

# Connection Matters

Coming together to  
reduce loneliness

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Report by Samir Hakim,  
Research Officer

# Executive summary

## Connection Matters

On Friday 16 June 2023, Public Voice and Haringey Circle held the Connection Matters Conference, as part of a week-long programme of events for Loneliness Awareness Week. The Conference brought together over 100 attendees to celebrate the immense power of community and connection. Policymakers, professionals, and the public, gathered to collaborate on addressing pressing local issues related to loneliness. It served as a platform for meaningful discussions, sharing of insights, and the development of key recommendations to combat loneliness in Haringey.

This report aims to outline the significant recommendations, barriers, and insights gathered during the event, highlighting crucial steps to end loneliness in Haringey. We hope the Conference encourages everyone to reflect on their personal experience of loneliness, and identify proactive steps to manage such feelings, nurture social connections, and create positive change.

### **About Haringey Reach and Connect**

The Loneliness Awareness Week programme and Conference were led by the Haringey Reach and Connect, a service managed by Public Voice in partnership with MIND In Haringey and Vibrance, which provides support and friendship for over 50s living in Haringey. Reach and Connect worked alongside Haringey Circle and a range of community partners to create a week-long programme of activities celebrating social connection.

# Connection Matters Conference

This event was run in partnership by:



The Loneliness Awareness week programme was led by:



a service managed and delivered in partnership by:



# Executive summary

## Key Suggestions and Recommendations

As you read through this report you may find the information gathered familiar. Prior to this event we understood access to local spaces, transport, services to support mental health, dementia and carers all have the potential to impact positively on loneliness.

The event aimed to draw attention to the issues and needs. Most importantly we wanted to identify suggestions and recommendations to address outreach, accessibility, increased choice and improvement to support for residents, who are the most vulnerable to becoming chronically lonely due to health and/or circumstance.

It was wonderful to come together and to experience the passion and commitment to call out loneliness as a major and pervasive issue in Haringey. We wish to build on this desire to effect change and continue to promote connection in our community.

Going forward we pledge to engage with those who can help implement changes, address complex challenges, such as transport, work with partners to continue to raise awareness, and share knowledge and experience of available services.

If you would like to contribute to making these suggestions and recommendations a reality, please send ideas and offers of support to [Hello@ReachandConnect.net](mailto:Hello@ReachandConnect.net).

# The structure

## Connection Matters

### Section 1 – The Speakers (4 to 15)

In Section 1 of this report, we present an overview of the expert speakers who participated in the Connection Matters event. We will delve into their insights on the topic of loneliness, its impact on individuals, and explore potential strategies to foster a stronger sense of community and reduce loneliness within Haringey borough.

01

02

### Section 2 – The Scenarios (16 to 34)

In Section 2, hypothetical scenarios of loneliness among Haringey residents were presented to the attendees. The Connection Matters event facilitated discussions to recognise barriers faced by these individuals. Participants actively proposed solutions, and valuable recommendations emerged from the dialogue, offering ways to address and alleviate loneliness effectively.

03

### Section 3 – The Suggestions (35 to 40)

In Section 3, the attendees were involved in finding ways to reduce loneliness in Haringey. We proposed solutions and asked participants to rank them by effectiveness. Valuable feedback, enriched with quotes and additional suggestions, was collected from the discussions, contributing to a comprehensive plan for combating loneliness in the community.

# Section 1

## The speakers

In Section 1 of this report, we present an overview of the expert speakers who participated in the Connection Matters Conference. We will delve into their insights on the topic of loneliness, its impact on individuals, and explore potential strategies to foster a stronger sense of community and reduce loneliness within Haringey.

Keynote speakers included:

**Robin Hewings**

Director of The Campaign to End Loneliness.

**Paul Allen**

Head of Integrated Commissioning for North Central London  
Integrated Care Board.

**Charlotte Lewis**

Age-friendly Communities Network Manager,  
Centre for Ageing Better.

# What is loneliness?

## Frances, local poet – Poem on Loneliness

**“Lonely, what is loneliness?** You could be alone but not lonely. You could be in a crowd with friends and still feel lonely. Some prefer their own company, in these days of modern technology, the computer, the cell phone, text messages, and, oh, do not forget, the ever-popular internet.

Moving to another country where you do not know anybody. A country where there is a language barrier. You could have acquaintances but not real friends. You could be married and still feel lonely.

The spouse working hard and able to do daily journeys home, lack of communication leads to loneliness. Couples grow apart. More so when the children have grown up and flown the nest, One less at home feels more alone. So, to not know what is best, to stay where you are alone, or leave and still be more lonely. There are those who have lost one who find it difficult to make decisions. What to buy? Where to go? Sometimes, even what to wear? What a despair. But it is at nighttime that one feels real loneliness, where you automatically say good night, god bless. During the night, reaching out a hand to touch, and nobody is there. That is loneliness.”

