Measuring the impact of interventions on loneliness

Steering Group meeting - 13th February 2015

Purpose of report

To appraise the Steering Group of the outcome of the piloting and validation analysis of the two draft tools to measure the impact of interventions on loneliness, and to recommend a way forward.

Background

The Steering Group considered and agreed an approach to piloting two draft measurement tools which had been developed through a highly participative process conducted over the summer. It also agreed an approach to validating whether the tools could be assessed as a reliable measure of loneliness in older people.

Piloting

The two draft tools were piloted within 18 organsiations:-

- Linkage Bristol
- Dorset POPP
- NBFA Assisting the Elderly
- Nottingham City Council – Sheltered Housing
- Rural Caravan Information Project
- Tower Hamlets Friends and Neighbours
- Friends of the Elderly
- Time to Talk Befriending
- Southville Community Development Centre – Bristol
- Community Service Volunteers
- Carers Centre – Bristol
- Age UK – Wiltshire
- Toynbee Hall
- Salford NHS Trust
- Brighton and Hove Neighbourhood Care Scheme
- Independent Age
- NBFA Assisting the Elderly

A total of **785** older people completed the survey forms (369 for T1 and 416 for T2). This volume of response allowed for a reliable statistical analysis.

Two draft tools were piloted:-

Tool 1

1. *I am content with my friendships and relationships*
2. *I am able to meet people with similar hobbies or interests*
3. *I meet socially with family and relatives as often as it suits me*
4. *My relationships are as satisfying as I would want them to be*
5. *I have enough people I feel comfortable asking for help at any time*
6. *I feel part of a community*

Tool 2

1. *I have as much company as I want with people I like*
2. *I find it easy to meet people who share my interests*
3. *I meet socially with friends and relatives as often as it suits me*
4. *There are many people I can trust completely*
5. *There is always someone I can talk to about my day to day problems*
6. *I feel like I belong to something I call community*

Validation

A variety of statistical tests have been applied to the data in order to validate whether the draft tools were a reliable measure of loneliness in older people. The analysis was undertaken by the statistician Jolanthe de Koning.

Overview

The project has developed two possible tools for measuring the self reported experience of loneliness in older people. Most importantly, the proposed tools are both shorter and written in much less distressing language than the current standard validated tool – the De Jong Gierveld scale.

The two tools are:-

1. **CTEL Tool** – this has been developed from the T1 tool that was piloted (none of the questions in the T2 version produced sufficiently robust results and therefore the T2 tool has been discarded). The proposed CTEL Tool comprises the following questions:-
   a. *"I am content with my friendships and relationships"* (T1, q.1),
   b. *"My relationships are as satisfying as I would want them to be"* (T1, q.4)
   c. *"I have enough people I feel comfortable asking for help at any time"* (T1, q.5).

   In situations where it is only possible to ask one question then the last question *"I have enough people I feel comfortable asking for help at any time"* could be asked.

2. **CTEL/DJG Combo** – this is an amalgamation of three of the questions from the De Jong Gierveld tool:-
   1. *There are plenty of people I can rely on*
   2. *There are many people I can trust completely*
   3. *There are enough people I feel close to*

   These three questions are defined by De Jong Gierveld as measuring 'social loneliness' and have been selected because they are not as intrusive and potentially distressing as the other three questions in the scale (which examine 'emotional loneliness').

   Added to this is one of the questions from the CTEL Tool

   4. *"My relationships are as satisfying as I would want them to be"* **(T1, q.4)**

   This gives a four item tool.

Validation
The statistical validation of the tools is very complex.

CTEL Tool
Reliability
In terms of reliability, the T1 tool was shown to have a good 'internal consistency'. This was measured by using the Cronbach's alpha test which assesses the extent to which individual questions in a scale are measuring aspects of the same underlying explanatory factor. Having a high Cronbach's Alpha means that an older person will tend to answer the different questions in the scale in a similar way. The draft Tool 1 one performs well

	Conbrach's aplha	Internal consistency
T1: 3 item (1,4,5)	0.858	Good
T1: 6 item	0.904	Excellent

The T1 tool can therefore be said to have a good level of reliability.

