

Recommendations of the Social Isolation Task Group – ‘The Impact of Social Isolation in Medway’

Recommendation No.	Text of Recommendation	Update July 2019
1	That Cabinet asks the Chief Finance Officer to investigate how Council Tax and benefit related correspondence could be utilised to send out information about social isolation and to work with Public Health and Voluntary Sector Partners to identify what information could be provided.	The opportunity to include a link to the online “Staying Connected” Booklet as part of Council corporate communications in the autumn is being scoped by finance. This booklet outlines services and support for over 55s who may be lonely or isolated.
2	That Cabinet requests that Bereavement Services consider how to engage, with appropriate sensitivity, with individuals observed to repeatedly visit Medway cemeteries alone, in order to establish whether the person feels isolated or lonely and if so, to signpost them to appropriate services, for example those in the Staying Connected resource.	Bereavement services staff have attended social isolation training and evaluation shows staff have increased knowledge of services available and how to signpost people to support. Bereavement services have updated their website to include the Staying Connected booklet. Staying Connected booklets are now available at Medway crematorium and at Council owned cemeteries.
3	<p>That Cabinet requests that Housing Management / Strategic Housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Works with contractor Mears and MHS Homes to further develop community involvement activities within social housing developments in Medway which aim to promote community connectedness and reduce isolation. ii) Investigates the feasibility of people living in sheltered housing, who are not otherwise visited by friends or relatives on a regular basis, receiving regular weekend visits, linking up with the voluntary sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Reducing loneliness and social isolation is addressed at ongoing meetings with contractors Mears and MHS Homes. This includes awareness of support available across Medway. MHS Homes are also a member of the Medway Social Isolation Network. ii) An item is scheduled for the September social isolation network to look at housing and isolation and identify opportunities for partners to work more closely together.

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	iii) Investigates the possibility of establishing a Homeshare scheme in Medway.	iii) A meeting is taking place with a provider of a Homeshare scheme in Medway in August to explore opportunities and benefits that a similar scheme in Medway could provide.
4	That Cabinet requests that Public Health further investigates the 'Chatty Café Scheme' and other similar schemes, including the Places of Welcome Scheme run by the Diocese of Rochester, with a view to encouraging cafes in Medway to participate and to consider whether local venues could be encouraged to offer a similar service.	Criteria for a Medway "Talkative Tables" scheme are in development, and it is planned to consult partners in the social isolation network on these in the autumn. A range of voluntary sector organisations also run schemes across Medway aimed at encouraging conversations e.g. dementia cafes and the rural café bus in HOO (delivered by Action in Rural Kent).
5	That Cabinet requests that Partnership Commissioning investigates the possibility of the Council supporting widening the offer of Community Interest Companies in Medway, such as Walderslade Together and Hoo Peninsula Cares, to enable similar provision for other parts of Medway.	An evaluation of the outcomes of wHoo Cares and Walderslade Together, as part of the development of a wider social prescribing initiative is currently being undertaken. The outcome of this work will inform how best to take forward initiatives like this across Medway.
6	That Cabinet requests that Partnership Commissioning, in conjunction with local voluntary sector organisations, investigates existing volunteer databases and investigates the need for and feasibility of establishing a Medway database of volunteers, if a suitable existing database cannot be identified.	Medway Voluntary Action currently hosts a database for both voluntary groups and potential volunteers in Medway. The "VC direct" database has over 900 voluntary sector groups listed. The Medway Volunteer Network, helps and advises interested people to volunteering opportunities across Medway http://www.medwayvoluntaryaction.org.uk/Volunteering-Volunteers
7	That Cabinet requests that Departmental Management Teams consider appointing a lead champion for reducing	Lead champions have been recruited for service areas across the Council.