# Robin Hewings

## The Campaign to End Loneliness

### What is the campaign to end loneliness?



The campaign to end loneliness is an initiative believing that people of all ages need connections that matter. The organisation has been experts in the field of loneliness and connection since 2011. Their vision is that everyone can live a life free from chronic loneliness.

### How can loneliness make us feel?



An important part to help relieve loneliness, is to understand how does loneliness make us feel?

This can include:

- Feeling like an outsider
- Being more self-conscious
- Being physically or mentally withdrawn
- Creating a barrier between yourself and the world around you
- Feeling like you need social contact, but you're less able to do it

### What is the impact of loneliness?



Loneliness can impact individuals of all ages, ranging from young people navigating uncertain educational and early career paths to new parents and the elderly. There are certain circumstances that can increase feelings of loneliness, such as financial struggles or living with specific health conditions or disabilities.



# What can we do about loneliness?



## Loneliness is shaped by different experiences

There is no single definitive method for curing loneliness, as it varies for each individual based on their unique experiences and needs. Different approaches are necessary to effectively reduce feelings of loneliness.



## Finding people

We need to find people who are experiencing loneliness. This can be challenging because people often do not openly express their feelings. We need to utilise our existing services such as social prescribing to reach out and engage with people who may benefit from support and create opportunities for meaningful connection.



## Listening to people

To combat loneliness, active listening is key. There's no single solution, so personalised interventions are crucial. By involving individuals, we can understand their unique needs and empower them to take control.



## Improving the built environment

Haringey offers the advantage of good transport links compared to rural areas. However, it is equally important for people to feel safe and have the ability to walk around and access community spaces. This fosters a sense of togetherness and helps forge real relationships



## Digital

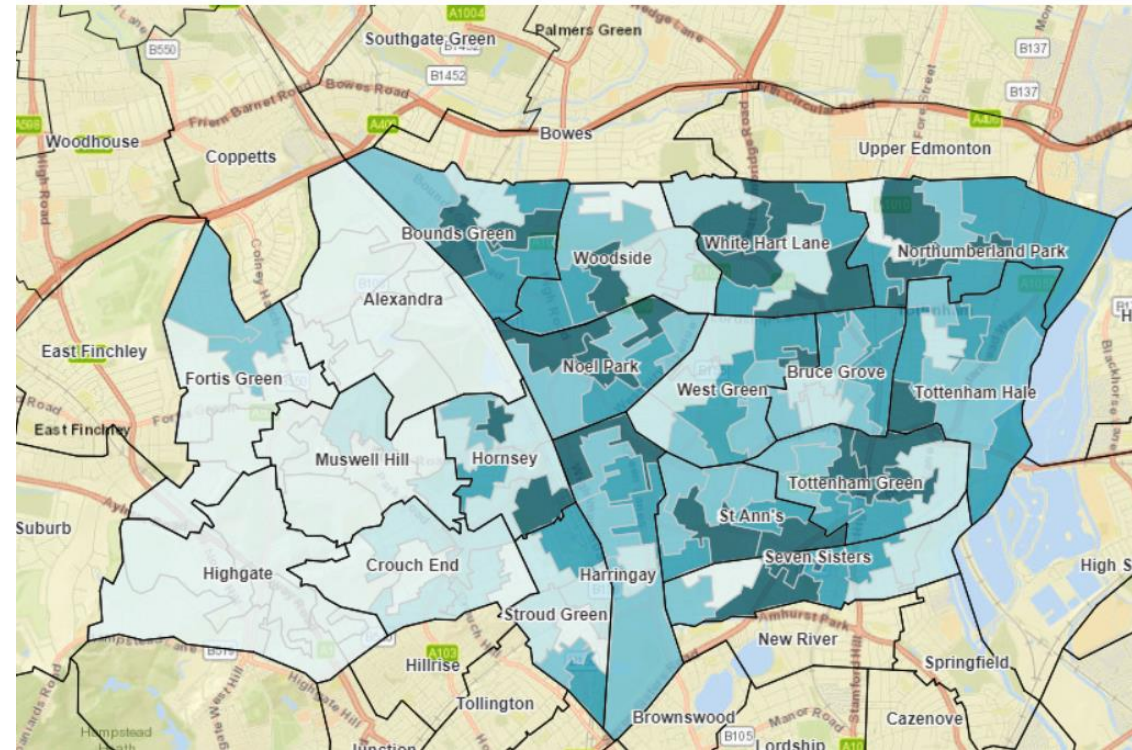
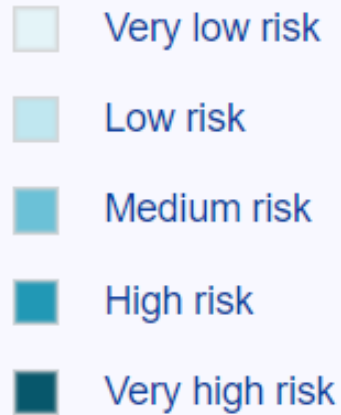
Digital has an interesting role. It can help us find information and connect with others, offering the potential for meaningful connections. However, it's important to acknowledge the negative as well. The online world can facilitate bullying, foster unhealthy comparisons, and promote app-based social comparisons.