Validity
The T1 tool was also found to be a valid measure of loneliness.   It provides a high enough correlation with the De Jong Gierveld (DJG) and therefore comes acceptably close to measuring the same incidence of loneliness as the DJG does. This was assessed using a statistical analysis called 'construct validity'. In essence, this is a way of demonstrating the extent to which the new draft T1 tool correlates well with a measure that has already been validated. The de Jong Gierveld Loneliness Scale (DJG) was agreed at the last Steering Group meeting as the most appropriate tool to

use to assess this correlation. It is widely considered as the academic 'gold standard'. The short version comprises six questions:-

5. *I experience a general sense of emptiness*
6. *There are plenty of people I can rely on*
7. *There are many people I can trust completely*
8. *There are enough people I feel close to*
9. *I miss having people around*
10. *I often feel rejected*

It is worth noting that a number of these questions are considered quite intrusive and potentially distressing – a view which is borne out by some of the user comments generated during the piloting (see Appendix C). There were also a number of organisations which withdrew from the piloting because of their concerns that the application of the de Jong Gierveld questions would be too distressing for their users. Neverthelss, in academic circles it is viewed as one of the most valid measures of loneliness.

In addition, the draft tools were also tested against the single item question used in the English Longitudinal Study on Ageing (ELSA) - ***How often do you feel lonely?*** However, ELSA itself does not score that highly in relation to the DJG and therefore the analysis of T1 in relation to this tool is not featured in this narrative.

The main construct validity results were as follows:

	DJG score Spearman's Rho	n
T1: 1st item	0.651	344
T1: 2nd item	0.546	343
T1: 3rd item	0.621	335
T1: 4th item	0.672	337
T1: 5th item	0.723	345
T1: 6th item	0.620	346
T1: 2 item (item 4,5)*	0.779	335
T1: 3 item (item 1,2,3)*	0.672	329
T1: 3 item (item 1,4,5)*	0.791	333
T1 6 item *	0.780	321

* Scoring taking account of the strength of response

Key:

Weak correlation, r<0.5
Moderate correlation, r> 0.5 & r < 0.7
Moderate-to-strong correlation, r>0.7 & r <0.900

The key points to note are as follows:-

- Overall, the T1 questions (the full 6 items and the proposed three item scale outlined below) give a moderate to strong correlation with the De Jong Gierveld scale and the ELSA question.

- In situations where only **one question** can be asked, the best question would be *"I have enough people I feel comfortable asking for help at any time"* (T1 q.5). This question is best at estimating what the answer would be if the 6 de Jong Gierveld were asked (a correlation of r = 0.723 between q.5 and the DJG scores), without having to ask these more intrusive questions.

- This question is better score than the ELSA question at estimating the De Jong Gierveld (given a slightly weaker correlation between the ELSA response and the De Jong Gierveld scale, r = 0.644).

- In situations where more questions can be asked, it would be best to ask three questions: *"I am content with my friendships and relationships"* (T1, q.1), *"My relationships are as satisfying as I would want them to be"* (T1, q.4), and *"I have enough people I feel comfortable asking for help at any time"* (T1, q.5).

- When these three questions are combined in such a way where only disagreement, **not the strength of disagreement,** is taken into account, they give the closest possible estimate to the score you would get when asking the de Jong Gierveld questons.

- When these three questions are combined in such a way where the **strength of disagreement is taken into account**, they give a slightly close estimate of the answer you would get if you asked the ELSA question, but it is very slightly less accurate in estimating the De Jong Gierveld response.

- While the strength of correlation is marginally higher (a differency of 0.009) when using the method which does not take into account the strength of responses ('neutral', 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree', in comparrison with using the method that does take into account the strength of responses, it can be argued that it is preferable to use the latter of the two, given its greater usefulnes for practitioners.

- Although q.1 and q.4 seem very similar, a test for whether the answers to these are significantly different showed that they were different (p<0.001), and that therefore the subtely different wording does reflect a differen meaning for some individuals. When only q. 4 and 5 are used, the score is slightly worse at estimating both the ELSA response and the De Jong Gierveld score, regardless of the method used to count the total score.

- There is no need to ask all 6 items from T1 as there is no additional benefit with regards to making a better prediction of the De Jong Gierveld scale.