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	social Isolation and promoting community connectedness for each service area, particularly frontline services and that, led by Public Health, this group of officers meet as a task and finish group.	<p>A new social isolation training session has been developed in 2019 and is being delivered, and over thirty lead champions from across the Council have been trained to date.</p> <p>Evaluation forms demonstrate that the training is improving awareness of social isolation and knowledge about what support is available for residents and how to signpost people to it.</p> <p>Leads are sharing information with their teams through team meetings and other forums.</p>
8	That Cabinet requests that Social Isolation Awareness training is delivered to key frontline staff and that training is offered to Members as part of the Councillor induction process following the next Medway Council elections in May 2019.	See update for action 7. In addition, Public Health induction was provided for Councillors in June 2019 with an overview of public health topics including social isolation. Options for a bespoke social isolation training session for Councillors as part of the ongoing member development programme are being discussed with Member Services for later in the year.
9	That the Procurement and Partnership Commissioning Teams give consideration to how the Council's procurement and commissioning arrangements could encourage organisations tendering for Council and jointly commissioned services to ensure that their staff and models of service delivery contribute to the reduction of social isolation and promotion of community connectedness in Medway.	Procurement and Partnership Commissioning teams have awarded procurements which address social isolation. Work is ongoing to make all bidders aware of signposting literature (e.g. Staying Connected) and spreading the message through all procurement activities.
10	<p>That information on the impact of Social Isolation and Loneliness be collected as follows:</p> <p>i) Via a question relating to social isolation / loneliness to be included in the annual staff survey.</p>	i) The June 2019 staff survey included a question related to social isolation, by asking staff if they feel they have opportunities to connect with colleagues. The question asked colleagues to score how much they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: "I feel part of the

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	<p>ii) That opportunities to include the impact of social isolation and loneliness within impact assessments carried out in relation to Council policies be explored.</p>	<p>Council family and have good opportunities to connect with other colleagues". The results will be reviewed and any opportunities for action identified.</p> <p>ii) Scoping work is underway looking at best practice and how this is incorporated in impact assessments in other areas.</p>
11	<p>That future surveys of Medway residents consider including questions relating to social isolation or loneliness in order to improve data in relation to social isolation amongst population groups in Medway.</p>	<p>Questions are being drafted for inclusion in the August 2019 Medway Citizen's Panel, to further build evidence about loneliness and isolation in Medway.</p> <p>Additionally, a household health and wellbeing survey is under development, which is it is anticipated will be implemented in the near future. This will include questions in relation to social isolation.</p>
12	<p>That Cabinet:</p> <p>i) Agrees to designate the Cabinet Member for Adults' Services as a Medway Social Isolation Ambassador, who will take the lead in representing the Council at external events and functions relevant to social isolation and loneliness and would promote action to raise awareness of the issues and actions necessary to help tackle social isolation and loneliness in Medway and promote community connectedness.</p> <p>ii) Acknowledges that in addition to the appointment of a Medway Social Isolation Ambassador, all Councillors should play a wider community role in</p>	<p>Councillor Brake is fulfilling the role of Social Isolation Ambassador as part of his portfolio for Adults' Services. Councillor Brake took part in an interview with BBC Radio Kent in June 2019 to discuss social isolation and promote the launch of Medway's campaign to tackle loneliness and isolation in Medway "A Better Medway – Together".</p>

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	helping to identify socially isolated or lonely people and signposting them to appropriate sources of advice and support.	
13	That Cabinet requests that the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee both have an active role in monitoring implementation of the recommendations of the Task Group.	A six month progress monitoring report will be presented/provided to both of these Boards/Committees.
14	<p>That Cabinet:</p> <p>i) Expresses its support for the development of social prescribing in Medway and of an associated directory of services, subject to appropriate funding being secured and requests that this work is promoted across the Council to enable staff to signpost isolated individuals to appropriate support.</p>	<p>i) The Medway 'Connect Well' Website was launched in June 2019. It is a searchable online database of organisations and activities in Medway, administered by Medway Voluntary Action (MVA). https://www.connectwellmedway.org.uk/</p> <p>People who aren't able to access it electronically can be supported over the phone by MVA to access the information.</p> <p>Medway Council have additionally secured some European funding to launch a new social prescribing service that specifically supports socially isolated older people (over the age of 65) to become less socially isolated. This programme will see three new link workers employed, and over the three-year programme they aim to support over 1,000 people living in Medway.</p> <p>The Medway Social Prescribing Network was also formed in December 2018, which is made up of a range of voluntary, public, health and academic sector partners. This network aims to support the coordination and ongoing development of the six social prescribing schemes happening across Medway. The network is also in place to</p>