# Paul Allen

## The picture of Haringey – risk of loneliness over 65

Age 65 + >> Risk of Loneliness

### Risk within this authority



- The east and central parts of the borough has a higher prevalence of loneliness for those over 65-year-old.
- There are pockets of loneliness risks in the West, within the Fortis Green and Crouch End area. However, loneliness remains an issue even in low-risk areas.

# Paul Allen

## The very different story of two ladies

### Frances

Frances was a lady in her 70s with sensory care needs. She had long-term health conditions and was blind.



01  
Frances was housebound, due to a lack of confidence in going out.



02  
Frances experienced feelings of stigma, bereavement and loss of purpose



03  
Frances had an 8-year-old grandchild. He supported her in going out and built a social connection.



04  
Frances was socially isolated, but her grandchild through simple acts of kindness helped Frances.

### Mary

Mary was a lady in her 70s with sensory care needs. She had long-term health conditions and was blind and deaf.



01  
Mary was more open to going out and enjoyed meeting new people.



02  
Mary made connections, and often spoke to strangers on the street asking for help to cross the road



03  
Mary often visited Frances and her grandchild. They played games together and enjoyed each others company.



04  
Mary refused to be socially isolated and did not let her health conditions affect her.

# Paul Allen

## Why might older people have a risk of loneliness?



### Health conditions

Having physical health conditions limits your ease of mobility preventing from you from going out.



### Dealing with loss and bereavement

Dealing with loss and bereavement can have significant impact on those aged over 65.



### Legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic changed how we interact with each other. The aftermath means people, especially those over 65 may still feel lonely.

# Paul Allen

## How can we reduce loneliness?



### Feel connected

Help people feel more connected by maintaining relationships with friends and family.



### Keeping busy

Pick up hobbies that keep you busy, this could be something you particularly enjoyed when you was younger.



### Keep active

Get involved in different activities such as sports, volunteering or cooking. This can help foster relationships and a social network.



### Seek help

Seek help when you need it. There are lots of national and local resources to use, such as local authority websites, the NHS and charities.

# Charlotte Lewis

## The eight domains of age-friendly communities

# 01

### Community and Health Care

Accessible and affordable community and health services are crucial in keeping seniors healthy, independent and active.

# 02

### Transportation

Accessible and affordable public transport is key to ensuring a city's elderly population can age actively and remain engaged with their community.

# 03

### Housing

Appropriate housing design and its proximity to community and social services allow older residents to live comfortably and safely, while housing affordability gives them peace of mind.

# 04

### Social Participation

Participating in leisure, social, cultural and spiritual activities in the community fosters seniors' continued integration with society and helps them stay engaged and informed

# 05

### Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

A clean city with well-maintained recreational areas, rest areas, and safe pedestrian and building infrastructure.

# 06

### Respect and Social Inclusion

Education about ageing should begin early to raise awareness on ageing and associated issues, so that people learn to appreciate their elderly.

# 07

### Civic Participation and Employment

Older people are an asset to the community, and there should be opportunities to contribute to their communities after retirement

# 08

### Communication and Information

Staying connected with events, news and activities with timely, accessible and practical information is a key part of active ageing.

# Charlotte Lewis

## Age-friendly communities

### How was the age-friendly approach made?

The Age-friendly Communities approach was developed by the World Health Organisation in 2007, in consultation with older people around the world. It is built on the evidence of what supports healthy and active ageing in a place and supports older residents to shape the place that they live.

### What is an age-friendly community?

An Age-friendly Community is a place that enables people to age well and live a good later life. Somewhere that people can stay living in their homes, participate in the activities they value, and contribute to their communities, for as long as possible. The UK Network of Age-friendly Communities is a growing movement, with over 60 places across the country committed to making their community a better place to age in.

### Why does it matter for Haringey?

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The UK has an ageing population. In the next 40 years there will be 111% increase of people who are over 80 years old

Supports communities understand what resources are available to make the biggest difference

A preventative approach encouraging people to stay active and engaged

Bringing together the private, public and voluntary sector integrating their services to support the community

Encourages the promotion of community work and making it visible for residents



# Councillor Lucia das Neves

## Creating intergenerational connections

Loneliness affects both young and old individuals, impacting their mental and physical well-being. Young people may experience isolation due to modern pressures, while older individuals face challenges like retirement and loss of social connections.



### Older people

Age UK highlighted 1.4 million older people in the UK are often lonely. Loneliness is a major issue that is now widely recognised in society today



### Young people

Research reveals that young people aged between 16 to 34 are 5x more likely than older people to experience loneliness.

Cllr Lucia highlighted from her experiences listening to young people that many of them are entering health and social care careers or being the first member of their families to go to university seeking guidance or mentors. By acknowledging that loneliness transcends age boundaries, we can create an inclusive environment fostering intergenerational connections and a sense of belonging.