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Cross tabulation

Comparing the results produced by the the CTEL Tool and the full De Jong Gierveld Tool is an important test of the accuracy of the new tool. If it can be calibrated to produce similar results for 'not lonely' and 'lonely' then it can be used as a useful measure of loneliness. The following table sets out the results:-

Summary of comparrison between the CTEL tool (0 to 12) and the original DJG tool:								Number of cases	%
Strong disagreement; people classified as not lonely by the CTEL tool (0 to 12) when they are classified as lonely by the original JDG tool:								2	0.6
Strong disagreement; people classified as lonely by the CTEL tool (0 to 12) when they are not according to the original DJG tool:								1	0.3
					Total strong disagreement:			**3**	**0.9**
Low disagreement; people classified as not lonely by the CTEL tool (0 to 12) but classified as somewhat lonely by the original DJG tool:								47	14.1
Low disagreement; people classified as somewhat lonely by the CTEL tool (0 to 12) but classified as not lonely by the original DJG tool:								7	2.1
Low disagreement; people classified as somewhat lonely by the CTEL tool (0 to 12) but classified as very lonely by the original DJG tool:								38	11.4
Low disagreement; people classified as most lonely by theCTEL tool (0 to 12) but classified as somewhat lonely by the original DJG tool:								20	6.0
					Total low disagreement:			**112**	**33.6**
Complete agreement; people classified as not lonely by both tools.								85	25.5
Complete agreement; people classified as somewhat lonely by both tools.								50	15.0
Complete agreement; people classified as most lonely byboth tools.								83	24.9
					Total complete agreement:			**218**	**65.5**

Using these cut-off points the CTEL tool V1 (0 to 12 score) agrees completely with the DJG responses for 65.5% of cases, make minor miscategorisarions for 33.6% of cases, and make more serious miscalculations for only 0.9% of cases.

The construct valdity of the CTEL tool (V1) with a 0 to 12 scoring scale is very slightly less strongly correlated to the 6-item DJG scale (r = 0.786, vs. r = 0.800 for when it is scored like the DJG scale, giving a range of 0 to 3).

CTEL/DJG Combo Tool

The purpose was to create a loneliness measuring tool which most closely represents the 6-item DJG scale, but does not include the three overly-intrusive and potentially distressing questions, while also keeping in mind that asking fewer questions is preferable in regards to not burdening service users. With these aims in mind it was felt preferable to use the 3 'social loneliness' questions from the DJG scale, and q.4 from the T1 questions devised by the CTEL Tool (see above):
* DJG djg2: "There are plenty of people I can rely on"
* DJG djg3: "There are many people I can trust completely"
* DJG djg4: "There are enough people I feel close to"
* T1 q.4: "My relationships are as satisfying as I would want them to be"

The choice of q4 fits with the theoretical underpinnings of the 6-item DJG scale, in which 3 items comprise the 'social loneliness' scale and the other 3 the 'emotional loneliness' scale. The most intrusive questions which we have ommitted are all the 'emotional loneliness' questions. Q.4 is an emotion-based question as it asks about about satisfaction with relationships, and so it seems theoretically appropriate for it to replace the 3 'emotional loneliness' DJG questions.

When scored in the same way as the DJG scale (with 'Strongly disagree', 'Disagree' and 'Nuetral' all scored as 1, and 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' scored as 0), this generates a scale from 0 to 4 and an strong ***construct validity correlation coefficient of r = 0.899 (p<0.001).***

However, ***for practical use***, this small range of 0 to 4 is not very good at showing small differences between the extreme ends of the loneliness scale. Once the 'Strongly agree' and 'Strongly disagree' responses has been scored separately, these four questions generate a total score range between 0 and 12. This score range will allow much more nuance in the ability for practitioners to see their service users change in their state of loneliness. There is, however, a very slight decrease in correlation to the the 6-item DJG scale when using this scoring range (r = 0.871 vs. r = 0.899).

