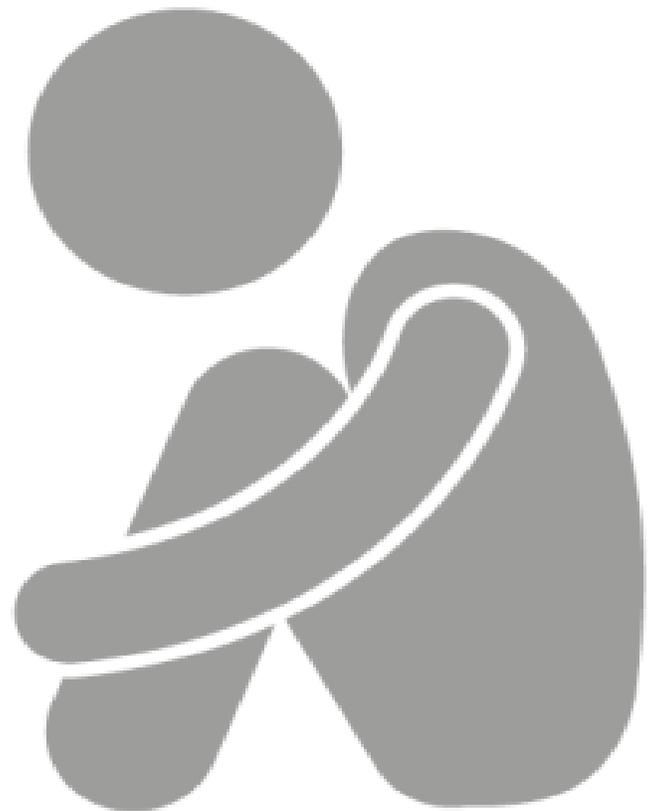


COMING IN FROM THE COLD

Why We Need to Talk About
Loneliness Among Our Young People



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Support with scoping research

The Campaign to End Loneliness

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About ACEVO

ACEVO is the UK's largest network for Charity and Social Enterprise Leaders

For nearly 30 years, we have provided support, development and an inspiring, collective campaigning voice for our members, the leaders of small, community based groups, ambitious medium-sized organisations, and well known, well-loved national and international not-for-profits.

We offer our members exclusive access to personal development opportunities and mentoring tailored to senior leadership roles; networking and learning events; bespoke consultancy and solutions that help boost their businesses; and discounted professional services delivered by our partners. In concert with our membership we craft positions on issues of importance to the third sector and our members' work – and we offer a leading and decisive voice that shapes the agenda.

ACEVO stands for the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations. Membership is open to social leaders of all stripes: to charity and social enterprise chief executives, to senior leaders, to chairs and to trustees.

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Contents

Foreword by ACEVO Director of Public Policy, Asheem Singh.....	6
Chapter One: The Grey Zone - When does a young person’s loneliness become a social problem?	8
What is loneliness?	8
What causes loneliness?	9
Psychological triggers.....	10
Social triggers.....	10
The ‘Grey Zone’	12
Chapter Two: London – A Grey Zone City?	13
The national picture of youth loneliness	13
Loneliness in London among all age groups	14
Young people in London	14
What causes loneliness among young people in London?	15
‘Floating Anxiety’	15
Young People in their own words.....	16
Chapter Three: The Cost of Youth Loneliness.....	18
The effect of loneliness on individual health.....	18
The effect of loneliness on community security.....	19
The effect of loneliness on deprivation	19
The Cost of Youth Loneliness to the Public Purse.....	20
The national costs of loneliness.....	20
The cost of loneliness in London.....	23
Chapter Four: Solutions on the Ground.....	25
Building personal resilience and capacity to form healthy relationships	25
Building communities	26
Chapter Five: Further Barriers to Addressing Loneliness	28
Lack of understanding.....	28
Underinvestment in prevention	28
Barriers in London.....	29
Underinvestment in the third sector in London	30
Underinvestment in prevention in London	31
Chapter Six: Recommendations.....	32

10 Step Programme to Escape the Grey Zone	32
Recommendations for the public sector	33
For the Mayor of London, London Assembly, and Greater London Authority (GLA)	33
For central government	34
Local Authorities in London and beyond	35
For NHS and public health bodies.....	36
Recommendations for the third sector	37
Recommendations for private business	39
Recommendations for further research	40
Recommendations for funders	40
Chapter Seven: Implementation Strategy for driving change at the local level led by voluntary and social enterprise organisations	41
Overview of change-making for leaders of voluntary sector youth organisations.....	41
Overview of change-making for leaders of local and national umbrella organisations.....	43
Local umbrella organisations	44
National umbrella organisations.....	45
Appendix A: Case Studies of Organisations working to Tackle Youth Loneliness	47
Case Study 1: Building personal resilience through training and coaching, Worth-It Projects	48
Case Study 2: Building young people’s ability to cope through telephone support and counselling, Get Connected	49
Case Study 3: Developing digital skills and confidence, HEBA Women’s Project.....	50
Case Study 4: Building empathy and creating purpose through intergenerational mentoring and rites of passage, abandofbrothers	51
Case Study 5: Supporting voice and choice through peer mentoring during a life transition, Shoreditch Trust’s Bump Buddies Programme	52
Case Study 6: Creating community hubs for young people by young people, Catch22’s Axis Service.....	53
Case Study 7: Creating intergenerational communities, North London Cares	54
Case Study 8: Creating communities of experience, Rees Foundation’s Revolution Networking	55

Case Study 9: Creating micro-communities, The Big Lunch	56
Case Study 10: Creating activist communities through nurturing young social leaders, vInspired	57
Appendix B: Full results of ACEVO’s Specially Commissioned Data Analysis by young people’s helpline Get Connected	58
Appendix C: More information about this report.....	65
Quotes from young people featured throughout the report	65
Estimates for the cost of loneliness to the public purse.....	65
Nationally	65
In London	66
Endnotes	67

Foreword by ACEVO Director of Public Policy, Asheem Singh

We all encounter it at some stage. The person sitting alone on the street corner; the individual staring blankly into space at the bar; the neighbour who hasn't been out for days. The people who charities and social enterprises help often are isolated and without support, or even a listening ear – until a care worker or an outreach officer comes along. They are alone. But are they lonely?

Among our elderly citizens, loneliness has been a matter of interest to researchers and practitioners for the past ten years or more. A good thing too, for things are improving, if slowly. Social leaders have created new ways to link older people with others who share their interests, to people who can help them with household tasks, and to their own families where technology is necessary to overcome distance.

But where does that leave the rest of the population? Loneliness is not confined to a particular age or type of person. It can affect anyone. And in our time, we may be approaching something of a watershed moment.

This report suggests that loneliness among the young, today, in our country is a real issue. Indeed in our urban spaces, where *stimulus* is rampant, *loneliness* actually approaches the status of pandemic. Focussing on our capital, this research explores the causes of loneliness and its impacts. It helps us understand the difference between being lonely and being alone.

The human costs are immense, but the cost to society of youth loneliness is commensurately shocking – up to **£34 billion in London alone**. It may be thought to be reductive to consider these complex matters in financial terms, but think of it as a proxy – and platform from which to urge action.

This report showcases some of the community initiatives which in London and beyond are making waves. There is no one formula for helping people overcome loneliness and battle their anxieties. The challenge is for social leaders to find solutions which work for their particular beneficiaries and local communities; to 'go with the grain' of twenty first century human nature. And then we look to government – national and mayoral – to look to scale up and bring into the mainstream some of these approaches.

Two more things. from the policy perspective, loneliness is a question of *prevention*: of dealing with a unique problem before it leads to expensive public health costs; a social capital challenge, if you will. So we submit this report as part of ACEVO's 'Five for the Future' campaign, which aims to ensure that prevention-focussed public services, delivered in partnership with the voluntary sector, are one day 'business as usual'. We want five percent of all public spending to go towards prevention. Funding to help build social capital and so prime young people to build better relationships is clearly part of that agenda.