# Councillor Lucia das Neves

## What is Haringey Council doing to help reduce loneliness?

01

### Localities Hubs

a dedicated space where individuals can access essential health and care services. These hubs not only cater to medical requirements but also could serve as a hub for representatives from the voluntary sector and other council services. The primary aim is to minimise the distance individuals have to travel in order to meet the needs of their community.

02

### Toilet Strategy

Haringey's Toilet Strategy is being developed with a core objective: to help people feel more confident when they venture outside their homes. This strategy focuses on enhancing the availability, cleanliness, and accessibility of public toilets, thereby addressing the needs of the community.

03

### Local Area Coordination

A holistic approach looking at our community, aiming to comprehend the distinct needs of different areas within the borough. It acknowledges the presence of diverse activities and groups across the borough, recognising their value. The objective is to harness the potential of them, ensuring we can maximise them for the benefit of the community.

04

### Carers Review

Cllr Lucia has requested a review of carers' experiences in Haringey to improve their situation. She actively listened to carers during Coffee Mornings and seeks to enhance their support, reducing loneliness or feelings of being overwhelmed and enabling them to provide optimal care.

# Section 2

## The scenarios and recommendations

In Section 2, hypothetical scenarios of loneliness among Haringey residents were presented to the attendees. The Conference facilitated discussions to recognise barriers faced by these individuals. Participants actively proposed solutions, and valuable recommendations emerged from the dialogue, offering ways to address and alleviate loneliness effectively.

# Scenario 1

## The situation of Colin

Colin is in his late 50s with mild to moderate anxiety disorder who lives on the tenth floor in a flat on his own. He was married but divorced some time ago and does not have a good relationship with his children or grandchildren. He has physical health issues which affect his ability to go out and says he feels extremely isolated. Since the pandemic he tells you that he does less and less as there isn't anything to do but be at home. He used to go to the Irish center and use the bar there but since it shut down, he hasn't got anywhere he feels comfortable which is local. Now he is only going out to the shop across the road when he needs to and to doctor or hospital appointments. He used to work as a bus driver but had to take early retirement due to his health issues.

# Scenario 1

## The feedback

### Barriers

Colin has long struggled with loneliness, facing difficulties in maintaining consistent communication with others. This prolonged sense of isolation has been exacerbated by his living arrangements and the added impact of the pandemic, intensifying the challenges he faces in combating loneliness. Isolated within the confines of his flat, Colin experienced a deep sense of detachment from the world outside.

With minimal contact from his family, Colin's feelings of isolation were amplified. The absence of familiar faces in his local area served to heighten his loneliness. Colin yearned for the existence of vibrant and inclusive communities that embraced and supported the elderly population.

### Solutions

Improving access to talking therapies (IAPT) is crucial, especially considering the individual has experienced loneliness for a long time. It is essential to help reduce the times for mental health support and ensure it is affordable for all, as not everyone can afford the subsidised costs associated with therapy. By prioritising accessibility, more individuals can receive the help they need in a timely manner, regardless of their financial circumstances.

Improving age integration is crucial to foster connections between generations, sharing skills and insights. Community awareness about social prescribing needs more promotion and funding to address the lack of knowledge. Additionally, the establishment of more community spaces is essential to enhance community engagement and combat social isolation. By prioritising these initiatives, we can create a more cohesive and supportive community for individuals like Colin, where people of all ages can thrive and connect with one another.

# Scenario 1

## The feedback

### Barriers

His living situation on a high floor, coupled with limited accessibility, posed significant challenges for him to engage with his community.

Closure of community spaces like the Irish Centre and Welbourne Centre has left communities without gathering places.

### Solutions

Transportation barriers isolate individuals, preventing them from attending appointments and community groups. Simply signposting people to resources isn't enough if they can't travel there. Solutions are needed, such as subsidised transportation options, community transportation programs, and improved accessibility in public buildings and transportation. By addressing these challenges, we can enhance access to essential services and foster a more connected and inclusive society.

There is a need for an increase in community spaces, starting from grassroots initiatives. Building stronger connections within families, such as offering parenting classes, can address social issues and provide support. Additionally, better infrastructure is necessary to create an environment that promotes community well-being and facilitates social engagement.

# Scenario 1

## The recommendations

### Improving access to talking therapies (IAPT)

It is essential to reduce waiting times for mental health support and ensure it is affordable for all.



### Age integration

Improving age integration is crucial to foster connections between generations, sharing skills and insights.



### Social prescribing

Community awareness about social prescribing needs more promotion and funding to address the lack of knowledge.



### Community spaces

Establishment of more community spaces is essential to enhance community engagement and combat social isolation.

### Transport

Solutions are needed for transport, such as subsidised transportation options, community transportation programs, and improved accessibility in public buildings and transportation.



### Infrastructure

Better infrastructure is necessary to create an environment that promotes community well-being and facilitates social engagement.