Comparing the results produced by the the CTEL/DJG Combo Tool and the full De Jong Gierveld Tool is an important test of the accuracy of the new tool. If it can be calibrated to produce similar results for 'not lonely' and 'lonely' then it can be used as a useful measure of loneliness. As indicated in the table below, one can be certain that ***76% of individuals*** will be classed exactly the same as would be when using the 6-point DJG scale. The ***other 24%*** may be slightly miss-classified with an adjacant category (e.g. the new tool could label them 'lonely' while the original 6-item DJG tool lavels them 'a little lonely'). ***Importantly, none*** of the cases would be classified in an extremely different catergory (e.g. 'not lonely' if they are 'very lonely' according to the 6-item DJG scale).

Summary of comparrison between the CTEL-DJG combination tool and the original DJG tool:									Number of cases	Percent
Strong disagreement; people classified as not lonely by the CTEL-DJG combination tool (scoring V3) when they are classified as lonely by the original JDG tool:									0	0.0
Strong disagreement; people classified as lonely by the CTEL-DJG combination when they are not according to the original DJG tool:									0	0.0
						Total strong disagreement:			**0**	**0.0**
Low disagreement; people classified as not lonely by the CTEL-DJG combination tool (scoring V3) but classified as somewhat lonely by the original DJG tool:									39	11.6
Low disagreement; people classified as somewhat lonely by the CTEL-DJG combination tool (scoring V3) but classified as not lonely by the original DJG tool:									11	3.3
Low disagreement; people classified as somewhat lonely by the CTEL-DJG combination tool (scoring V3) but classified as very lonely by the original DJG tool:									4	1.2
Low disagreement; people classified as most lonely by the CTEL-DJG combination tool (scoring V3) but classified as somewhat lonely by the original DJG tool:									27	8.0
						Total low disagreement:			**81**	**24.0**
Complete agreement; people classified as not lonely by both tools.									83	24.6
Complete agreement; people classified as somewhat lonely by both tools.									53	15.7
Complete agreement; people classified as most lonely byboth tools.									120	35.6
						Total complete agreement:			**256**	**76.0**

Method of Completion
It was left up to the piloting organisations to decide how to deliver the survey tool. There were two main ways:-
1. self completion – where the older person completed the form on their own
2. assisted completion – where the older person was engaged in discussion about the questions by a member of staff or volunteer

The statistical analysis showed a significant difference in results depending on the method of completion. Only 9.62% of the assisted completion group reported being 'most lonely', whereas 23.74% of the self completion group scored 'most lonely'. This difference is most likely to be as a result of a bias effect of people not wanting to display the extent of their loneliness to another person. However given the significant differences in the levels of loneliness across the different organisations there is a slight possibility that this might have contributed to this effect.

There didn't appear to be any significant difference in the results produced by versions of the forms which had 'smiley faces' scoring compared to text answers.

Further validation
Now that two valid tools have been identified there is a further test which now needs to be conducted. The Sensitivity of the tools to measuring change over time needs to be assessed. It is important in order to establish whether the tool is able to detect changes in people's situation over time. This is tested by comparing mean scores using a paired samples t-test. A decision will need to be made as to whether further field trials should be undertaken to in order to address this sensitivity testing.

Feedback

Organisations were asked to provide general feedback on the experience of piloting the tool:-

- From the perspective of service users

- From the perspective of staff/volunteers administering the tool

- From the perspective of the organisation

In providing this feedback organisations were advised that it was quite important to concentrate on the experience associated with the draft questionnaire – and not the additional validation process (ie the de Jong Gierveld questions on the second page). Having looked at the feedback received it is not clear that people were able to make this separation. So concerns about the difficulties in completing the form need to be seen in this context – the pilot was a 13 item survey; the proposed final tool is a 2 item survey – a very different proposition.

The feedback received is outlined in full at Appendix A. Some of the main issues raised were as follows:-

- There were as many comments about the tool being difficult to complete as there were that it was easy. De Jong Gierveld questions were singled out and referred to as particularly distressing.

- A number of organisations commented that they thought it was better to complete the form in discussion with the person – partly to make it easier for them, but also so that something could be done if the person was reporting significant loneliness.

- Some of the language was commented on – with particular reference made to the suitability of the term 'relationships'. Does it refer to romantic, friendships or family?

- Some found the 'smiley faces' option difficult; others found it easier.

- Some comments were more fundamentally about the nature of one off surveys.