Secondly, this piece is not just a discussion of the problem – rather, it is an implementation piece too. It contains real solutions for all parts of society – from the Mayor of London who is tasked with creating a **Deputy Mayor for**

Young People, to local businesses to voluntary and social enterprise organisations'. This dual emphasis on policy and implementation reflects ACEVO's approach to supporting our members through providing both thought leadership and practical solutions under one umbrella.

Loneliness is in some ways about being uncomfortable with being alone; wherein the fact of being alone exacerbates the anxiety associated with being a supposedly non-functioning part of wider society. In the early part of the twenty first century, for the first time in human history, more of the world's population lived in cities than not. The melancholic, meditative mood, William Wordsworth's 'inward eye, which is the bliss of solitude,' is often associated with the pastoral and with bucolia. It is increasingly absent from our young peoples' upbringing.

How do we create an environment in which that spirit of comfort, of acceptance with who we are, individually but also collectively can be learned, not in some bygone era but in ours? That's the social sector's special skill. And we need to help them do it even better.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Asheem Singh', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Asheem Singh
Director of Public Policy, ACEVO

Chapter One: The Grey Zone - When does a young person's loneliness become a social problem?

Nearly everyone knows what it means to feel lonely. They understand what it is to feel that there is nowhere to turn to for help or support. To feel that, ultimately, if anything were to happen to you, then nobody would notice. For many people, this loneliness is at worst a fleeting concern, quickly remedied. For others, it is more insidious. They never truly achieve the social connectivity which they desire. As they become lonely, people turn in on themselves. They become mistrustful of others, and begin to see themselves as an outsider – regardless of the reality of the situation.

When we discuss loneliness, the assumption is often that we are talking about older people. In the winter months, local councils remind us to check on our older neighbours. The Campaign to End Loneliness and Age UK, among other organisations, have done important work in raising awareness of social isolation among this group.

But loneliness isn't a condition which affects only older people. Several surveys conducted over the past five years show that loneliness is at least as prevalent – if not more so – among young people. People in their teens, twenties, and early thirties are often negotiating major life transitions, financial problems, or long working hours – all of which can leave them feeling isolated.

And as more of society becomes lonely, it approaches a point where it becomes a significant social problem. Rather than simply being a handful of isolated individuals, it becomes a situation where whole communities begin to pay the cost of loneliness. This is not a situation where everyone is lonely, but a 'grey zone' in which loneliness has become endemic and deleterious to community relations.

What is loneliness?

If we wish to examine the damage which is done to our society by loneliness, it is first necessary to establish what is meant by the term. Loneliness is not an objective experience; we cannot simply look at a person's situation and say whether or not they are lonely. That is a matter for *them*.

Of the many attempts to define precisely what loneliness is, the most commonly cited was devised by Jenny De Jong Gierveld, an academic who defines loneliness as 'a situation experienced by the individual as one where there is an unpleasant or inadmissible lack of (quality of) certain relationships. This includes situations in which the number of existing relationships is smaller than is considered desirable or admissible, as well as situations where the intimacy one wishes for has not been realised'.¹ This

"...loneliness is not the same as being alone. You might choose to be alone and live happily without much contact with other people. Or you may have lots of social contact, or be in a relationship or part of a family and still feel lonely."

Mind

<http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/loneliness#.VTpBZPDlaVo>

means that loneliness can be related to the quantity or the quality of your relationships. It might be that you don't have enough friends and acquaintances or it might be that you feel emotionally cut off from others, even though you have a good social network.²

As loneliness is a subjective, self-assessed condition it is inappropriate to label someone else as 'lonely' – not least, because individuals have different preferences regarding the amount of social contact they desire. Some people need many close relationships to prevent them from feeling lonely, whereas other people will thrive on a smaller number of superficial relationships.³ This becomes easier to understand when you consider the difference between 'loneliness' and 'solitude'. Both involve being alone but the former is an unpleasant emotional state and the latter is a pleasant sense of freedom or rest from others.⁴ Whether being alone is experienced as loneliness or solitude depends on an individual's preference at a particular moment in time.

Another question of definition is whether or not loneliness should be considered a health issue. Although government officials have generally talked about loneliness in those terms, the consensus view is that loneliness is a social issue which only becomes a health issue when society ignores the root of the problem. Paul Farmer, Chief Executive of Mind, and Jenny Edwards, Chief Executive of the Mental Health Foundation, say, 'we would not argue that loneliness should be seen as a mental health issue, or medicalised into a mental illness. In fact, we'd argue the opposite. Tackling the crisis of loneliness starts with individuals, in communities and in wider society'.⁵

Loneliness has a strong basis in 'maladaptive social cognition', which refers to a psychological state in which an individual experiences hypervigilance for social threats.⁶ Having initially experienced loneliness as a result of a transition, the lonely person may begin to feel vulnerable and to have a tendency to see all the negatives in their social engagement with others and none of the positives.⁷ They may misinterpret other people's social signals altogether. For example, a lonely person may interpret a colleague's terseness as evidence that the colleague doesn't like them, rather than recognising that the colleague is simply feeling stressed about their work.⁸ Due to this perception of threat, a lonely person may behave in an anti-social fashion, withdrawing from others or actively alienating them.⁹ This becomes a 'pernicious cycle' whereby lonely people isolate themselves further.¹⁰

What causes loneliness?

The causes of loneliness are complex. A lonely person will often face a number of different, mutually-reinforcing barriers to a more satisfying social life.

Leading loneliness scholars John T. Cacioppo and William Patrick argue that loneliness is a biological mechanism much like physical pain which warns us that we are vulnerable. Whereas physical pain tells us that we need to seek shelter, loneliness tells us that we need to seek out social protection. Humans have evolved to be 'an obligatorily gregarious species' and 'our brains and bodies are designed to function in aggregates, not in isolation' (Cacioppo and Patrick, 2009, p. 127). Therefore, loneliness is a response to humans' deeply engrained socially-minded characteristics as a species.

Psychological triggers

Loneliness is linked to insecurity and instability. Researchers have found that lower levels of loneliness are associated with marriage, higher education, and higher income. Higher levels of loneliness are associated with living alone, infrequent contact with friends and family, dissatisfaction with living circumstances, chronic work and/or social stress, having a small

“As career patterns, housing patterns, mortality patterns, and social policies follow the lead of global capitalism, much of the world seems determined to adopt a lifestyle that will compound and reinforce the chronic sense of isolation that millions of individuals already feel, even when they are surrounded by well-meaning friends and family.”

Cacioppo and Patrick, *Loneliness: Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection*, 2009, p. 53

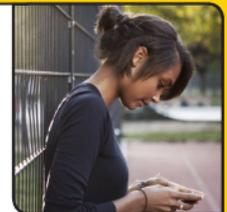
social network, lack of a spousal confidant, marital or family conflict, and divorce and widowhood.¹¹ In other words, you're less likely to be lonely if you have a stable intimate relationship and good financial prospects. You're more likely to be lonely if your social interactions are sporadic or you're suffering from other destabilising and isolating strains such as unsuitable living conditions or health problems. People are particularly vulnerable to loneliness during life transitions such as moving to a new city, losing a job, or becoming a parent.¹²

Some commentators have also asserted that perceiving other people to have a better social life than your own makes you feel lonelier. Academics Daniel Perlman and Letitia Anne Peplau say, 'In assessing one's social relations, social comparisons with others in similar situations may be important'.¹³ At the same time, research suggests that being around lonely people makes you feel lonelier: loneliness is contagious.¹⁴ This has the unfortunate effect that non-lonely people may reject lonely people, pushing them to the margins of society.¹⁵ These two seemingly contradictory behaviours both suggest that loneliness has some basis in pressure to be socially successful – to have the security of belonging to a strong, dominant social group. Comparing your social connections unfavourably with those of others and engaging with people who seem like interlopers both create fear of exclusion and ostracisation.

