Loneliness

Isolation

& ADDICTION

Sometimes loneliness can lead to addiction. Other times it can result from it. In either case it's a slippery slope and dangerous relationship where one feeds the other if you're not careful.

Change Grow Live

Adult and Young People's Drug and Alcohol Service

Manchester

MY RECOVERY
Tameside

Isolation and Loneliness
Jackie McVan, GM Head of Services
Liz McCoy, Lead for Addictions

Liz McCoy – Head of Addictions. Pennine Care NHS Trust

Two Major areas of Impact

➡ The long-term effects on health and wellbeing of social isolation and subjective loneliness.

➡ The contributary effects of social isolation on Drug (and alcohol) related deaths….Using Alone.

Today – focusing on the long-term effects of loneliness and isolation.

GM DRD Report 2022

Of the people reported

- 70% of people lived alone

- 75% of people died alone (as reported by coroner)

Why Now?

- ROBERT ALTON
- Bolton
- Found at home, 6 years after his death
- Book-keeper
- Probably died May 2017, aged 70
- Opportunities were missed – council tax unpaid, post mounting up, gas checks

He's not the only one – remember their names!

- Sheila Seleoane - aged 61
- Laura Winham – aged 38
- Tim O Sullivan – aged 61

Society Today

- Increasingly becoming a contactless society

- Internet – banking, shopping, health care appointments, therapy, relationships

- Automated responses/call centres

- Services are often transactional - rx, TOPS, drug screen

- Stigma "*what will the neighbours say?*"

- Shame; fear; pride, retribution

- Lack of insight or awareness (personal/services)

- Poverty challenges

Life after Covid

- 41% people feel more lonely

- ¼ people are scared something will happen to them, and no one will notice

- 31% reported they feel they have no one to turn to

- 1/3 of people reported they had no meaningful conversation over the previous week

- Some communities at greater risk of loneliness– BAME communities, parents with young children, young people, those living with long term physical & mental health conditions, people on lower incomes and those with limited access to digital technology

This is being recognised

Booths Supermarkets

- The Warmth of a Welcome

- Personal Care for Customers

- You cannot replace personality and interest with a computer!

- A business that is listening to the people they serve

- Increases social value – local jobs for local people

- Responds to diversity - Hybrid modelling

- For some; their only connection?

The effects of Social Isolation and loneliness

- Extremely damaging to people's health

- Seen as a psychological problem but manifests as physical

- Highly subjective (every person needs different amounts of social contact to be well)

- Amount that's right for an individual appears to be at least in part genetic/innate (twin studies)

- Has AT LEAST the same detrimental effect as smoking and obesity

Effects of Loneliness

- Lonely people are at increased risk of EVERYTHING
  - ❖ Cardiovascular disease
  - ❖ Cancer
  - ❖ Neurodegenerative diseases
- Odds of early mortality increased by **26%**
- Also increases Mental Health risks
  - ❖ Anxiety and Depression
  - ❖ Stress
  - ❖ Eating disorders
- Intersectional Impacts of Mental and Physical Health
- 'Chicken and Egg'

Underlying Mechanisms

- Obligatory social and co-operative species : survival mechanism

- Immune system impacted : Persistently lonely vs Socially active middle-aged people. Genes responsible for inflammation highly activated.

- Sleep Impacted – vicious circle with inflammation, with mental health, and with personal ability to tackle both health and isolation

- POSSIBLY … body ceaselessly primed and vigilant due to possible mortal threat 'lack of back-up'.

How do we recognise this and measure it ?

- Almost entirely subjective BUT some underlying genetic factors

- Questionnaire – for your interest

- People with same life circumstances can score very differently

Compounded in our services by:

- ❖ Transactional services vs Compassionate and Humanitarian services

- ❖ Case loads

- ❖ Worker compassion fatigue

What can we do?

- Personal Pledges - we are all part of a community.

- Professional Pledges – some space, give permission, a couple of quid?

- Small Things and Making Every Contact Count…a smile, a kind word, 2 minutes?

- Opportunities for all - facilitating access; providing the link; offering information –giving people purpose!

- Thinking outside the box – a phone call at Christmas? Sending a Card? Taking services/activities to rural areas?

Five Ways To Wellbeing!

- Keep it simple

- Be creative!

- Look for those opportunities!

- Practice what you (and I) preach!

- Notice the Ripple Effect - consider using this within our teams; can we apply it to all that we do?

- Empower our people!

- Make your pledge?

What can we do ? - Easier than you think ☺

CALL TO ACTION

Do something social on the run up to Christmas/'Twixmas'

(at work and for yourself)

- Card making (my office is currently full of card stuff and glitter). Get a list of places to send cards – spread the good wishes (homeless hostels, temp accommodation)

- Decoration making (see above)

- Brew and a biscuit

- List of services, events and activities etc sent to people

- Tell them where the carol services are.

- Anything your service / agency can manage.

JANUARY '24 – Tell us what you did . The smaller the better. Everything Counts ! ☺

CGL Festive Activities

- 1st Dec - Christmas Tree Decorating (3 sites)

- 11th December - Winter Olympics (Lancs)

- 15th December – Christmas Party

- 22nd Dec Service user Lunch & Mince pies

- Christmas Day - Phoenix Mill opening (activities to be determined)

- 28th Dec – Naloxone distribution, hot chocolate and mince pies (outreach, hostels, temp accom. & CJ focus)

- Service user safety planning with all Sus – including discussion on isolation and connectedness

Thank you
Any Questions?

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