  For example one organisations stated that – "*because the questions measure different things, the answers can be felt as 'inconsistent' – for example someone may generally have plenty of friends and support, but feel lonely at home or at weekends because they miss their husband/wife if widowed. Or someone may not feel particularly lonely, but equally not feel part of a 'community' (or want to be part of one).* ".

  Another organisation commented – "*They were slightly unsure about the phrase "the extent to which they apply to your current situation" because it wasn't clear for them whether it was about how they felt at that moment in*

time or in general. Staff felt that it was answered more 'in the moment'
rather than in a wider or general sense of loneliness.”

Another stated that – "*the measures of 'plenty', 'many', 'often' were felt to*
set the bar too high. *The phrase 'see family as often as it suits me' made*
some people uncomfortable, because they felt that the problems of busy
families meant that they couldn't but they also understood that this was
inevitable and therefore not a 'fair' assessment."

These kind of issues are endemic in any survey approach and it is not clear
how to address them.

- Organisations would welcome a guide on how to score the results.

- There are access issues to be addressed for people with learning difficulties,
  visual impairment or dyslexia.

Conclusions and Discussion Points

The project appears to have arrived at a positive conclusion. It would appear that we have developed two valid meausures of loneliness both of which are shorter than most of the alternatives and are couched in language which is much less distressing to older people. The CTEL Tool has also been developed through a highly participative process with older people and voluntary organisations.

There are a number of issues for the Steering Group to consider:-

Two or Three Item scale
A two item scale is more effective than ELSA and nearly as effective as the full De Jong Gierveld 6 item scale:-
a.   I have enough people I feel comfortable asking for help at any time
b.   My relationships are as satisfying as I would want them to be

However, the addition of a third question
*c. **I am content with my friendships and relationships***
improves the effectiveness of the tool a little, but could meet with some resistance given the similarity of the two of the questions. What should CTEL advise – the two or the three item scale?

Additional information
How should CTEL advise organisations about asking additional, open questions that unpick why someone might be experiencing loneliness. This could cover questions such as:-
* What time of the week do you find most difficult?
* What would you like to change in your life?
* Do you live on your own?

Method of administering
Advice needs to be given to organizations about how to administer the tool. There was quite strong feedback from the piloting that organisations felt that it was important to assist people in completion of the forms. On the other hand it was clear within the statistical analysis that self completion appeared to pick up greater levels of loneliness. What should CTEL advise organisations to do? (It should be remembered that we are now advocating a two, three or four item questionnaire rather than the 13 item one which was used in the piloting – so assistance should not be so important)

Equalities
Should some further piloting with ethnic minority communities be undertaken to ensure that translated language versions are accessible and produce valid results. Should versions which are accessible to people with visual impairments be developed?

Pilot Feedback

Users reported that pilot tool was easier than the De Jong Gierveld questions. Generally well received by volunteers though one felt that it was too intrusive. The process went very smoothly. The organisation is very interested in having a tool that will help assess levels of loneliness and to use when reviewing impact of services. Existing tools are a bit basic and do not measure impact.

Generally a good response to volunteers and the questionnaire seemingly interesting but not always easy to complete in limited time. BS3 CT felt it to be a good tool.

We probably wouldn't have achieved such a high return if the questionnaire was only available as a word document and would not have had the resources to participate fully in this pilot given the costs of posting and administering returned forms and staff time to introduce this to carers face-to-face etc.

Non-middle class service users found the tool to be positive as long as it was carried out through an interview. Being given the chance to talk about their issues with the staff member made them feel a sense of 'relief'. Older middle class service users were generally offended by the questions and felt that they were too intrusive. However, it was stated that the more positively worded questions were effective and the negatively worded questions should be removed, particularly question 1. All service users felt that a follow up would be necessary a few days after administering the tool. Older middle class service users recommended using less passive questions e.g. "What would you like to change in your life?" One user advised that the term 'relationships' should be clarified or made into separate questions for romantic relationships, friendships and family. She also thought it was positive to use direct questions. For staff: it was a positive experience when the service users were less offended! You need a good 40 minute time period to administer the tool as some of the questions need to be discussed and followed up with advice. There is a lot of responsibility involved. For the organisation - the tool would certainly be useful as a before and after for our older volunteers as well as beneficiaries of all ages. However, it needs some editing – see below.

