, all ages, Strategy for Tackling Loneliness and series of campaigns, toolkits and workshops.
- The project has examined and used recommendations and examples of what has worked well elsewhere. Existing research has been used including the government's national strategy A Connected Society and Healthy Transitions - Growing Old in North Yorkshire, to learn more about the issues which the campaigns, individuals, communities and organisations need to tackle.

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# Approach

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- Heavily inspired by the “Promising Approaches Framework” as a means of seeking to classify the range of services that are available to support people who are at risk of loneliness, “Be Social Be Well” focuses on the specific needs of the county.
- It highlights the need to learn from and invest in, best practice early intervention and prevention services and activities to encourage longer-term, cost effective solutions.

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# Funding Partners including in-kind support

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Over a two year period to Dec 2020:-

- £99,555 from the National Lottery Community Fund's Building Connections Fund.
- NYCC
- Stronger Communities
- DEFRA
- Community First Yorkshire

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# Multi-agency Steering Group

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- Community First Yorkshire
- Harrogate Borough Council
- Harrogate and Rural CCG
- NYCC Public Health
- NYCC Children and Young People's Service
- NY Police
- NY Sport
- York, North Yorkshire & East Riding Enterprise Partnership
- University of York
- MIND
- NYCC Stronger Communities
- Dementia Forward
- NY Youth
- Two Ridings Community Foundation
- Age UK
- Carers Resource
- Methodist and United Reform Church



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## Progress so far

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### Staying Social, Staying Well Quiz

**The first campaign**, launched July 19, is aimed at those in the pre-retirement phase, workers who may have, to date, just focussed on the finances of their retirement, but not the wider social aspects. It's to get them thinking about the impact that stopping paid work could have on how they stay connected to their family, friends, colleagues and neighbours.

Over **1000** individuals viewed the quiz July-Dec 19.



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## Progress so far

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### “Be Social Be Well” Framework in partnership with Skyblue Research

- Review of current literature and thinking
- Consultation events and story gathering survey work to gather stories about the lived experience of loneliness
- In association with NYCC Public Health Team, data gathering and analysis to create a profile of loneliness across North Yorkshire





## People at risk in North Yorkshire

- 6% (c30, 000) of residents (over 16) may currently experience chronic loneliness
- 39% (c198, 000) adults may experience temporary loneliness
- 54% (c274, 000) adults hardly ever or never experience feelings of loneliness
- In addition children and young people (under 16):
  - accessing free school meals
  - experiencing bullying, one in four children in North Yorkshire report being bullied



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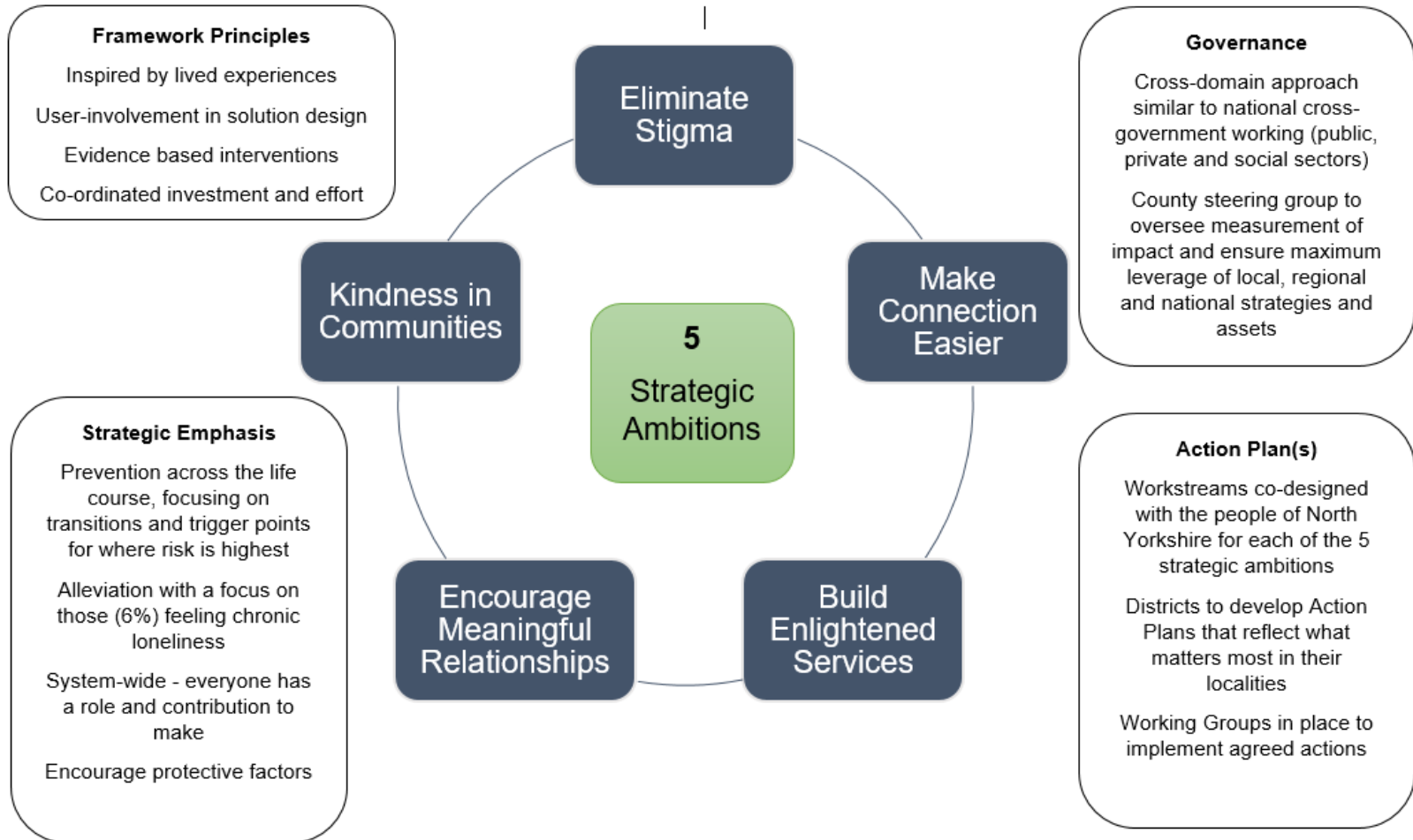
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## Progress so far