# Scenario 2

## The situation of Angus

Angus is a gay man in his late 80's living alone. He is a private renter and has lots of disrepair issues which are becoming so bad they are affecting his health. He has asthma, and the mould is making his cough and chest worse. He is feeling very anxious and has not been able to open any mail for several months. He feels trapped in his flat and is too scared to speak to the landlord as he fears it may lead to his eviction, and he does not feel safe in his home. When younger he worked as a museum curator, but now lacks the confidence he used to have. He describes having gradually lost contact with friends and family over the years, and those he was closest to have passed away. He is still very independent and has no care needs.

# Scenario 2

## The feedback

### Barriers

Angus is gay. Historically, there has been stigma and discrimination directed towards individuals who identify as gay. One such example is Section 28, a law that previously perpetuated discrimination against gay people. Angus might have experienced a perceived risk of facing stigma due to his sexual orientation. Although Section 28 no longer exists, its impact can still be felt among individuals over the age of 50 in Haringey.

Angus faced mold issues in his rented home, highlighting the need for better support and improved landlord-tenant relationships. More needs to be done to empower tenants with information on their rights and avenues for complaint can help them address housing problems. Encouraging open communication and mediation services can foster understanding and resolution.

### Solutions

Implementing a buddy/befriending scheme would provide Angus with long-term support and help foster meaningful relationships. This program would pair Angus with a reliable friend who can offer guidance, emotional support, and assistance whenever needed. Creating LGBTQ+ spaces where individuals can seek support and connect with others can also be incredibly valuable. These spaces provide a safe and inclusive environment where individuals can share their experiences, find understanding, and build a sense of community.

Establishing dedicated community spaces where private renters can come together and discuss their experiences with their landlords can be highly beneficial. These spaces provide a platform for tenants to share their stories, concerns, and insights, fostering a sense of solidarity and support among individuals facing similar challenges. There should also be Council intervention in privately rented properties, even though they are privately owned, it is crucial to ensure tenant well-being.



# Scenario 2

## The feedback

### Barriers

If Angus is digitally excluded and lacks knowledge on accessing support, it is crucial to bridge the digital divide and provide him with the necessary guidance.

Angus, a former museum curator, may find himself questioning how to continue adding value to society in his old age. As someone who was once deeply involved in the world of curating, he might feel uncertain about how to contribute meaningfully as he grows older.

### Solutions

Signposting Angus to services like Haringey Reach and Connect is crucial in providing him with support to access key services and combat loneliness. These services can guide him towards social activities, community programs, and support networks specifically designed to address isolation. Additionally, it is important to ensure Angus receives bereavement support during times of loss. By signposting him to appropriate bereavement support organisations, he can access counselling, therapy, or group sessions that help him navigate the grieving process.

Connecting older people like Angus with platforms such as Bruce Castle Museum and students can facilitate the sharing of advice and wisdom derived from their personal experiences. By bridging the generation gap, Angus can offer valuable insights and knowledge to younger individuals, fostering intergenerational understanding and learning.

# Scenario 2

## The recommendations

### Befriending/buddy scheme

Implementing a buddy/befriending scheme would provide people with long-term support and help foster meaningful relationships.



### Social groups and spaces

Creating spaces where individuals can seek support and connect with others can be incredibly valuable.



### Haringey Reach and Connect

Signposting to services like Haringey Reach and Connect is crucial to providing people with support to access key services and combat loneliness.



### Bereavement support

By signposting people to bereavement support organisations, they can access counselling, therapy, or sessions that help navigate grieving processes.



### Sharing experiences and wisdom

Connecting older people with platforms of their expertise and students can facilitate the sharing of advice and wisdom derived from their personal experiences.

# Scenario 3

## The situation of Pushpa

Pushpa is a woman in her early 50s who cares for her elderly parents; her father has dementia which has affected his communication and her mother has long term health problems and sleeps a lot. It is her parents' home, but the house needs work due to wear and tear, and the garden is becoming unmanageable. She gets some support from carers who come in twice a day for washing and dressing, but she still finds herself doing the cooking, cleaning, and caring for the rest of the week. She tells you over the phone that she is feeling very depressed and burnt out. She feels like she hasn't had a break for years and doesn't have any time for herself. She sometimes doesn't see or speak to anyone else outside of the house for several days. She cares deeply about her parents and wants to be there for them but is also racked with guilt as doesn't know how she can go on.

# Scenario 3

## The feedback

### Barriers

Pushpa finds herself in a crisis point, facing a challenging family situation. As a carer, she faces immense expectations and a strong sense of duty. Cultural sensitivity plays a role in her experience, adding complexity to her responsibilities. The overwhelming responsibilities have led to burnout, with Pushpa experiencing a lack of rest, sleep, and possibly going through menopause. Carers like Pushpa often carry a heavy emotional burden that impacts their well-being.

Pushpa may be encountering financial barriers and experiencing a lack of full financial support. It is important to ensure that Pushpa receives the necessary financial resources to alleviate the burden she faces as a carer and to improve her overall financial well-being.