The volunteers conducting the questionnaire found the lengthy preamble was frustrating (although appreciated it was necessary to give participants this information). From the perspective of the organisation it was a difficult and sensitive set of questions to ask in view of the nature of our services users

Some users found the use of 'smiley faces' difficult.

As this was done by a mail-out it was not much of an administrative burden. However, the people replying were probably disproportionately individuals who were comfortable with completing forms and posting them. We received 36 response out 70. We probably missed out on less-able people whom we support.

Questions generally seen as easy to understand and to answer. However, some people refused to answer – they don't want to take part in questionnaires and feel bombarded already by cold calls. (This is the downside of calling people at an early stage of service engagement before they feel part of the service. Also, presumably would be better face to face.). Because the questions measure different things, the answers can be felt as 'inconsistent' – for example someone may generally have plenty of friends and support, but feel lonely at home or at weekends because they miss their husband/wife if widowed. Or someone may not feel particularly lonely, but equally not feel part of a 'community' (or want to be part of one). Some queries from service users about the question wording: question 2 assumes that people want to meet people with similar hobbies/interests; questions 1 and 4 not always clear what is meant by the word 'relationships' and how this is different to friendships (would it make more sense to say 'family relationships'?). Some people were not keen on the use of the word 'rejected' (they felt this was too strong), also the measures of 'plenty', 'many', 'often' were felt to set the bar too high. The phrase 'see family as often as it suits me' made some people uncomfortable, because they felt that the problems of busy families meant that they couldn't but they also understood that this was inevitable and therefore not a 'fair' assessment. From the perspective of staff/volunteers administering the tool - When conducting by phone, need someone who can establish a rapport on the phone. Helpful to clearly link the purpose of the questions to service development, rather than calling it a questionnaire (as people very reluctant to complete questionnaires given number of cold calls people get). Better to conduct questions like this by phone or face to face than written as might be difficult to understand the context and value of them without a good explanation, and also questions are quite private/sensitive and people may not want to just return this kind of information by post. Sometimes our interviewer found it difficult to keep people focused on the questions, it does need someone with skills around this and a good understanding of why it matters to ask the questions as written and not to steer people. From the perspective of the organisation - It was not a particularly time consuming task, although as expected some phone calls took longer than others and some older people wanted/needed to continue a broader conversation once the sensitive issues around loneliness had been raised. If done as part of a general initial assessment of someone for service provision, this would be less of an issue – compared to doing it as a one off exercise. As mentioned above, it calls on someone with good phone skills to build a rapport but also be able to be clear about the limits of the phone call and signpost to what other support is available.

Service users mostly were generally happy to complete the forms, though is some areas there was more hesitancy. It was not always clear what the reluctance was about, however one clear piece of feedback was that people felt insulted by it and that it didnt apply to them. There was also 'form fatique' with people feeling burdened about having to complete another form. Staff didn't encounter any problems. The organisation didn;t encounter any difficulties in piloting the form. Their primay concern is whether the toolkit will be seen as vailed in terms of evidiencing the effectiveness of the work. Another concern is how to incorporate the questionnaire into existing paper work in a way that is sensitive and non intrusive.

Service users seemed to find the tool easy to answer – only 2 people who returned the rest of the forms in their pack had failed to fill out the questionnaire. There is a possibility that some of the answers were given mistakenly thinking that we would prefer to see a positive attitude/response – this certainly seems to have been the case in the past with other well being measuring tools we have attempted to use. However it is difficult to tell if this is the case or not. The organisation found the tool very easy to administer, it was sent alongside usual paperwork and was no extra effort to include. A guide to analysing the results would be helpful, although I appreciate it's mostly self explanatory. Felt that the information collected will be very useful for including in reports and stats, without being too intrusive to the beneficiaries as it can easily be included in paperwork we ask them to complete anyway. Therefore it will be very beneficial to be able to use this tool.

Users in general found it easy to relate to the smiley faces instead of trying to associate their feelings with complex words. They were slightly unsure about the phrase "the extend to which they apply to your current situation" because it wasn't clear for them whether it was about how they felt at that moment in time or in general. Staff felt that it was answered more 'in the moment' rather than in a wider or general sense of loneliness. However they did find a general interest from residents in the survey itself. Staff who gathered the data found it relatively easy to complete. However surveys were usually gatthered at social gatherings instead of seeking out people who might be lonely.