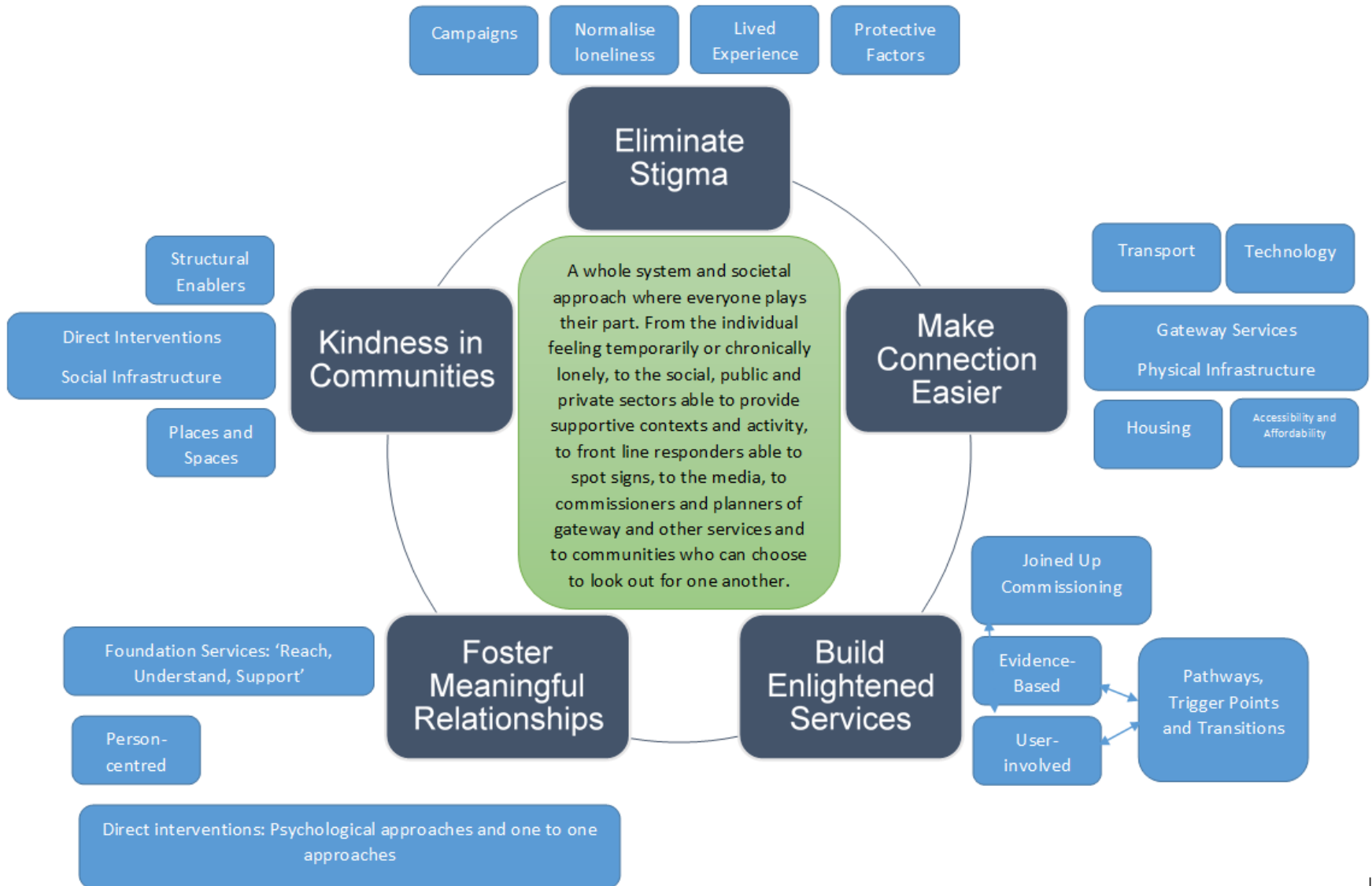
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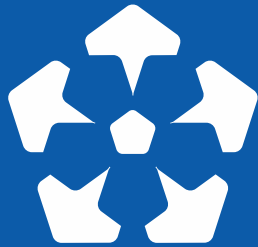
- Workshops and awareness raising events in association with the Stronger Communities team and other organisations such as NY Police, generating interest and support across the county and a willingness to get involved in workshop delivery, campaigns and supported social activities.

# The 5 “Be Social Be Well” Strategic Ambitions...



# Aims and priority actions





# Community First Yorkshire