

## **HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD**

**21 OCTOBER 2014**

### **A STRATEGY TO REDUCE SOCIAL ISOLATION IN MEDWAY (2014-2018)**

Report from: Dr Alison Barnett, Director of Public Health

Author: Colin Thompson, Consultant in Public Health

#### **Summary**

Social isolation is a key priority of the Medway Health and Wellbeing Board and this strategy has been developed to tackle the issue across Medway. A draft of the strategy is being brought to Medway Health and Wellbeing Board for approval prior to being sent to the Cabinet.

#### **1. Budget and Policy Framework**

- 1.1 Social isolation has been identified as a priority within the Medway Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Health and Wellbeing Board has identified the development of a strategy to address social isolation within its priorities for 2014/15.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 Social isolation occurs when a person has little or no social interaction with other people and society. It differs from loneliness, which is concerned with negative feelings that an individual may have due to a lack or loss of meaningful social relationships. Social isolation can affect anyone, although certain groups in the population are at increased risk.
- 2.2 Social isolation can have a considerable negative impact on health and wellbeing. It is associated with a range of negative health outcomes including; increased risk of dementia, high blood pressure, stress levels, poorer immunity and death. Research has shown that people with strong social relationships have a 50% increased likelihood of survival than those with weaker social relationships. This difference on survival is comparable with well-established risk factors for mortality such as smoking, obesity and physical inactivity.
- 2.3 The Medway Health and Wellbeing Board have determined social isolation as one of its key priorities and will oversee the implementation of the strategy.
- 2.4 This strategy has been developed with the overarching aim of preventing and reducing the complex range of harms associated with being socially isolated.

In order to achieve this aim, three key strategic themes have been identified;

- Raising awareness
- Action for individuals
- Community Action

2.5 For each strategic theme, there are a range of targeted actions, although some actions may span all three. For each theme, there will be an aspiration to work in partnership to ensure there is a joined approach in tackling social isolation.

### **3. Advice and analysis**

3.1 A Diversity Impact Assessment has been completed for the strategy and is appended to this report as Annex A. It is recommended that no further action is necessary. The reason for this is due to the strategy not having actions that have negative effects on any of the protected characteristic groups.

### **4. Risk management**

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Action to avoid or mitigate risk</b>	<b>Risk rating</b>
The voluntary & community Sector and statutory agencies do not engage with the Strategy	The voluntary & community Sector is not responsive to the needs of the community or influencing the planning of services by statutory agencies	Establish strong communication arrangements to ensure delivery of the outcomes in the Strategy	D1
Lack of a mechanism for co-ordinated decision making by strategic partners	Statutory agencies and voluntary & community sector have a reduction in capacity due to uncoordinated funding decisions or staffing changes.	Key stakeholders involved with the strategy being implemented create a platform for developing such a mechanism	D2

### **5. Consultation**

5.1 The strategy was informed by focus groups with a range of groups at risk of social isolation in Medway. Consultation on the draft has taken place with the Corporate Management Team at Medway council and key stakeholders from the voluntary and community sector and statutory agencies (e.g. Medway Voluntary Action, Medway CCG, Carer's First).

### **6. Financial and legal implications**

6.1 Recommendations will be financed from existing resources from agencies within the public and voluntary sector.

6.2 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. The decision to adopt the strategy is a decision for Cabinet. Cabinet's decision will be

informed by the Board's recommendations and by the DIA, which will help ensure that the Council has complied with its public sector equality duty under section 149 Equality Act 2010.

## **7. Recommendations**

- 7.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to comment on the draft strategy prior to its submission to Cabinet for formal approval and adoption.

### **Lead officer contact**

Dr Alison Barnett, Director of Public Health

01634 335176

[Alison.barnett@medway.gov.uk](mailto:Alison.barnett@medway.gov.uk)

### **Background papers**

Draft version of Strategy to reduce social isolation in Medway 2014-2018

Diversity Impact Assessment of Strategy