Gabby's story, age 24

OO I never felt like I fitted in and I just didn't know how to make them. I became disabled from a young age and my peers just didn't understand - I was bullied and very isolated. The feeling of being alone scares me. I live alone but have friends and family to talk to every day, but there are just too many people in London. We all co-exist but everything flashes past so quickly. Not many people have time for others - the world is constantly moving and I feel like I'm at a standstill.

I think that to combat loneliness in London there needs to be more intergenerational work and better awareness of loneliness as a public health issue. We all experience fear, anxiety, anger and frustration but loneliness doesn't have to be permanent with the right care and support.” OO



Social triggers

Although loneliness is a subjective experience rooted in individual preferences and behaviours, the phenomenon clearly has some basis in dysfunctional interactions among groups of people. Many scholars who study 'social capital' – levels of social connectivity within society – believe that modern Western lifestyles are to blame for loneliness. Changes to working practices over the past 50 years have resulted in shorter job

The 'Grey Zone'

These causes and triggers explain why an individual may become lonely in the first place. Combined with a lack of personal resilience, they may also explain why individuals are unable to move out of this situation.

As we examine in chapter three, this has serious implications for an individual's physical and mental health. However, a few individuals plight – no matter how unfortunate – cannot be considered a true social problem. It is inevitable that the entire population cannot be entirely satisfied with their lives. As we have mentioned, for many people, this is only a fleeting concern. For many others, it is a more long-standing issue. The concern is that this latter group grows, until we reach a stage of 'critical mass' of loneliness.

In this report we use the term the 'grey zone' to describe an area which has hit this point – where loneliness becomes not only an individual but a societal problem. That is to say the point where the lonely cease to be a handful of isolated individuals, and become a body of the disaffected or in Paul Farmer's phrase, where the problems within a community or a society are particularly conducive to individuals being lonely. As loneliness becomes more widespread, it retains its contagious nature.²² This creates a pernicious cycle, where the spread of loneliness ensures that it continues to do so. Indeed, if many people are lonely, then the realities of maladaptive social cognition mean that you are unlikely to see a sudden rise in social engagement. Even those who otherwise are not lonely may find that there are no communities for them to engage with.

Beyond this point, the lonely are no longer a minority group, but instead represent a significant class of marginalised individuals. If this is to happen, then the not inconsiderable costs of loneliness – both human and monetary – are no longer avoidable. Instead, they begin to escalate. It is in 'grey zone' areas that the costs we describe in terms of community breakdown are especially prevalent.

This is the point that some of the most harmful effects of loneliness come to the fore. While health problems accompany each case of loneliness, other problems proliferate beyond a certain point. This is particularly relevant with relation to community breakdown and associated costs through increased crime and in some contexts, radicalisation. As the lonely seek social relations – however superficial – phenomena such as gang-affiliation become commonplace, as they offer a feeling of 'belonging' which is absent elsewhere. Of course, these may exist without the lonely, but their prevalence can be partly attributed to the sheer number of the disaffected within a society.

Any case of loneliness is a concern, and efforts should be undertaken to remedy it. When it becomes a self-perpetuating social issue, however, it is more than this. In a 'grey zone' loneliness needs not just action at the level of the individual, but a concerted plan to break the cycle of isolation which has developed, and rejuvenate communities. This can be especially effective in areas of large population density, where the objective proximity of the populace is not matched by the feeling of proximity. Our capital city therefore is this report's locus.

Chapter Two: London – A Grey Zone City?

“When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford”

-Samuel Johnson, 1777

London is a truly global city. Its 8 million residents inhabit a uniquely cosmopolitan society. From fixie-riding hipsters in Hackney to media darlings in Notting Hill, from stockbrokers in Chelsea townhouses to the Tamil diaspora in East Ham, London offers something of everything. These are not simply discrete units next to one another, but instead parts of the highly complex interdependent web of connectedness which forms London. It is constantly expanding, as young people flock to the bright lights of the city, and existing residents often love living there too much to leave.

From this, you would expect London to also be one of the happiest places in the country. Dig a little deeper, however, and the picture is far from rosy. Many Londoners seem to have tired of their city. Rather than the vastness of the city encouraging more socially connected citizens, there is a creeping problem of Londoners feeling cut off, and disconnected from the society in which they live. It is this loneliness – which occurs in the middle of the busiest city in the UK – which we are examining, and is at the heart of a bigger question. What can be done to improve young people’s lives in a city where, on the surface, they have opportunities to acquire everything they could ever need?

That subject will be considered later in this piece. In this section, we attempt to isolate the scale of the problem. We begin by considering youth loneliness across the UK, then we move to considering loneliness among all age groups in London, and finally youth loneliness in London. We ask this question – is London a city in the ‘grey zone’?

The national picture of youth loneliness

The national picture is of an increasing prevalence of youth loneliness – in many cases more pronounced even than loneliness among the elderly. Given the welcome, high quality campaigns dedicated to the latter problem – which can have serious, tragic consequences – this itself should raise alarm.

- The Mental Health Foundation in 2010 concluded that ‘in general, the younger you are, the more likely you are to feel lonely often (12%) and the more likely to have felt depressed because you felt alone (53%)’.²³
- The Aviva Health Check Report, Spring 2014, found that ‘nearly half (48%) of 18-24 year olds say they often feel lonely, compared to a quarter of those aged over 65 and a UK average of 34%. These figures are in stark contrast to what is assumed knowledge; that older people are isolated and lonely while young people are constantly socially connected’.²⁴

Coming in from the Cold

- Polling for a series of special BBC television and radio programmes on loneliness in 2015 found that three in 10 of those aged between 18 and 24 say they experience loneliness at least some of the time, almost the same rate as that among those over 65 (31%).²⁵
- A 2015 nationwide survey carried out by Opinium on behalf of The Big Lunch shows that 83% of 18-34-year-olds are 'often, always or sometimes' lonely. By contrast, around half (48%) of people aged 55+ said they never feel lonely.²⁶

Loneliness in London among all age groups

These studies break down data by age but not by both age and region so they do not tell us about loneliness levels among young Londoners in particular. However, relevant data is available for Londoners of all age groups. The Mental Health Foundation's report found the following:

- 10% of Londoners often felt lonely (compared with 5% of people from Northern Ireland and 6% of people from the East Midlands).
- 52% of Londoners agreed or strongly agreed that 'people are getting lonelier in general' (compared with 41% of people in the North West).
- 28% of Londoners agreed or strongly agreed that they worry about feeling lonely (compared with 19% of people from Northern Ireland and 20% of people from the North East).²⁷

In the results of all 16 of the Mental Health Foundation's survey questions, London emerged as one of the loneliest places in the UK. Furthermore, data from the Office for National Statistics shows that 17.8% of Londoners feel they don't have a spouse, family member or friend to rely on if they have a serious problem. This is the highest score out of all regions in the UK. It

compares with a national average of 13.3% and a figure of 11.6% for the South West.²⁸

Young people in London

To investigate levels of loneliness among young Londoners in particular, ACEVO commissioned young people's charity Get Connected²⁹ to analyse their data logs over the preceding 12 months. This analysis revealed that between September 2014 and September 2015, 694

contacts were logged with the keywords 'lonely', 'isolated' or 'alone'.

James' story, aged 16:

OO I lives with my family and I talk to people every day but I never feel comfortable discussing how I feel. I feel the worst in social situations - I don't fully understand why parties make me feel so lonely but when my friends are having a good time I'm generally not. I don't drink much, so I tend to become slightly out of the group and I'm nervous when people get drunk - I can't connect or understand their behaviour.

I think loneliness comes through most predominantly when people can't quite connect with the group that they're a part of. I think hobbies and clubs are hugely important to get people connected and feel like they're part of a group that they have things in common with. Schools often promote extra-curricular activities but they usually stress the idea of getting involved purely to add something to your CV, rather than enjoyment.