### Solutions

To support Pushpa as a carer, various options can be considered. Respite care offers temporary relief by arranging for someone else to take over carer duties. Seeking additional family support can help lighten the load and share responsibilities. Day centers provide a safe environment for Pushpa to take breaks and engage in activities. A handyman service can be utilised to maintain the property and garden, providing assistance with repairs, maintenance, and gardening tasks.

A carers assessment can help evaluate her needs and provide tailored support. Connecting with organisations like Carers First can offer additional resources and emotional support. Care packages are also getting progressively worse, and there needs to be a review to ensure more support is available for carers.

To address Pushpa's financial challenges, a review of her benefits eligibility is essential. Accessing Haringey advice services can help her navigate the system, understand her rights, and maximise her financial support. This ensures she receives the full assistance she is entitled to.

# Scenario 3

## The feedback

### Barriers

Pushpa may face barriers when accessing primary care services, such as waiting for a GP appointment or mental health services.

There is a significant gap in dementia awareness within society. This lack of awareness often extends to neighborhoods, where if people were more informed about individuals living with dementia, they could offer support and understanding.

### Solutions

To address the issue of wait times for assessments, it is crucial to provide interim support services. This can involve offering temporary assistance, information, and resources to individuals while they await their appointment or assessment. This ensures that they still receive some level of support during this waiting period.

Increasing dementia awareness among young people is important to foster understanding and empathy. Education programs can teach them about the experiences of living with dementia. Building relationships with bus drivers can provide better support during transportation, as they interact with a diverse range of individuals. Establishing community groups like memory cafés can create inclusive spaces for people with dementia to socialise and access support services.

# Scenario 3

## The feedback

### Barriers

Pushpa's family may be experiencing emotional distress as conditions of dementia worsens.

Pushpa's heavy workload can worsen feelings of social isolation

### Solutions

To support families caring for individuals with dementia, the focus should shift towards prevention and creating a dementia-friendly borough in Haringey. This involves raising awareness, providing education, and implementing initiatives that promote understanding and inclusivity. Collaboration and a comprehensive support system are crucial for achieving these goals.

Involving her parents in gardening activities can also alleviate pressure on Pushpa and evoke memories of past gardening experiences for her parents. This therapeutic approach promotes well-being, stimulates senses, and benefits individuals with dementia.

To help Pushpa regain a social circle, connecting her with a social prescriber can be beneficial. Social prescribers can assist in identifying activities, groups, or organisations that align with Pushpa's interests and help her reconnect with a supportive community. Additionally, providing her with time and support to reconnect with old friends she may have lost touch with can also help rebuild her social network and provide emotional support.

# Scenario 3

## The recommendations

### Carers support

Respite care, care homes and seeking extra family support should become more available to carers to help the load and share responsibilities.



### Financial support

There should be outreach from services to ensure people are receiving correct benefits, help understand their rights and maximise financial support.

### Carer packages

Care packages are getting progressively worse, and there needs to be a review to ensure more support is available for carers.



### Interim support

To address the issue of wait times for assessments, it is crucial to provide interim support services where people receive temporary assistance and resources.

### Carers assessment

Completing a carers assessment should be a simple and easy process to help evaluate needs and provide tailored support.



### Awareness on dementia

Increasing dementia awareness among young people is important to foster understanding and empathy.

# Scenario 3

## The recommendations

### Training for bus drivers

Training for bus drivers is crucial so they can provide better support during transportation, as they interact with a diverse range of individuals.



### Memory cafes

Establishing community groups like memory cafés can create inclusive spaces for people with dementia to socialise and access support services.



### Dementia friendly borough

This involves raising awareness, providing education, and implementing initiatives that promote understanding and inclusivity to support people living with dementia.



### Memories of past experiences

Involving people living with dementia in activities such as gardening can evoke memories of past gardening experiences. This therapeutic approach promotes well-being, stimulates senses, and benefits individuals with dementia.



### Connecting with old friends

Reconnecting with old friends' people may have lost touch with can help rebuild social networks and provide emotional support.





# Scenario 4

## The situation of Alev

Alev recently retired from work aged 61; her husband is still working, and both her children live abroad. She has osteoporosis and has had a recent fall, and now her family do not want her going out alone due to her increasing frailty. As a result, she spends a lot of time at home alone. She is unable to use a computer and can only use the house phone. She is feeling very low and when you meet her at the doctor's surgery, she is quite tearful as she explains she used to be so busy when she worked as a carer and feels she has lost her sense of purpose. She wants to feel more connected but doesn't know how. She has heard of a Turkish community group, but it is on the other side of the borough, and finances are tight, and she can't think how she could get there.

# Scenario 4

## The feedback

### Barriers

Alev's situation is influenced by her husband still working while she is retired, her children living far away, and the absence of family support. These circumstances have resulted in a loss of purpose and feelings of isolation.

Alev may experience a loss of confidence due to her circumstances.

