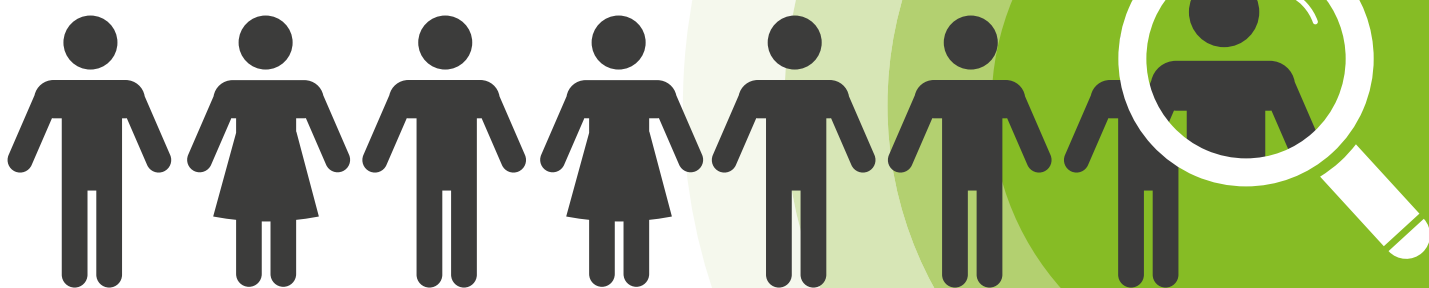


THE MISSING MILLION: IN SEARCH OF THE LONELIEST IN OUR COMMUNITIES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





Executive summary

The public and political attention on loneliness has sharpened significantly in recent years as the social, economic and moral case for tackling loneliness grows in awareness, evidence and support. In the United Kingdom, there are an estimated one million, one hundred thousand people over the age of 65 who are chronically lonely. We are in desperate need to identify these missing million lonely older people.

Members of the Campaign's Learning Network, alongside many other interested parties, have expressed strong interest in further guidance and ideas on how to address the challenge of identifying loneliness. In response, we have launched the *Missing Million* report with three main aims:

- **To help commissioners and service providers develop methods to help them identify older people experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, loneliness.**
- **To help commissioners and service providers to put these methods into practice.**
- **To help front line service providers to better understand and respond to loneliness and engage older people experiencing loneliness in constructive dialogue.**

The report is divided into three sections. The first section, **Identifying loneliness**, describes different ways of identifying older people experiencing loneliness, along with some ideas for collaboration and innovation. The report has focused on two types of approach that start from different places but that are complementary. The first is a top-down approach: what data is available to help locate older people experiencing loneliness and to identify geographical areas that are likely to contain older people at risk of becoming lonely? The second is bottom-up: how might local, hidden intelligence be surfaced and used to help identify older people who are lonely?

The second section, **Applying the methods**, explains how the methods described in the first section have been put into practice as foundation services, and illustrates how different methods can be complementary and combined. It also gives examples of identifying and engaging older people from groups which have a relatively high risk of experiencing loneliness.

The third section of the report, **Talking about loneliness**, aims to help front line staff and volunteers prepare for and engage in constructive dialogue with older people experiencing loneliness in ways that can bring about positive change. It addresses the question of how to speak with an older person experiencing loneliness or who is at risk of becoming lonely.



Key Findings

Each section of the report provides key summary points that distil the most important learning from the material presented and discussed. These are:

IDENTIFYING LONELINESS



- **Use data to inform decisions** – a number of data sources detailed in the report provide direct and indirect perspectives on loneliness among older people. Visualising data in maps is a powerful way of understanding and communicating the problem of loneliness in a given area.
- **Harness local capacity and intelligence** – working with communities taps into the knowledge and capability held by local people to identify, engage and support older people experiencing loneliness in their areas.
- **Develop partnerships** – loneliness is personalised, multidimensional and requires a range of individuals and agencies to coordinate and respond.

APPLYING THE METHODS



- In order to successfully identify older people experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, loneliness, a range of foundation services are required. These are the first steps in finding individuals experiencing loneliness and enabling them to gain support that meets their specific needs. Foundation services have three main aims: identifying and establishing contact with lonely individuals (reaching); drawing out the specific circumstances of an individual's loneliness and establishing the most appropriate help (understanding); and supporting individuals to make use of available services (supporting).
- It is necessary to combine different methods and data sources in order to effectively identify older people experiencing loneliness.
- Cross-check data analysis with the local experience of your staff and volunteers on the ground and with those of partner organisations.
- Social prescribing projects and bereavement services are two important forms of foundation services.
- The expanding range of open data, data visualisation packages, health informatics and the internet of things, provides new ways of identifying older people experiencing loneliness.
- Services should seek to understand their specific target audience(s) and develop and test different tones and mediums of communication in promoting their service. Care needs to be given to ensure services are advertised in ways that are accessible to particular vulnerable groups, such as older people with sensory impairments who experience loneliness.