Almost every single person prefferred the de Jong Gierveld questions on the basis that it was more succinct. Staff felt that it was hard to ask people to complete the questionnaires and preferred the organisation to fund the Podnosh Impact Assessment which is claimed to be more about "how have we helped you today" based and likely to reveal loneliness but not in such a blatant way. The organisation feels that this tool is not suitable for it.

Users thought first question should read "I have as much company as I want, with people I get on with". One user felt there should be a question about whether the person lived on their own. A few participants also felt that the response didn't read correctly, such as for question one - "yes/no/I would like more".   For the organisation administering the tool ti was fair enough asking

these questions but it is important that clients who are taking part, who are identified as lonely, can be assured that something can be done about it.

General public perspective: The Community Organiser was surprised at how honestly people rated their answers. Even when she completed it with two men together, one said he felt rejected for example, when the other did not. Another said his relationships were not what he would wish, when his neighbour said his were. One woman said 'Although my answers have been negative, it has been helpful in showing me what the problem is'. We were then able to talk about what might enable her to do the things she wanted to do but wasn't doing. People seemed happy enough to take part. One man drinks all day and 'likes drinking' – although his answers seemed pretty depressing to the Community Organiser – when she asked him at the end how it had felt to go through the statements, he said he had enjoyed our conversation. From the Community Organiser's perspective as an 'administering' person - she was dubious at first (particularly about the de Jong Gierfield tool) but found both sets of statements useful tools that lead naturally to conversations about desire for change, what might facilitate desired change and wider conversation about community.

Number of comments from users - "I wanted to fill this out with you here because although my situation has changed since my volunteer befriender started visiting me I do still feel lonely most of the time". "I am not sure what to put...the form is a bit confusing...please can you explain it to me". "I am dyslexic – can you help?". "I'm confused by the questions and answers". From the perspective if staff/volunteers administering the tool - We were not surprised that we didn't get a huge response from our scheme members through the postal questionnaire method. Most of the people I spoke to said they found the form difficult to complete. This was mainly due to: - The fact they had forgotten the question by the time I had asked them if they strongly agreed...right through to prefer not to answer. -Not understanding the questions. - I would say that the majority of people who I sat down with to go through the form found it difficult to complete. There were of course exceptions to this – I would say 5 or 6 managed to fill it out without questions or uncertainty. There are a number of factors that could have impacted on their ability to complete the form on their own: - Learning disability - Visual impairment - Environment i.e. on a 1:1 basis or in a group situation. We would have liked to have been able to speak to each of our scheme members face to face to go through the questionnaire. We didn't feel our members would appreciate going through the questions over the phone as the people we liaised with face to face found some of the questions difficult to answer. I don't think we had much of a response to the post mail out because it was sent in an impersonal way. Judging by the responses of other participants we spoke to face to face the questions weren't always easy to answer which could have hindered the process. A large number of our scheme members have visual or hearing impairments or have dementia and other illnesses which could offer another explanation as to why we did not receive a large response to our mail out. The group situations on the other hand seemed to work well. We definitely would say this was the most effective method. Most people within the group knew each other quite well which I think enabled people to answer openly and ask questions between themselves if needed. At New Larchwood the participants were really enthused to be part of the pilot which could help to make a difference to service provision for older people. At the HOPE event the older people who participated not only know each other well but have known me for some time so I think all these factors contributed to the effectiveness of this approach.

In general those clients participating from Toynbee Hall were happy to be part of the pilot, and although we discussed the challenging topic and wording used, they engaged in discussion around loneliness. Other outreach staff and providers reported much more resistant and hesitant, and concerned about the language used. Some of these participants found the questions very challenging, becoming emotional and tearful. The outreach staff found it very challenging. They found the questions provoked crying and very painful emotional responses. Some of the clients were seamen, who ended up here in the UK and could no longer leave to go home due to long term health conditions, and the questions around community and relationships were very difficult, the clients became very upset. For the organisation - we were excited about the tool, but with some of the experiences the staff have reported, we were concerned with some of the language used, and how this had left come of the participants