

**HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
13 DECEMBER 2018**

**TASK GROUP DRAFT REPORT: THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL
ISOLATION IN MEDWAY**

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Summary

The draft Task Group report considers the impact of social isolation and loneliness in Medway and makes a number of recommendations for actions that the Council and other organisations can take to reduce social isolation in Medway.

The Task Group hopes that the recommendations contained in the report will act as a catalyst to further tackling social isolation and loneliness in Medway and the negative impact that it has on health and wellbeing.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 Under Chapter 4 of the Constitution (Part 5 – Overview and Scrutiny Rules - paragraph 21.1 (xvii)), each overview and scrutiny committee has the responsibility to appoint time limited Task Groups to undertake in-depth reviews within the overall programme of reviews agreed each year by the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to make recommendations to the Council and Leader and Cabinet as appropriate. The review topic, 'The Impact of Social Isolation in Medway' is within the remit of the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The recommendations will also be of interest and relevance to the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 1.2 The recommendations arising from the review are consistent with the Council's Policy Framework.

2. Background

- 2.1 In June 2011 the BS OSC agreed to exercise a more pro-active role than previously in prioritising the programme of in-depth scrutiny review work. This followed a Council decision that a maximum of three reviews or themed meetings can be undertaken annually across all four OSCs in light of

shrinking capacity across the organisation – representing a shift from the previous position of multiple Task Groups with no fixed timelines running at any one time.

- 2.2 In line with best practice the Committee also decided to adopt a more systematic approach to the selection of topics with nominations submitted by each Committee, taking into account suggestions and advice from Directors and Deputy/Assistant Directors.
- 2.3 The selection of topics for the current round of in-depth scrutiny reviews was agreed by the Business Support O and S Committee on 30 November 2017 as follows:

Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee	The Impact of Social Isolation in Medway
Health and Adult Social Care / Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committees	Support for Carers
Health and Social Care, Children and Young People, Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committees	Physical Activity
Regeneration, Culture and Environment and Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committees	Town Centres for the 21 st Century

- 2.4 The Task Group commenced its work in May 2018 following conclusion of previous Task Group looking at Employment Opportunities for 18 to 25 year olds.
- 2.5 The Membership of the Task Group included Councillors Purdy (Chairman), Aldous, McDonald, Price and Wildey.

3. Terms of Reference

- 3.1 The Task Group's Terms of Reference were as follows:
- 3.2 It is proposed that the Task Group reviews progress to date in Medway and opportunities to enhance existing work as well as considering the national picture to ensure that Medway's approach is aligned with the emerging national picture.
- 3.3 It is recognised that the voluntary sector and local communities are both critically important to addressing the causes of social isolation and to promoting community connectedness and it will therefore be important to consider the views and contribution of community groups as part of the evidence gathering.
- 3.4 The Key lines of enquiry were as follows:
- To define and understand the term social isolation and how it differs from loneliness.

- To consider national research and guidance on what works to reduce loneliness and social isolation.
- To review progress against themes identified in Medway's social isolation strategy – 'A Strategy to Reduce Social Isolation 2014-18' and to identify any gaps and arising opportunities.
- To consider the role of Council services, such as Adult Social Care and other service providers in helping to address social isolation and to identify where Medway Council could provide support and add value and to consider the impact of the physical environment.
- To consider the role that Medway Councils' key stakeholders can play and possible interventions to address social isolation e.g. health partners, the voluntary sector, other key local institutions and organisations.
- To review the way in which local communities could improve the manner in which they help themselves.
- To investigate the current interventions provided by a range of organisations, including local, regional or national examples and identify ways in which partners and local communities can work together further to address social isolation in Medway.
- To thoroughly investigate social isolation affecting older people and also to consider the impact on younger adults (including young parents).