### Solutions

Creating a local community network closer to Alev can help address her feelings of isolation. By focusing on building connections within her immediate neighborhood, Alev can foster a sense of belonging and support. This may involve reaching out to neighbors, organising community events, or joining/volunteering at local clubs or organisations.

Additionally, finding existing communities closer to home that can provide support and companionship is crucial. A community connector can assist Alev in identifying and accessing helper communities that align with her interests and needs.

More planning services should also be available to help prepare for retirement and being elderly, so people do not lose that sense of purpose they had when they were younger.

Therapeutic and mental health intervention is needed. A lot of support in these areas lasts between 8 to 10 weeks, which is not adequate time to support individuals who require long-term mental support. There should be sufficient time that the individual receiving support should decide.

# Scenario 4

## The feedback

### Barriers

Alev is experiencing digital exclusion being unable to use the computer or the telephone.

Alev has a long-term health condition and mobility issues preventing her from going out and about in the community.

Alev is not aware of the services available in and outside of Haringey.

### Solutions

It is crucial to shift away from the expectation that everyone should simply learn how to use technology. Instead, we should focus on providing support in ways that accommodate individuals who are not able or feel pressured to use the internet. By offering alternative methods for accessing services, such as in-person assistance at a wellbeing center, we can ensure that everyone can access the support they need.

The role of GPs should extend beyond addressing immediate medical concerns, particularly for individuals with mobility issues. GPs should prioritise the well-being of patients during appointments and be proactive in recognising the impact of mobility issues on their overall health and quality of life. This can involve referring patients to social prescribers who can assist with connecting them to community resources, support networks, and therapeutic interventions.

Services should be more localised to Haringey to enable better ease of access to support services. These services should be promoted better and could include being outside the borough if it has accessible transport routes, such as being on the bus route for an individual.

# Scenario 4

## The recommendations

### Local support

Creating a local network closer to home can help address feelings of isolation. By focusing on building connections within the immediate neighbourhood.



### Long-term mental health support

A lot of support in these areas lasts between 8 to 10 weeks, which is not adequate time to support individuals who require long-term mental support.

### Community connector

Making community connectors more present can assist in identifying and accessing helper communities that align with people's interests and needs.



### Digital exclusion

Offering alternative methods from digital services, such as in-person assistance at a wellbeing center can ensure that everyone can access the support they need.

### Planning for retirement

Planning services should also be available to help prepare for retirement and being elderly, so people do not lose that sense of purpose they had when they were younger.



### Appointments with a GP

GPs should prioritise the well-being of patients during appointments and be proactive in recognising the impact of mobility issues on their overall health and quality of life.

