

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

NHS
Pennine Care
NHS Foundation Trust



Isolation and Loneliness – 25th April 2024
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 contributory 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

Life after lockdown tackling loneliness | British Red Cross – 2020

- 41% people feel more lonely
- 1/4 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 - 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; 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?

Libraries/Human Libraries

- Free for all - zero tariff
- Anyone can access – inclusive, purposeful
- Who turns up, are the right people
- Reduces social isolation, builds confidence
- Challenges stigma; raises awareness



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%**

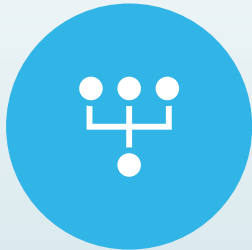
Also increases Mental Health risks

- 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!



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 ?



Did a local call to action when we presented late last year- activities not related to treatment.



If you or your service did something (big or small) put it in the chat. What worked and what didn't ?



What next



“The toll of deaths of despair “ By [Christine Camacho](#) and [Luke Munford](#)



Support for physical health



Support for mental health



What about support for the rest of the person ?



Be more Library 😊

Links

[The toll of 'Deaths of Despair' in England \(manchester.ac.uk\)](#)

[5 steps to mental wellbeing - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Bookkeeper lay dead in his Bolton flat for six years \(telegraph.co.uk\)](#)

[MECC Link - Simple signposting to better health and wellbeing](#)

[Unexpected human at the till: cashiers are making a comeback | Yvonne Roberts | The Guardian](#)

Thank you
Any Questions?

- Liz McCoy
- e.mccoy@nhs.net

- Jackie McVan
- Jackie.mcvan@cgl.org.uk