It's important for young people to be able to socialise in settings that they feel secure in, without pressure to drink alcohol or anything like that. I think that this will allow people to feel fully involved and engaged in a group so they feel included." OO



Young people in London accounted for 25% of these contacts, despite the fact that Londoners account for only 13% of the UK population as a whole.³⁰ That means that there are twice as many lonely callers from London as you would expect if loneliness levels were the same across the UK.

Of these contacts from lonely young Londoners, there were several further nuances.

Firstly, the largest group of contacts by far were from the 18-24 age category. It would not be unreasonable to suggest that many of this

group are undergoing substantial life transitions – often for the first time.

This could be anything from leaving home or finishing university to entering the work market, or finding themselves in an uncertain employment situation – in effect, becoming a ‘NEET’.

Nearly three quarters of the calls logged from lonely Londoners came from women. While it is possible that this reflects the speaks to a more concerning imbalance. Indeed, mental health services have also found that around three quarters of those applying to them for support are women. Based on the findings of GetConnected, it appears that women are three times as likely to be lonely – or at least self-identify as lonely – as their male counterparts.

Of the calls logged by GetConnected, nearly 60% came from members of ethnic minorities. This is compared to only 40% of Londoners. This is a significant over-representation, and suggests that ethnic minorities are roughly 50% more likely to be lonely than is the norm. Much of this difference is made up by British Asians, who are overrepresented by nearly 100%.

The findings of Get Connected’s analysis can be found in full in Appendix B.

What causes loneliness among young people in London?

‘Floating Anxiety’

When looking at the research from GetConnected, it is noticeable that the largest group of calls from lonely young Londoners were logged alongside ‘Mental Health and Wellbeing’.

What this suggests is that, for many lonely young people, the cause of loneliness is not one distinct problem. While some linked it to homelessness, debt, relationships or education, the plurality did not. From this, it is possible to conclude that the major cause of loneliness is ‘floating’ or generalised anxiety – a sense that all is not quite right in their lives. This kind of malaise cannot be tackled through highly specific interventions.

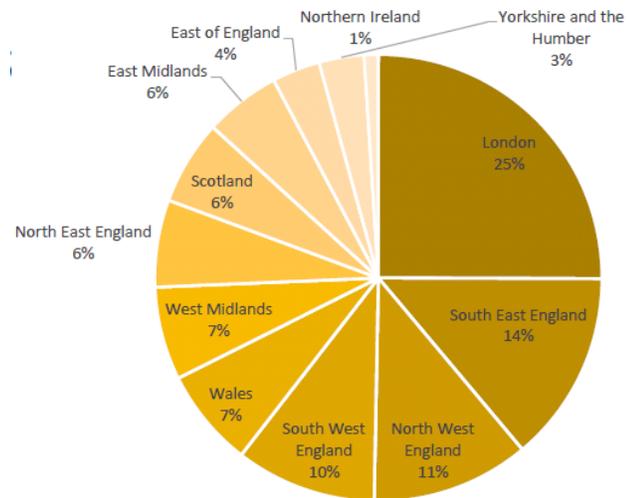
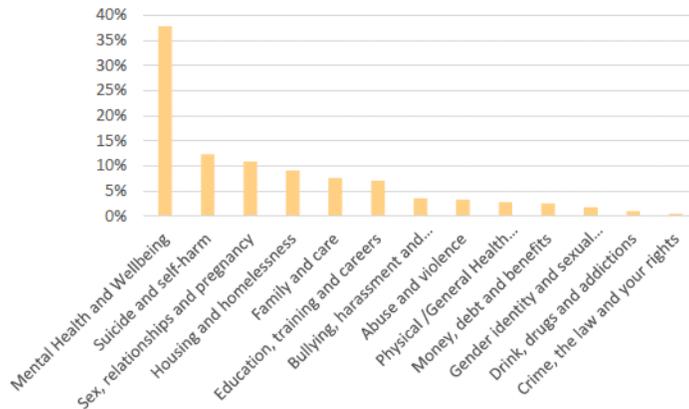


Figure 2: Calls to GetConnected from lonely young people by region

Figure 3: Which issues were most commonly logged alongside loneliness?



Instead, it requires a more strategic approach, which brings together the various strands of a young person's life.

Given that a great many of these people will be in the 18-24 age category, it is possible to surmise

that this generalised anxiety may well be linked to life transitions. When their lives are undergoing turbulence, it is unsurprising that young people are left feeling isolated from others, as their social networks are disturbed. These transitions may also leave them feeling overwhelmed by the enormity of 'everything' – notably, the challenges they face in reconstructing the networks which have been disturbed by life transitions.

Young People in their own words

To understand better the reasons why young Londoners experience such high rates of loneliness, ACEVO undertook desk-based research, as well as hearings with young Londoners and service providers. The results showed that life in London puts young people at particularly high risk of the psychological and social triggers for loneliness explained above.

From our conversations with young Londoners, we found a variety of factors which were seen as contributing to feelings of loneliness. The covered a range of areas, from the socio-economic to the cultural. What we present below is a selection of quotes from young people in London – explaining, in their own words, what makes Londoners so prone to loneliness. These do not cover every possible cause of loneliness among young Londoners. However, they identify high housing prices, long working hours and internal migration as factors which may contribute to youth loneliness.

“The more amazing a city is the more isolated it leaves some people because everyone is looking around them and seeing all this amazing stuff going on the whole time. And if they're uninvolved, or they feel uninvited, or somehow left behind by it, that's quite heart-breaking and it's a difficult thing to deal with.”

Alex Smith, Founder and CEO, North London Cares and South London Cares

We asked young Londoners why they were lonely. These are some of their responses.

I don't exactly have a social life because of the hours I work. It makes it even harder because I come home, go to sleep, wake up, go to work, and on my days off, I don't want to go out. I want to sleep and recuperate because I've been working so long in the week. It's hard to get over it. You have to keep your mind busy on other things.

Channele, 26

You're being forced to leave your community. When you want to get your own place but still live in this community, it's literally impossible because the rent's too high.

Steve, 25

In my little home town I had loads of friends. Then I went to college and university and had loads of friends. But as soon as I moved to London after university... everyone just disbands and you're left to start from scratch and it's been so long since you had to make friends. You haven't had to do it since primary school so how do you do it? If you have friends who do live in London, the chances are that they are going to live all over the place so for me to see my nearest friend it's an hour's journey.

Tom, 24

I think also, affordable living would help to make people less lonely. I don't think anyone growing up in Hackney in the last 20 years will be able to afford a house in their home town. It's forcing them to move out to places where they don't really know anyone and making them move away from their family. Coz their family are older and had the opportunity to invest it in housing when it was a lot cheaper but now it's become so expensive that people have to move out to a different borough or Outer London.

John, 22

Some people are so content about hiding behind social media so when it comes to going out they just can't do it. Some people go to crazy extents and will pretend to be this person for three, four, five years and just won't go out to show who they really are because they are so uncomfortable with themselves. So it's an insecurity thing as well. Social media's just crazy. And the pressures as well - of how you should look, what you should do, where you should go, having to go to the best events and show it all over Instagram... And it's getting worse as well

Lisa, 18

For a full transcript of our young people's focus group, with further detail on their comments, please see the ACEVO website.

Chapter Three: The Cost of Youth Loneliness

If they are acute, even short-term periods of loneliness can be highly damaging for individuals. Long-term, chronic loneliness makes life unliveable and can deliver a huge waste of human potential. In this section of the report, we discuss the effects of youth loneliness on health and community security and cohesion.