4. Methodology

- 4.1 On 10 May 2018, the Task Group met to discuss the background to the review, as well as the review scope and to agree its Terms of Reference. At this point, the group also considered the methodology for the review and agreed to hold a series of round table evidence sessions, thereby providing an opportunity for the participants to get together in an informal setting to examine the issues as they relate to their specific service or organisation.
- 4.2 In addition to the roundtable evidence gathering sessions, a meeting was also arranged with Tracey Crouch MP, Minister for Loneliness to find out about the Government's plans to address social isolation and to discuss how councils could play their part in this work.
- 4.3 The Task Group also agreed a visit to Bracknell Forest in order to find out about the significant amount of work undertaken by Bracknell Forest Council and other organisations to address social isolation and loneliness in that area.
- 4.4 Following the first roundtable evidence gathering session with a variety of Council services, it was agreed that further roundtable discussions would be held with locally based public and voluntary sector organisations to find out about work already being undertaken to address social isolation and loneliness and to discuss what further activity could be undertaken and how Medway Council could support this.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations of the Task Group

- 5.1 The Task Group held its final meeting on 14 November to agree the draft report and recommendations.
- 5.2 It had been anticipated that the recommendations of the Task Group would be presented according to the relevant theme of the Council's existing Social Isolation Strategy, the themes of which were raising awareness, action for

individuals and community action. However, due to a number of recommendations being relevant to two or more of the themes, this approach has not been taken. The evidence and recommendations have instead been grouped according to the key issues and proposed action areas identified during the Task Group's evidence gathering.

- 5.3 The recommendations put forward by the Task Group recognise both that financial resources are constrained and that the variety of existing work being undertaken by the Council and other organisations will already be addressing social isolation in Medway.
- 5.4 The Government has published its Loneliness Strategy since the Task Group undertook its evidence gathering. An additional recommendation has therefore been made for the national strategy to be reviewed against local activity to consider alignment to local activity and avoid unnecessary duplication.
- 5.5 A key finding of the Task Group is that work to address social isolation and loneliness is not always as joined up as it could be, with a need to strengthen communications and awareness raising of the local offer and the need to bring organisations together having been highlighted.

6. Future Timetable

- 6.1 The timetable for securing approval of the report is as follows:
- **13 December** – Health and Adult Social Care OSC considers report
 - **15 January 2019** - Cabinet considers report
- 6.2 In recognition of the proposed role of the Health and Wellbeing Board in monitoring implementation of the recommendations of the Task Group and in overseeing the broader work taking place to address social isolation and loneliness, it is proposed that the report is presented to the February 2019 meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

7. Risk management

- 7.1 There are no risks arising from the report. However, adoption by Cabinet of the recommendations would lead to various options being explored and, at that point, any risks would need to be assessed.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 Any service improvements as a result of the recommendations of this report will need to be delivered from within existing budgets. The work of the Task Group was supported by Democratic Services and officers from Public Health and Adult Social Care.
- 8.2 There is a small budget held by Democratic Services to meet the cost of any visits, stakeholder events or expenses incurred by expert witnesses associated with the review. The only cost incurred during this review was the hire of a mini bus for the Task Group visit to Bracknell Forest.

8.3 Task Groups are advised to formulate recommendations in the context of the prevailing financial climate.

9. Legal implications

9.1 Medway Council has a legal obligation under section 149 Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality, and foster good relations between those with a protected characteristic (pregnancy and maternity, age discrimination, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it.

9.2 To assist the Council in fulfilling the legal obligations set out above, a Diversity Impact Assessment has been undertaken. This is included as an appendix to the draft report.

9.3 There are no other legal implications arising from the recommendations. However, officers may need to consider the legal implications of some recommendations as the proposals are developed.

10. Recommendation

10.1 It is requested that the Committee considers the report and recommendations made by the Social Isolation Task Group, as set out at Appendix A and agrees to recommend it to Cabinet on 15 January 2019.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Task Group Draft Report.

Background papers

The background papers relied upon in producing the report from the Task Group are set out within the main report.