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	<p>ii) Emphasises the importance of ensuring that adequate provision is made for people who are unable or unwilling to access information via the internet e.g. if an online directory of services is developed.</p> <p>iii) Requests that consideration be given with regard to whether any in-kind, non-financial support could be provided to local voluntary organisations where their activities or planned activities directly contribute to reducing social isolation or loneliness in Medway</p>	<p>support the development of the wider system dependencies that need to be in place to have a fully functioning social prescribing system. One of these system dependencies is the Connect Well Medway Directory of Services described above, with the ambition of providing a single portal for residents to find local activities. These activities have been through a self-validated quality assurance process, before being registered on the system. The range of activities includes physical activity, arts and a wide range of other social groups, mainly provided by the voluntary and community sector. These activities provide a wide opportunities for people that are socially isolated to participate in. The system has an inbuilt referral system that allows individuals to self-refer to services or health and social care professionals to refer to activities and track the output of those referrals.</p> <p>ii) The Medway 'Connect Well' Website offers people online support. Additional telephone support is offered to people who are unable or unwilling to access information electronically.</p> <p>The Council are supporting voluntary sector organisations to raise awareness of their services/support that contributes to reducing isolation.</p> <p>For example, through the "A Better Medway – Together" social media campaign to tackle isolation in Medway, third sector partners' are offered the opportunity to promote their services/activities through A Better Medway's communications channels, and through inclusion in the</p>

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		<p>“Staying Connected” guide. Support is also offered through the social isolation network, which is administered by Medway Council including sharing of best practice, funding opportunities etc.</p>
15	<p>That the Communications and Marketing team investigates the following, subject to resources being available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Undertaking a public campaign focusing on actions individuals and communities can take to promote community connectedness and contribute to reducing isolation and loneliness. ii) Promotion of activities and events run by local organisations that aim to reduce social isolation and loneliness and connect communities. 	<p>A new social media campaign to tackle isolation and loneliness in Medway was launched in June 2019 (loneliness awareness week). The campaign is called “A Better Medway – Together”.</p> <p>https://www.medway.gov.uk/community</p> <p>The campaign focuses on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the community to make more connections with others by asking people to make a pledge to connect with others. Pledges can be made by individuals or organisations, for example, pledges could include saying hello to your elderly neighbour, hosting a coffee morning or volunteering at a community event. • Raising awareness of activities, services and support in Medway that residents can access to connect with others and reduce loneliness, including featuring at least one activity or service weekly on social media where residents can connect with others. • 85 pledges have been made in the first month of the campaign. • An example of one pledge was Great Lines Parkrun, whose pledge was to ask those attending Parkrun during loneliness awareness week to: a)

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		<p>say hello to someone new at Parkrun or b) bring someone new along to Parkrun.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The A Better Medway – Together campaign is performing well on social media. For example, the campaign launch post received almost 4,000 social media impressions (number of times the post was displayed on users' newsfeeds). The launch facebook post was "liked" 242 times and shared 37 times. Examples of local projects which help people connect with others highlighted as part of the campaign are being viewed by over 1,000 people. The campaign can be followed on the "A Better Medway" social media pages or by following #MedwayTogether
16	That Cabinet requests that Public Health ensures / continues to ensure that copies of the 'Staying Connected' booklet are available in key locations, such as libraries, cemeteries / funeral directors and that consideration is given to producing a version of the booklet aimed at younger adults.	<p>Staying Connected booklets are distributed to a range of locations including libraries, sport centres, crematoriums and to people in their homes through Kent Fire and Rescue Safe and Well visits.</p> <p>Over 750 physical booklets have been distributed during 2019. Distribution has taken place through a range of public engagement events (Focus on days; Pensioner forum; and Medway Mile). The booklets are also available at a range of locations across Medway, for example libraries, council offices and crematoriums.</p> <p>The booklets have further been distributed to people in their own homes who may be isolated through Kent Fire and Rescue's safe and well home visits. The booklets can also be downloaded from the A Better Medway website.</p> <p>A review of the Staying Connected Guide was completed</p>