The effect of loneliness on individual health

Loneliness has a severe effect on both physical and mental health. Over time, it puts the individual at higher risk of cardiovascular disease, diminished immunity, being overweight, and having high cholesterol, among other problems.³¹ Symptoms of mental illness associated with loneliness include personality disorders and psychoses, suicide, impaired cognitive performance and cognitive decline over time, increased risk of Alzheimer's Disease, and depression.³² Ultimately, lonely people die sooner than non-lonely people.³³

John T. Cacioppo and William Patrick describe loneliness as having a 'wear and tear' effect on the body. They identify five 'causal pathways' leading to health decline as a result of loneliness:³⁴

- 1) Lonely people tend to have lower 'executive control' (i.e. self-regulation) and self-esteem than

non-lonely people leading to poor health behaviours such as smoking, drinking to excess, overeating, or risky sexual encounters.

- 2) The dysfunctional behaviours of lonely people result in them having higher levels of stress due to objective circumstances.

- 3) Lonely people perceive their lives as more stressful than non-lonely people, although their objective stressors may be very similar. They also gain less pleasure than non-lonely people when they have positive social interactions and tend to engage in 'grin and bear it' passive coping behaviours rather than trying to change their objective circumstances.

- 4) The stress of loneliness induces a physiological response which eventually leads to

"It's hard for people to express emotions and if they're not confident enough to express the fact that they're lonely, then I don't think they'll ever get over the fact that they are lonely. It's always gonna (sic) build up and build up. Until they open up and accept the fact that they are lonely, then they can't get any help for that. It can make it worse. For me, I went through a stage where I was really locked off to any friends or family and it just made me drink a lot of alcohol. It doesn't make it any better. It was just me trying to hide the fact that I was in that situation."

John, 22, East London

"Among young adults, we found that the greater the degree of loneliness, the more the individual withdrew from active engagement when faced with stressors. Similarly, the greater the loneliness, the less likely was the individual to seek either emotional support or instrumental (practical) support from others."

Cacioppo and Patrick, *Loneliness: Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection*, 2009, p. 103

high blood pressure. The effects may not be noticeable in young people but by the time they reach middle age, there may be serious consequences.

- 5) Lonely young adults take longer to fall asleep and are likely to feel tired during the day. They may experience the same quantity of sleep as non-lonely young adults, but its quality is much lower.

All this means that, over time, loneliness will harm a young person's health. As a result of maladaptive social cognition, loneliness can easily become a negative spiral, gradually worsening over many years.³⁵ Many commentators suggest that equipping young people to be resilient in the face of social isolation – learning how to break this cycle – may help to prevent them from experiencing loneliness in middle or older age.³⁶ There is therefore a mandate to tackle loneliness from a public health perspective – both to improve outcomes for young people and as a preventative measure for loneliness among older people.

The effect of loneliness on community security

Loneliness also has effects which reach far beyond the individual concerned. Lonely people are more likely to feel socially excluded – that is, left out of mainstream social, cultural, economic, and political activities – than non-lonely people.³⁷ In turn, social exclusion is linked to aggressive behaviour.³⁸ According to Public Health England, 'young people who feel excluded by mainstream society may show disregard for its rules, contributing to a willingness to break laws and perpetrate violence'. In particular, they may be drawn into gangs which 'offer a source of support to isolated young people who lack strong family or social relationships'.³⁹

“When they're feeling lonely, young people are more likely to get involved in crime. I did when I was a kid. Being lonely made me more want to go out of the house and get involved in things I shouldn't have been.”

Raymond, 28, East London

Loneliness is also a factor in the radicalisation of young Muslims. A study undertaken by Professor Kamaldeep Bhui, of the University of London, in 2014 found that young people on the path to radicalisation are likely to be educated and come from wealthy families 'but feel bored with their lives and socially isolated'. Professor Bhui concluded that these young people were depressed and lonely.⁴⁰ Similarly, in an article entitled 'Radicalization of Youth as a Growing Concern for Counter-Terrorism Policy', academics Margarita Bizina and David H. Gray concluded: 'Socially isolated, disenchanted young men turn to extremism in their search for identity, acceptance and purpose which they are unable to find in the community more often concerned with wealth accumulation rather than healthy relationship-building'.⁴¹

The effect of loneliness on deprivation

Quite aside from its role in instigating criminal activity, loneliness has been linked to community deprivation as a whole. High 'social capital' (i.e. good social connectivity) is associated with positive outcomes for communities, while low social capital is associated with negative outcomes. This is partly because social capital provides access to other forms of capital.⁴² Even if you and your neighbour do not have a close relationship, in areas with high

social capital (or high trust), your neighbour may help you out on the basis of 'generalised reciprocity'.⁴³ These exchanges bring about tangible, measurable benefits in areas such as child welfare and education; health; productivity; economic prosperity; happiness; democratic citizenship; and government performance.

Social capital theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu have particularly emphasised the importance of this effect in relation to the jobs market. Well-connected people are likely to have access to more jobs and better jobs. Social connections can even mitigate for potential barriers to employment such as low skills or poor qualifications on the basis that 'it's not what you know, but who you know'.

The Cost of Youth Loneliness to the Public Purse⁴⁴

Estimating the cost of youth loneliness to the State is by no means an easy task. A scoping exercise carried out by The Campaign to End Loneliness in January 2014 describes some of the challenges in arriving at an estimate of the cost to society of loneliness among *older* people. These include scarcity of data on loneliness prevalence; the difficulties of drawing straightforward, causal links between loneliness and particular health problems; and the difficulty in estimating service usage among people who are not lonely to facilitate comparison.⁴⁵ All these issues apply to loneliness among young people too.

That being said, it would be irresponsible for this report to overlook the financial implications of youth loneliness. Although straightforward lines of causality may not be forthcoming, the effects of loneliness on health and individuals' behaviour are well documented. Although it may be seen as reductive to estimate the costs of loneliness in pounds and pennies, it serves as a useful indicator of the scale of the problem.

According to research undertaken by the Campaign to End Loneliness, GPs estimate that for 1 in 10 of their appointments, the patient came to see them because they are feeling lonely rather than because they have a physical or mental health complaint. This adds up to 34 million appointments per year at a cost of £45 for each one. That means that in GP appointments alone, loneliness costs the NHS £1.53 billion per year.

There are three main areas of State expenditure which are particularly relevant to youth loneliness: health and social care, underemployment and crime. We provide one cost estimate for the UK as a whole and another specifically for London. For workings and sources, please see Appendix C.