TALKING ABOUT LONELINESS



- **Foundations for a conversation:** use the skills and qualities of empathy, openness, warmth and respect to facilitate a conversation about loneliness and the psychological distress it causes.
- **Problem-solving conversations:** structure and facilitate dialogue to help people identify and plan their own solutions.
- **Resourcing:** identify and promote the internal capabilities of a person, and encourage the use of groups and other external resources that suit the person and what they want to achieve or experience. Create community directories and use social media and technology to facilitate this.

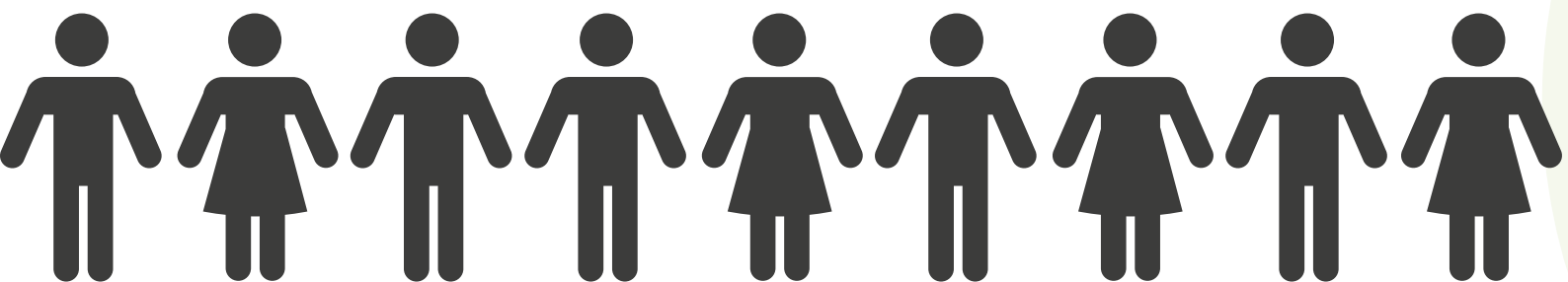
10 Key Recommendations

Throughout the report, summary recommendations are offered which provide ways of applying the materials and case studies presented in each section. The key recommendations for service providers and commissioners of services in the report are:

- 1 Review the risk of loneliness within your community using the Age UK loneliness heat map.** Overlay your service locations onto the map and overlay the map with data showing the location of individual service users. Consider whether it is likely that your service has high penetration rates into high risk areas and what might be done to communicate your service in hotspot locations.
- 2 Map your local Risk of Loneliness Index data.** Hold a multi-stakeholder workshop to assess how well current service provision corresponds to the spatial distribution of loneliness among older people across the locality. Engage your local Age UK office, health and wellbeing board, fire and rescue service, local third sector organisations, housing associations, relevant public services, and key local businesses (for example, local supermarkets and leisure providers) in your local workshop.
- 3 Engage with your local fire and rescue service** and explore how you can collaborate on loneliness among older people within a broad safe and well agenda. Seek to use Exeter data to guide resource allocation and, where technical capability allows, enrich the power of this dataset by combining it with other forms of data about the local population.



- 4** **The Community Insight tool** gives rich information about localities and can help point to determinants of loneliness in a given neighbourhood. In areas in which it is important to understand and mobilise local community assets (including local residents), the Connected Communities method can be employed to use local people and knowledge to identify older people experiencing loneliness (and other vulnerable groups), and the sometimes hidden potential in communities that can help to alleviate loneliness.
- 5** **Work with partners to create a community resource directory** that details a range of appropriate services and support for older people experiencing loneliness. Consider producing this in a range of electronic and hard copy formats and distribute widely, including to staff and volunteers who may come into contact with older people experiencing loneliness.
- 6** **Work with local GP surgeries** to establish social prescribing schemes that specifically address loneliness among older people.
- 7** **Work with registrar departments, hospices, and GP surgeries** to ensure recently bereaved older people are given information about local opportunities for social contact.
- 8** **Ensure older people with sensory impairments are supported** to access mainstream and specific services and support.
- 9** **Work with older people who are already engaged in your service/activities** to identify and engage other older people who may be experiencing loneliness or who are at risk of becoming lonely.
- 10** **Base your approach to engaging in dialogue about loneliness with an older person** on the core conditions: communicate empathy, genuineness and regard for the person you are talking with. Do not speak in ways that infantilise or patronise the other person.



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