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		in July 2019 with the help of Kent University. It is planned that future versions of the staying connected booklet will be expanded to list opportunities for a wider age range of people to reduce loneliness and social isolation in Medway.
17	That Cabinet requests that the Council takes opportunities to engage with central Government's work on reducing social isolation and loneliness in Medway, including opportunities to highlight key issues and good practice in Medway.	Medway continues to engage with the national work around loneliness, for example linking the launch of the A Better Medway Together Campaign to the national Loneliness Awareness Week. The pensioners' information and advice fair, hosted by MP Tracey Crouch, was also attended and Staying Connected promoted.
18	That Cabinet requests that Medway Ethnic Minority Forum [now Medway Diversity Forum] be invited to join the Social Isolation Network with a view to discussing ways in which social isolation and loneliness can be addressed amongst BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) communities.	Medway Diversity Forum are a member of the Medway Social Isolation Network.
19	<p>That Cabinet recommends that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Arriva be invited to join the Social Isolation Network with a view to discussing the part it can play in helping to address social isolation and loneliness in Medway. ii) Consideration is given in relation to how the Villager community transport scheme could be enhanced to further address social isolation and loneliness. 	<p>Arriva have been invited to engage with and attend the Medway Social Isolation Network meetings.</p> <p>A discussion with Arriva will take place to investigate initiatives such as introducing 'Chatty Buses' routes.</p> <p>Arriva staff will be invited to attend the loneliness and social isolation training module, to further raise awareness of the issues with staff.</p> <p>This is ongoing and a discussion with Norse is planned to progress this recommendation. An initial meeting was held with transport to discuss this recommendation and it was felt that routine bus routes may provide more opportunities for conversations as the Villager service often runs day</p>

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		trips which promote opportunities for conversation. Therefore, an additional meeting is planned with Arriva and a voluntary sector representative to discuss this opportunity.
20	That Cabinet requests that evidence around the role of technology in reducing social isolation is reviewed and opportunities explored for a pilot within Adult Social Care / Public Health.	Cabinet has recently approved the Carers' Strategy and action plan, which includes consideration of social isolation. Partnership Commissioning are working with colleagues to ensure opportunities are explored to embed social isolation throughout their work. This will include offering opportunities, where appropriate, to pilot technological advancements that may reduce social isolation. The use of Wider use of Telecare and Telehealth and technology solutions are also being considered. Partnership working between Adult Social Care and Public Health will look at opportunities to attract funding to expand the use of technology.
21	That Cabinet commends the significant amount of work to address social isolation and loneliness already taking place across the Council and requests that consideration is given as to how the need to address these challenges could be taken into account as part of departmental service plans.	The Business Intelligence team are undertaking work to explore opportunities to embed social isolation within service plans and induction.
22	That the voluntary sector in Medway be encouraged to continue working with the Council to reduce social isolation, for example by attending the Social Isolation Network and supporting the Government Strategy and public campaigns aimed at reducing isolation.	The Medway Social Isolation Network (MSIN) meets regularly and is well attended. The network is engaged with over 30 local organisations. A Medway social isolation newsletter for professionals has been introduced in 2019 and three newsletters have been produced and distributed so far.

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23	That Cabinet requests that the Social Isolation Network reviews the national strategy against actions taking place in Medway and identifies any gaps for possible actions to be further investigated by the Council / partners.	In January 2019 the Medway social isolation network reviewed the action plan against the national strategy. The action plan was felt to be fit for purpose in light of the national strategy and no additional gaps/actions were identified by partners.