# Section 3

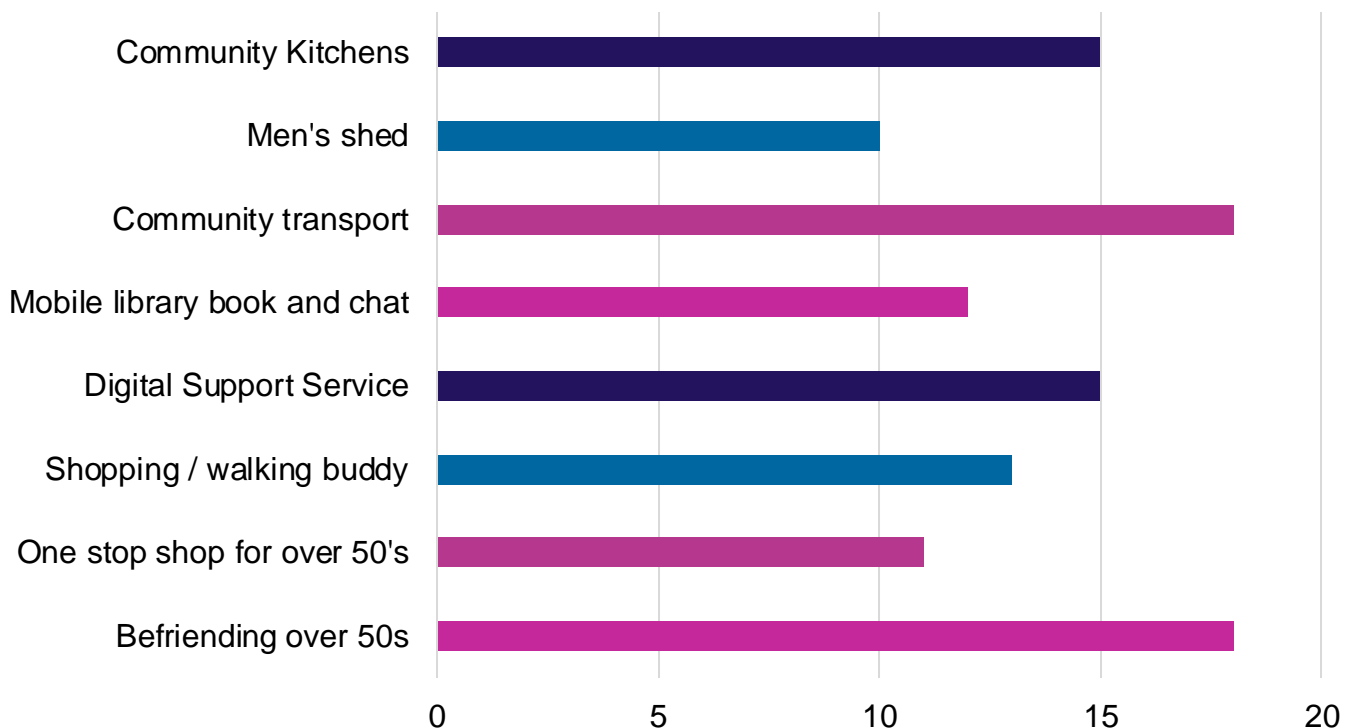
## The suggestions

In Section 3, the attendees were involved in finding ways to reduce loneliness in Haringey. We proposed solutions and asked participants to rank them by effectiveness. Valuable feedback, enriched with quotes and additional suggestions, was collected from the discussions, contributing to a comprehensive plan for combating loneliness in the community.

# How can we make a difference to loneliness?

## The rankings

### How can we make a difference to loneliness?



Community Transport (1), Befriending over 50s (2) and Community Kitchens (3) were identified as the top three most beneficial services to support residents and help make Haringey are more connected borough.

# How can we make a difference to loneliness?

## The quotes



### Digital support service

"Could be essential for people that were house bound"



### Digital support service

"Brilliant idea for people with lack of knowledge of digital world"



### Digital support service

"Where possible, as some old people are not conversant with this"

### Mobile library book and chat

"Needs continuity - must be at the same time and place each week"

### Mobile library book and chat

"Good to have face to face interaction"

### Mobile library book and chat

"A great idea for connecting with people"

### Community transport

"Especially for people with limited funds or a disability"

### Community transport

"Buses to lower ramp to enable access"

### Community transport

"Dial a ride - is not easily available to all wanting it"



# How can we make a difference to loneliness?

## The quotes



### Befriending over 50s

"It would make a huge difference to my community"



### Befriending over 50s

"A real benefit in reducing isolation for older people"



### Befriending over 50s

"Definitely reduce loneliness, having a friend, much better relations"

### One stop shop for over 50's

"Visibility and being local is very important"

### One stop shop for over 50's

"Very good idea to have in many fields such as health social services"

### One stop shop for over 50's

"Could help to make friends/decrease loneliness"

### Shopping / walking buddy

#### buddy

"Especially for the visually impaired and people who are fearful of falling"

### Shopping / walking buddy

#### buddy

"What happens when they do not get on! Need alternatives"

### Shopping / walking buddy

#### buddy

"Trust and honesty is vital in this area"





# How can we make a difference to loneliness?

## The quotes



### Men's shed

"This will be welcomed as men seem to be neglected"

### Community kitchens

"Perhaps a breakfast club & activities"



### Men's shed

"Important for men to use their skills"

### Community kitchens

"Where dietary issues could be helped with"



### Men's shed

"A lot of men are isolated and pull out of groups"

### Community kitchens

"Very important for elderlies"



# How can we make a difference to loneliness?

## Other suggestions

### Women's shed

5 respondents suggested women's shed could be vital to help foster social connection in a similar manner to the men's shed movement.



### Social media

Another recommendation was supporting isolated people to engage more with the community via social media.



### Existing communities

One respondent claimed existing communities need more dialogue and potentially auditing. This is to ensure that we're not duplicating efforts and we can work together to reduce loneliness.



### Educating NHS staff

It was highlighted that we must educate community nurses, physios and GPs to look for signs of social isolation and refer people to services that can support them.

### Paperwork advocacy services

Paperwork advocacy services was mentioned to support people deal with bureaucracies for complex problems.

### Linking up the medical and social

It was highlighted that the medical and social organisations need to work in unison to help support people with mental health issues and help foster social connections.

# Going Forward

## Our Actions

Following the response and enthusiasm to our 2023 Loneliness Awareness Week and Connection Matters Conference, Public Voice will continue raising awareness around loneliness and social isolation through the Reach and Connect service and help support work towards solutions.

We invite partners to share their initiatives and help to address gaps during the year. We commit to collaborate with local partners to design and develop interventions to better support residents facing social isolation – helping identify resident needs, engage residents to make use of new services, and build the case for support and funding to scale these interventions.

Haringey Reach and Connect invites interested parties to connect and co-produce a follow-up event in June 2024. Our 2024 event will show Haringey's progression a year on and identify areas where further work is needed.

Tackling loneliness will need long-term and sustainable commitment. It will take community effort and resources to address make a difference. Reach and Connect is committed to supporting this, and will continue to offer one-to-one brief interventions to support residents who may be experiencing loneliness, and to continue to connect with partners to support initiatives to increase choice and support available.

**Please send your ideas and any offers of support to [Hello@ReachandConnect.net](mailto:Hello@ReachandConnect.net)**

**Thank you**



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