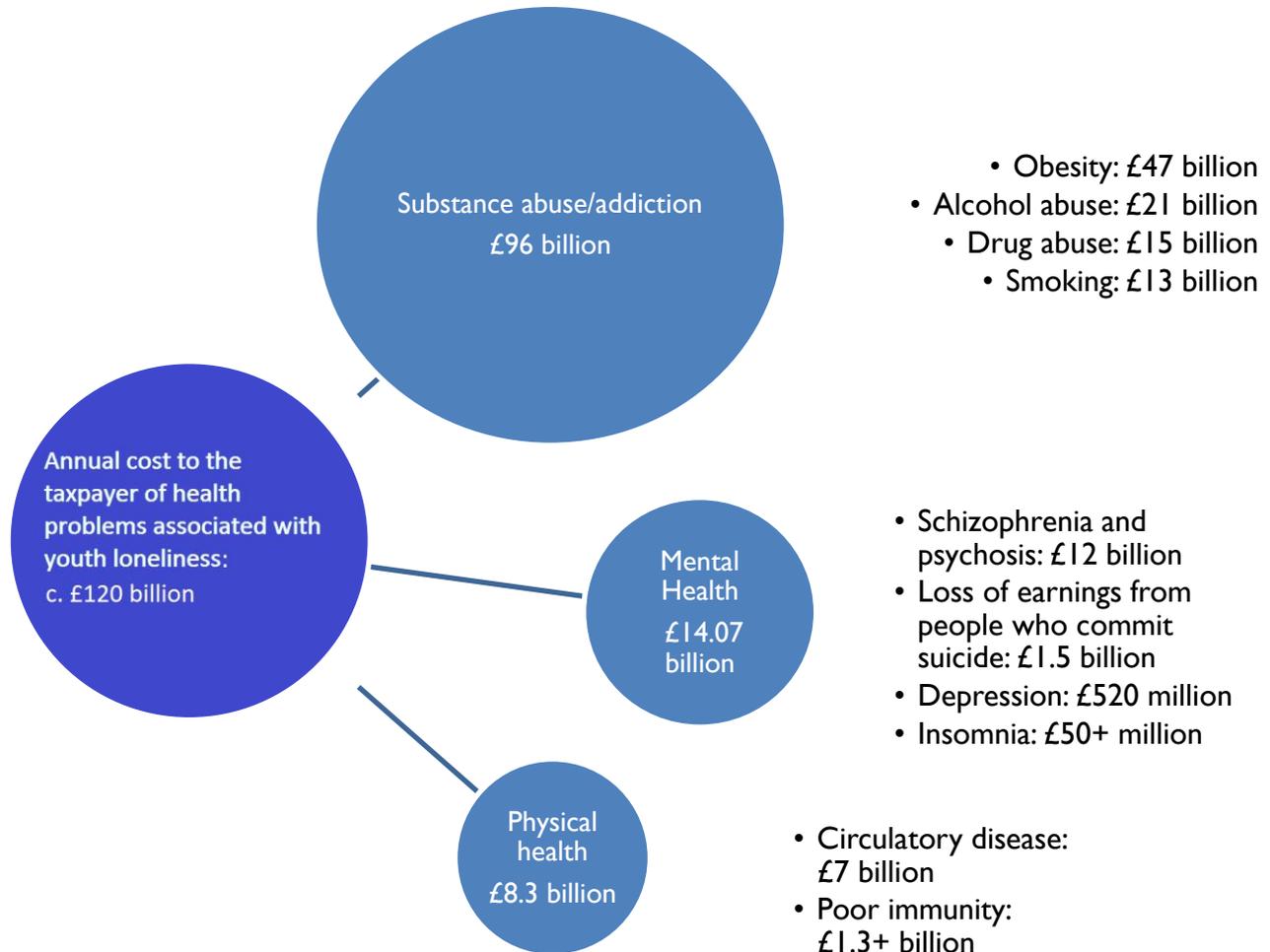
The national costs of loneliness

Health and social care

In a report published in June 2015, healthcare economists Matrix Knowledge estimated that chronic loneliness among older people costs NHS and local authorities £12,000 per person over 15 years.⁴⁶ The figure is based on a comparison between service use for lonely and

non-lonely older adults across seven key areas. It is not possible to undertake a similar calculation with respect to young people because a comparable evidence base contrasting service use between lonely and non-lonely young adults does not yet exist.

There is a considerable cost to the public purse of some of the health problems which are known to arise out of loneliness. Although it is impossible to say how small or great a part youth loneliness plays in instigating any of the following problems, the sums involved are so high that even if we assume loneliness has only a very small impact, the cost to the taxpayer runs to hundreds of millions of pounds. The diagram below shows the annual cost for a range of health problems which are associated with youth loneliness.



The sum total of these problems comes to £118.37 billion. Even if youth loneliness accounted for 1% of this overall spend, that would be a total cost of around £1.2 billion.

Crime

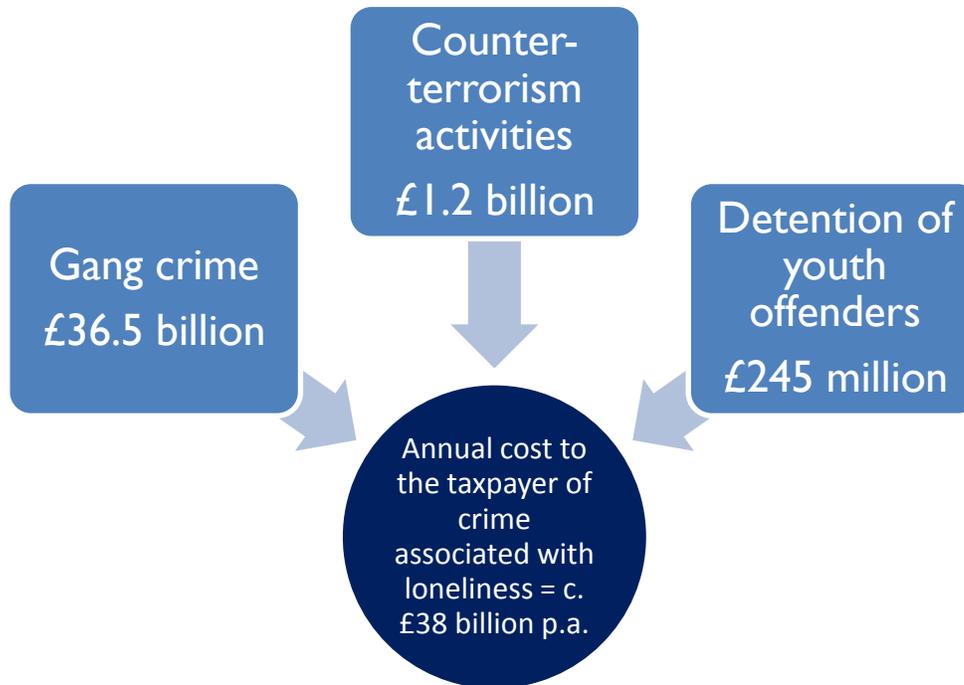
Loneliness is linked to youth offending, in particular through membership of gangs and involvement in violent extremism. Some of the

The National Audit Office estimates that preventing just one in ten young offenders from ending up in custody in the UK would save £100 million a year.

<http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/images/publications/less%20crime%20lower%20costs%20-%20may%2009.pdf>

annual costs to the State associated with these problems are represented in the diagram below.

The total cost of these three indicators alone comes to £37.945 billion per year.



Unemployment and underemployment

A 2014 report produced by the Social Integration Commission found that a lack of social integration, or social connectivity, contributes to long-term unemployment and underemployment. This is because around 40% of jobs are found through personal contacts and because 'limited networks make it harder for employers to recruit the right talent' and for 'people with specific skills to find the right jobs'.⁴⁷ The Social Integration Commission estimates that long-term unemployment costs the State £1.5 billion per year.

Similarly, the Commission uses estimates for the total lost income from underemployment due to a lack of social integration and the total increased tax receipts attainable by improved social integration to calculate that unfulfilled potential costs the State £700 million per year. This adds up to a combined cost to the State of £2.2 billion due to unemployment and underemployment, which is often a result of poor social connectivity.

Total cost of loneliness nationally

Combining the estimates above for State expenditure on health (£120 billion); justice (£38 billion); and unemployment and underemployment (£2 billion), we can say that youth loneliness and lack of social connectivity within communities contributes towards problems which cost the State around £160 billion a year.

The cost of loneliness in London

To calculate the cost of loneliness in London specifically, the UK-wide estimates above were scaled to represent the population of London. Wherever possible, estimates were not based simply on the percentage of the national population living in London but also according to the prevalence of a particular health or social issue among Londoners. For example, there are just over 12 million obese people nationwide and 1.6 million of them live in London: 13% of the total number. Therefore, the cost estimate for obesity in London is estimated to be 13% of the national cost. More information about how these estimates were arrived at can be found in Appendix C.

Luke's story, aged 17:

OO My loneliest points came during secondary school, when I was being bullied and all my classmates turned on me. I had no one to talk to or work with and that made me feel incredibly alone.

