



Research Hub Bulletin - Winter 2012

The Research Hub supports the Campaign to End Loneliness by gathering, communicating and contributing to the evidence base around loneliness and isolation. Members of the Hub include leading academics in the field along with local authority and voluntary sector representatives.

This quarterly bulletin provides information on how to get involved, recent related research and initiatives and keeps you up to date with the Research Hub's activities.

Previous bulletins can be found on the Campaign to End Loneliness website.

News from the Research Hub

- **Second meeting:** The Research Hub held its second meeting in Oxford in December, which was attended by 12 members. The meeting discussed further research into interventions on loneliness, responding to the government's Measuring National Wellbeing programme and research suggestions for an upcoming briefing paper for local authorities, to be produced by the Campaign and the Local Government association.
- **Consultation responses:** The Research Hub supported the Campaign to deliver responses to the Department of Health's *Caring for Our Future* consultation on social care and the Office for National Statistics Measuring National Wellbeing Programme. The responses are available to be read on Campaign website.
- **Conference:** The Research Hub will be hosting a conference exploring 'What do we know about loneliness?' on the 9th and 10th of July in Oxford. The purpose of the conference, which will bring together leading national and international academics, the voluntary sector, practitioners and service users, is to provide an overview of the evidence on loneliness, up and coming research and identify the gaps in the evidence. More information will be available soon.

New research into loneliness and social isolation

■ **Journal of Psychology ‘Loneliness’ Special Edition**

The Journal of Psychology has published a special edition on loneliness because “all of us experience it, but only in the past 2 decades has there been an open quest to understand it and learn how to cope with it.”

This issue covers a varied selection of research on loneliness, and its relationships to other human conditions. There are three sections: the first reviews loneliness in general, the second loneliness through the life-cycle and the third looks at the connection between loneliness and other conditions.

Articles of interest include:

- *The Prevalence of Loneliness Among Adults: A Case Study of the United Kingdom*
Christina R. Victor & Keming Yang pp. 85-104
- *Cross-National Differences in Older Adult Loneliness*
Tineke Fokkema, Jenny De Jong Gierveld & Pearl A. Dykstra pp. 201-228
- *No Place Like Home? Potential Pathways to Loneliness in Older Adults Under the Care of a Live-In Foreign Home Care Worker*
Liat Ayalon, Sharon Shiovitz-Ezra & Yuval Palgi pp.189-200
- *Life Events and Personality Predicting Loneliness Among Centenarians: Findings From the Georgia Centenarian Study*
Bob Hensley, Peter Martin, Jennifer A. Margrett, Maurice MacDonald, Ilene C. Siegler, Leonard W. Poon & The Georgia Centenarian Study pp. 173-188

Routledge have given limited **free** access to this special edition on Loneliness and all articles can be downloaded here: <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/vjrl20/current>

■ **Preventing loneliness and social isolation: interventions and outcomes** (SCIE Research briefing 39)

This is one in a series of briefings about preventive care and support for adults from the Social Care Institute for Excellence. The review found that successful interventions to tackle social isolation or loneliness included befriending, mentoring, Community Navigator and social group schemes.

There was also evidence from longitudinal studies that older people who were part of a social group intervention were more likely to live longer than those who had not received such a service.

For an electronic copy of this briefing, please visit the SCIE website:

<http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/briefings/briefing39/>

- **Making time use explicit in an investigation of social exclusion in the UK.** Dr Matt Barnes (Grant Holder). Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). Start date: 14 January 2008; End date: 31 January 2010.

A new study, funded by the ESRC has found that shift workers and older people are at greater risk of social exclusion. Researchers found that the barriers (such as low income, transport issues) to participating in certain activities, such as sports, arts, volunteering or social networking, were greater for people in older age.

They also found that on average older people spend 11 hours alone on a week day and 10.5 hours alone at the weekend (excluding sleep time). Dr Matt Barnes said that the results suggest local government and charities need to recognise the importance of social participation in improving quality of life and should “improve the accessibility of public transport and other facilities and services”.

- ***Listening to You: the baseline report from the Campaign to End Loneliness***

The Campaign to End Loneliness asked more than 1,500 adults over the age of 40 – the majority over 65 – about their views on loneliness and what they were doing to prevent or alleviate it. These responses were published in December as *Listening to You: the baseline report from the Campaign to End Loneliness*.

Nearly half of respondents thought that loneliness was ‘very important’ as a social issue, and 90% said they thought loneliness was fairly or very damaging to a person’s health.

One of the most interesting results for the Campaign was that 42% did not know of any organisations or services that could help those facing loneliness. This is despite many local organisations providing support for people in their older age to stay connected.

A copy of the *Listening to You* report can be found here:

<http://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk/information-on-loneliness/listening-to-you/>

- **Perceived health benefits of participatory activities - Contact the Elderly findings**

Contact the Elderly is a national organisation which organises regular Sunday afternoon tea parties for people over 75 who live with little or no social support. They regularly survey their members to evaluate their service and in 2007 they studied the health impact of attending these social events.

Responders (n=354) reported that they perceived improvements in health, with 50% saying that their "general health had improved" and 28% said that they had a better appetite since attending the tea parties.

In terms of psychological benefits, 87% of respondents said that they felt "less lonely" and 84% said they felt "part of a community".

For further information on the results, please contact Marie Holdt, Communications Manager: Marie.Holdt@contact-the-elderly.org.uk

■ **Equality and Human Rights Commission: Inquiry into home care of older people (November 2011)**

The EHRC have published a report on their inquiry into the home care system in England, condemning the neglect, lack of dignity and even physical abuse experienced by some older people receiving domiciliary care in their own homes.