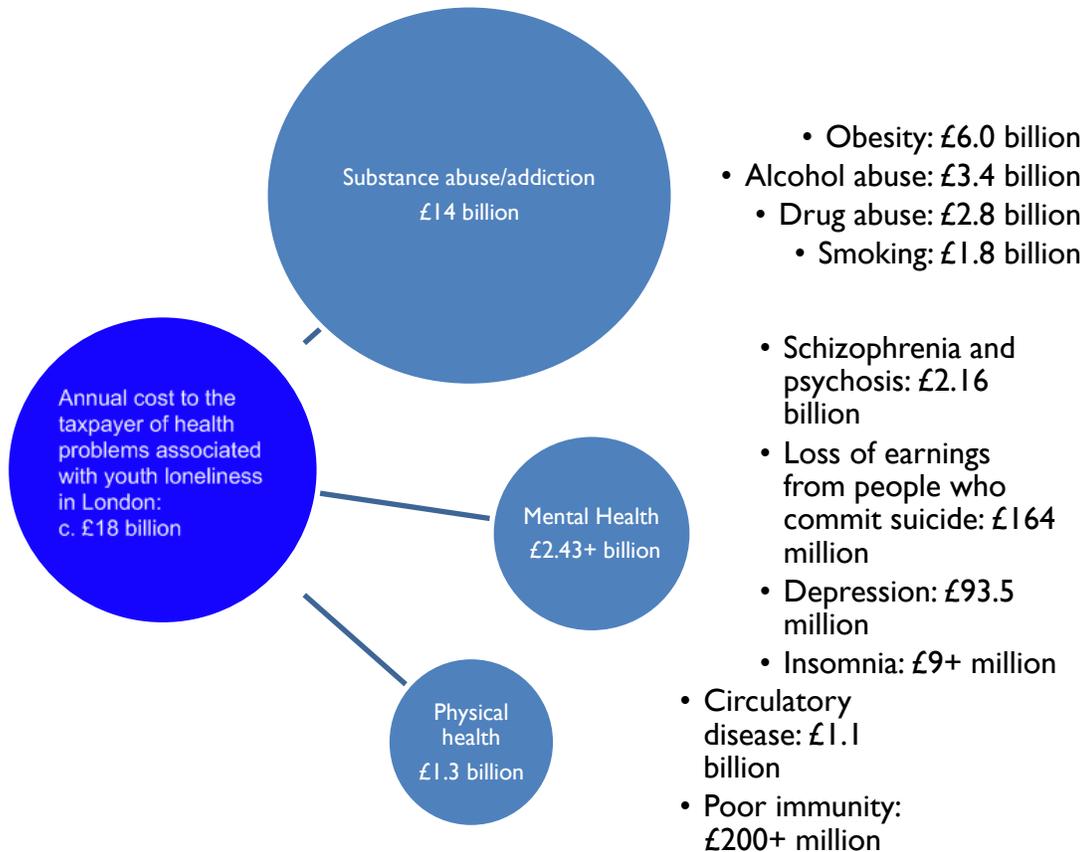
I lives with my parents and two siblings but I don't really talk to them much - we don't have common interests and am too scared to tell them about my struggles with mental health. I Get Connected and ChildLine to talk about how I felt. I think there needs to be more help with the pressures of school and college, with more awareness on mental health issues.

Young people in London might feel lonely in such a big city - they may not know who they can talk to as it's such a big place." OO



Health and Social Care

The cost of health issues associated with loneliness for London is estimated as follows:



The sum total of these problems comes to £17.73 billion – just less than £18 billion. Even if youth loneliness accounted for 1% of this overall spend, that would be a total cost of £180 million.

Crime

Using the same method, the cost of social problems in London associated with loneliness is estimated as follows:



Measures to address gang violence, terrorism, and youth offending in London are estimated to cost the State £15.818 billion – just less than £16 billion.

Unemployment and Underemployment

By scaling down the Social Integration Commission's figures for the national cost of unemployment and underemployment as a result of poor social connectivity and taking into account the demography of London, we estimate that the cost of unemployment in London as a result of poor social connectivity is £292 million, and the cost of underemployment is £191 million.⁴⁸ This is a combined total of £483 million – approaching £500 million.

Total Cost of Loneliness in London

Combining the estimates above for State expenditure on health (£18 billion); justice (£16 billion); and unemployment and underemployment (£500 million), we can say that youth loneliness and lack of social connectivity within communities in London contributes to problems which cost the State £18.516 billion per year.

This is simply the cost of loneliness in monetary terms. The true cost of loneliness is, of course, in terms of the wellbeing of the individuals affected. The loss to their lives in terms of their mental health, self-esteem, and even physical wellbeing is far greater than the mere costs to the state. Any attempts to combat loneliness must be motivated not only by concern for financials, but also a human concern for the wellbeing of those affected. As such, how we engage with the lonely is of central importance, and this is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Four: Solutions on the Ground

The threat of loneliness among the young should be apparent to leaders in London. Gang crime and extremism have had a huge impact on the capital over the past two decades. Meanwhile, deprivation and poor health

“We need to promote skills for life. We need to give people the skills they need to self-preserve against loneliness and to work through shock so that when one social connection falls away they know how what to do to replace it.”

Kate Jopling, Head of Policy and Research at Relate and Former Director of The Campaign to End Loneliness

outcomes have had a more insidious but equally pernicious impact.

The case studies contained in Appendix A give an insight into how we can apply that ethos on the ground. We focus in particular on new and innovative models for preventing and alleviating loneliness instigated by social leaders within London and further afield.

Another way of categorising interventions would be to look at projects which *prevent* loneliness as distinct from those which *alleviate* loneliness. However, given the fluidity between the two – particularly when

it comes to informal, open-access youth services – we assume that all services will do a little of each.⁴⁹ Indeed, one of the most effective ways to alleviate loneliness is to equip individuals with the skills to prevent its continuation and recurrence.

Building personal resilience and capacity to form healthy relationships

The need for initiatives to build young people’s resilience and self-esteem to prevent them from entering into anti-social, destructive patterns of thinking and behaviour was expressed strongly by both ACEVO’s Young People’s and Providers’ steering groups. Members of ACEVO’s provider group also pointed out that giving young people new opportunities for social contact is not helpful if that young person does not have the skills or attitude to allow them to fully engage with others. In fact, creating these new connections without doing the groundwork could be counterproductive as the person concerned may feel an even deeper sense of loneliness if they fail to build productive relationships when they are on offer.

Some examples of interventions which help to equip young people with the skills to flourish include psychological therapies, counselling, mentoring, befriending, helplines, and online chat facilities. Practical skills which may be taught alongside building up an individual’s personal and social skills include digital literacy, financial management, or personal care. Supporting someone to develop the life skills they need to cope with a life transition (such as how to care for a first child) may be particularly helpful as individuals are at high risk of loneliness during times of change.

“School doesn’t teach us how to be ready for independence... They just teach you these are your subjects, do them, get your grades, bye... I was in a unit – where you go when you get kicked out of school – for two years. When I was there, I learnt so much more about life and people from the people the school brought in than I had from any other secondary school that I’d been to. It was kind of funny that it has to get to that point of us actually getting excluded from school for you to want to teach us how to deal with life in the first place. I just thought it was a bit backwards and maybe they need to start bringing that into mainstream schools.”

Lisa, 18, North London

Resilience and capacity-building services will often (though not always) be delivered via tailored, one-to-one support. This dedicated attention improves the intervention's probability of success as it enables the individual concerned to work with the service provider to arrive at a plan for action that they feel comfortable with. Experts agree that given the highly personal and subjective nature of loneliness, a flexible approach to interventions must be adopted – there's no 'one size fits all' solution.

For information on schemes aiming to build personal resilience, see the following case studies:

- Worth-it Projects
- Get Connected
- HEBA Women's Project
- Abandofbrothers
- Shoreditch Trust's 'Bump Buddies'

Building communities

Community-based approaches to tackling loneliness can take a wide variety of different forms. The Campaign to End Loneliness' *Promising approaches to reducing loneliness and isolation in later life* asserts that one type does not necessarily appear any more promising than another – the effectiveness of an intervention will depend on an individual's preferences about how they like to spend their time. For this reason, it is important that there is a 'menu' of activities on offer in a particular community.⁵⁰

However, academic Mimi Cattan argues that the most effective group-based activities will be focused on shared interests and will allow the targeted group to play a role in governing the activity at hand.⁵¹ A desire to meet others with shared interests emerged in both ACEVO's Young People's focus group and Community Network's peer-led research. Both the focus groups and the research also made reference to needing 'spaces' in which to meet people and relax. This perceived lack of 'space' for young Londoners to interact may be due to the closure of many youth clubs, decline of pubs, and moves by many local authorities to prevent young people from gathering in public spaces.