The inquiry also found that there was a "pervasive social isolation and loneliness experienced by many older people confined to their homes who lack support to get out and take part in community life".

A copy of the report can be found on the EHRC website:

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/legal-and-policy/inquiries-and-assessments/inquiry-into-home-care-of-older-people>

Future research

■ **Local Government Association and Campaign to End Loneliness: Guide for Local Authorities**

The Campaign to End Loneliness and the Local Government Association (LGA) have written a guide for local authorities interested in taking action at a local level to combat loneliness as part of the LGA Ageing Well programme.

The document will provide a brief summary of key research on the issue of loneliness, and some practical steps every local authority, working in partnership

with other local actors, can take to tackle the problem. These practical steps are illustrated by case studies drawn from around the country.

All supporters will receive an electronic copy in early March.

■ Demos: 'Ageing Sociably'

Demos have launched a new research project to identify ways that private companies can make use of their local presence and existing operating models to generate new social opportunities for older people. The project is funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

For more information on the research questions, methodology and report visit: <http://www.demos.co.uk/projects/agingsociably>

■ Young Foundation: Engaging men with social projects

With funding from the Big Lottery Fund, the Young Foundation is carrying out a programme of research looking at the way men engage with social projects. The study will work with men across the UK and make international comparisons to identify barriers to male engagement and provide examples of good practice.

The project page can be found on the Young Foundation website here: <http://www.youngfoundation.org/our-work/research/male-engagement-with-social-projects>

Answering your questions

The Research Hub work to support practitioners by communicating the evidence base around loneliness and isolation. This section addresses questions on the subject of loneliness posed to the Campaign to End Loneliness or to the academics.

If you would like to ask the Research Hub a question relating to loneliness or social isolation in older age, or receive a copy of these studies, please email Anna on anna@campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk.

■ Loneliness and Suicide

A number of people have asked if there is a link between loneliness and suicide in older age. The Hub have identified two studies which provide evidence on this relationship:

- Loneliness and low social interaction are predictive of suicide in older age

- Social isolation and decreased social support are generally associated with suicidal feelings amongst older people
- Some studies have found that loneliness is a 'risk factor' for suicide in older age

O'Connell, H., Chin, A., Cunnigham, C and Lawlor, B. (2004) Recent developments: Suicide in older people *British Medical Journal* 29 pp.895–9

Koponen, H. J. et al (2007) Rates and previous disease history in old age suicide *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* 22 pp. 38-46

■ Befriending services

There has been considerable discussion amongst Research Hub members on the topic of befriending. To date, there has been less "robust" published evidence showing the positive impact for older people of one-to-one befriending activities than there is for group and educational interventions. However, people working with older people on a one-to-one basis often find strong evidence of the positive impact of this type of support.

Befriending and mentoring are also widely used with young people and a recent study found positive effects of befriending and mentoring for young people when the service was well planned, sustained and resulted in meaningful relationships. (Dr Kate Phillip and Jenny Spratt (2007) *A synthesis of published research on mentoring and befriending for the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation* The Rowan Group, University of Aberdeen).

Additionally one supporter of the Campaign to End Loneliness, Tower Hamlets Friends and Neighbours, have gathered significant quotes from service users saying how they value befriending, that their sense of loneliness increases when they do not have it and the value they place upon support provided by a trusting relationship with one person over time.

Research Hub Members

Ann Bowling	Professor of Healthcare of Older Adults, Kingston University
Vanessa Burholt	Professor of Gerontology and Director of the Interdisciplinary Centre on Ageing, Swansea University
Richard Bryan	Managing Director, QA Research
Paul Cann	Chief Executive Age UK Oxfordshire
Mima Cattan	Professor in Public Health (Knowledge Translation) Northumbria University
Laura Ferguson	Director, Campaign to End Loneliness

Sheila Furlong	Director, The Archway Foundation
Barbara Hanratty	Clinical Senior Lecturer, Institute of Psychology, Health and Society, University of Liverpool
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Annabel Knight	Project Officer, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation
Sally Richards	Senior Lecturer in Social Work, Oxford Brookes University
Tracey Robbins	Programme Manager, Joseph Rowntree Foundation,
Phil Rossall	Research Manager, Age UK
Thomas Scharf	Professor of Social Gerontology and Director of the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology at NUI Galway, Ireland
Rachel Taylor	Research Officer, Oxfordshire County Council
Nicole Valtorta	Research Assistant, Institute of Psychology, Health and Society, University of Liverpool
Christina Victor	Professor of Public Health / Associate Deputy (Research) - School Management; Health, Brunel University

Joining the Research Hub

If you would like to join the hub, contribute to the knowledge on loneliness and isolation, attend meetings or be a virtual member, please contact the Research Hub Chair: rachel.taylor@oxfordshire.gov.uk. We'll keep you informed of developments you your name added to the mailing list.

We welcome any contributions on published or unpublished research on the topic of loneliness in older age, including academic journals, new reports, non-academic articles, local evaluations and case studies.

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About the Campaign to End Loneliness

The Campaign to End Loneliness aims to create connections in older age by bringing others together to combat loneliness. We believe that everyone can make a difference to older people who are lonely or isolated and work to ensure that we all take more effective steps to tackle the factors that cause loneliness.

The Campaign is led by 5 partners: Age UK Oxfordshire, Independent Age, Manchester City Council, Sense and WRVS. It is funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

Through our project work we will:

- **Raise awareness** – of loneliness and why working to reduce it matters.
- **Build the evidence base** – gather the evidence, promote what works and find the gaps in current interventions.
- **Share future-proofing ideas for individuals** – helping us all to future-proof our own lives against loneliness in older age.