Some of the benefits of community-based

“In the local community, there aren't enough activities or projects to bring people together.”

Rob, 29, West London

loneliness interventions include their role in building links between the generations; building communities of 'interest' (as opposed to geographically-based communities); and building 'micro-communities' (e.g. community on a particular street). All these help to alleviate both young people's feelings of alienation from London and the

difficulty of creating community links given the transience and instability of life in the city. They also help to create links across socioeconomic divides,

“Peer-to-peer support is really important. It impassions people to make changes in their own lives as well as seeing if they can make a difference to other people.”

Sarah Milan, CEO, Rees Foundation

“It’s important for young people to be able to socialise in settings that they feel secure in, without pressure to drink alcohol or anything like that. I think that this will allow people to feel fully involved and engaged in a group so they feel included.”

James, 16 (Get Connected)

which is an important factor in reducing feelings of loneliness and exclusion among people of all ages.

Another highly beneficial aspect of community-based approaches to reducing loneliness is that there is often no clear division between service user and service provider. Volunteers who ostensibly get involved in an initiative to help others will find that their own levels of wellbeing and sense of connection to the community increase. This reduces the stigma that some young people might feel when trying

to find opportunities for better social engagement.

For more information on schemes aiming to build communities, see the following case studies:

- Catch22’s Axis Service
- North London Cares
- Rees Foundation’s Revolution Networking
- The Big Lunch
- vInspired

Savings to the public purse generated by services to address youth loneliness

The youth sector needs to get better at evidencing the importance of its work, as advocated by a range of organisations including the National Children’s Bureau and The Centre for Youth Impact. However, there are striking figures available to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of youth interventions. According to The Young Foundation, volunteer-staffed services can cost as little as £32 per participant – less than is spent on one day of schooling. Even the £2000 needed for a more complex youth services intervention costs the same as only one term of state education. This compares with a cost of £40,000 to the taxpayer of a young person spending a year in prison, for example.⁵² The National Youth Agency stresses that detached, street-based youth work, which is effective in reaching the most disadvantaged young people, is particularly inexpensive – weighing in at as little as £16 per contact.⁵³

Harry’s story, aged 17

Harry believes his anxiety sparks from the idea of being lonely. He lives with his family, but prefers to keep himself to himself.

“I’ve contacted several support organisations like Get Connected, ChildLine and I regularly visit my GP. I feel like the friends I do have make no effort whatsoever to see me. I generally prefer being up in my room on my laptop, away from my family.

I talk to my family but at school when I do reach out to my teachers it’s only when I really have to. I have volunteer work too, and I feel more confident talking to the people there – they usually don’t make me feel so lonely but I sometimes still do.

I think in a city like London it can feel like there are just so many people it can make you feel more isolated. If you find it difficult to make friends, it can make you feel even worse when you are surrounded by so many people you don’t know.

I really think that for things to get better, all teachers – especially at secondary school and beyond – need to be more aware of how you can support someone who is struggling with loneliness or any other issue with their mental health.”

Coming in from the Cold

Chapter Five: Further Barriers to Addressing Loneliness

Lack of understanding

“The vast majority of young people have happy childhoods and make a positive contribution to society. There are, however, a minority that require further support as they are troubled, rather than troublesome.”

National Youth Agency

PI3: <http://www.nya.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/NYA-Commission-into-%E2%80%98what-is-a-sufficient-youth-offer%E2%80%99.pdf>

This introduction to youth loneliness has presented a troubling – if surmountable – picture. But it is only the beginning of a wider conversation. While there are various studies which investigate youth loneliness among particular subgroups, such as homeless young people, there has been no large scale study on youth loneliness as a whole. Without this evidence base, there is little impetus for the public sector to engage with youth loneliness or for new services to be developed to address it.

Underinvestment in prevention

Where public sector bodies do still have money to spend, it is not necessarily used in the most efficient way to counter loneliness, which, due to its chronic and progressive nature, is undoubtedly prevention.⁵⁴ There are several reasons why prevention is not widely employed at the level of either central or local government.

First, the savings generated by preventative measures instigated by one department are often reaped by another department, meaning that departments are not incentivised to embed prevention in their operations. Secondly, the extent of the savings generated by preventative services is still disputed – more evidence is needed to establish a comprehensive case for this spending. Thirdly, the short term nature of government budgets often means that short term ‘crisis management’ becomes the default option, rather than taking a longer view.

“Commissioners need to focus less on price and more on value.”

Stuart Mathers, Former CEO, The Avenues Youth Project

Looking at loneliness specifically, research undertaken by The Campaign to End Loneliness shows – at least with respect to older people – that commissioners do understand the benefits of commissioning preventatively. However, they may be put off from doing so due to the difficulty of proving the financial case.⁵⁵ With regard to children and young people, the now defunct National CAHMs Support Service argued in a 2011 publication that ‘While the benefits of intervening early are not disputed, introducing more early intervention services can be challenging for commissioners, particularly when resources are limited, the requirements of the acute sector continue to grow and the cost benefit is not easily demonstrable nor always realised in the short term’.⁵⁶

This incapacity to commission preventatively in the youth sector has led to more investment being channelled into targeted interventions and less into open-access services. According to the National Youth Agency, planned expenditure on universal services in England fell by 17.6% between 2011/12 and 2012/13, with the majority of local authorities reporting a decrease in planned expenditure for subsequent years. By contrast, planned

expenditure on targeted services increased between 2011/12 and 2012/13 by 3.2%.⁵⁷ While targeted intervention can be effective in supporting the most vulnerable young people, it relies upon a group having been previously identified as requiring help and there is little room for self-referral. This means that initiatives of this kind are more likely to be reacting to an existing need than preventing one from developing to begin with. The National Youth Agency says that it is crucial to ‘include the right mix of open access provision alongside targeted activities’ and that ‘the relationship and interdependency between the two is intrinsic to ensure there isn’t an increase in a “conveyor belt of need”’.⁵⁸

In the short-term, one way to bolster the standing of universal services would be to reinforce the statutory guidance with respect to youth provision. Currently, the guidance says simply, ‘Local authorities are responsible for securing, so far as is reasonably practicable, a local offer that is sufficient to improve young people’s well-being and personal and social development. A sufficient local offer will result in positive feedback from young people on the adequacy and quality of local provision, and positive trends in data that are indicative of local young people’s well-being and personal and social development’.⁵⁹ This statement neither guarantees a minimum standard of provision nor specifies a gold standard to work towards. Therefore, faced with the need to make large savings, local authorities have been able to make disproportionately large cuts to this area with little challenge from local communities or the voluntary sector. Both UNISON and the National Youth Agency have called for this guidance to be strengthened and clarified.⁶⁰

Longer-term, it is critical that a greater proportion of public sector expenditure is channelled into preventative youth services. ACEVO’s 2015 report *Remaking the State* called for 5% of all government spending to be devoted to preventative services, especially in major delivery departments (initially health, welfare, justice and education)⁶¹. This ‘Five for the Future’ would be approximately double the current tally and, following five years of severe cuts to preventative services, take us up to and beyond levels of expenditure at the start of 2010. Over the course of the next five years, we urge government to turn this into a whole government commitment and to push total spending on prevention up a percentage point each year to 10% of the total by the end of 2020.

Barriers in London

We have heard that young Londoners are particularly at risk due to structural issues such as internal migration, high housing costs and long working hours. The potential problems associated with a large migrant population⁶² and unaffordable housing⁶³ are well-understood and extend far beyond youth loneliness. Furthermore, all three of

“Young people seeking an independent life in London today face the greatest scale of challenge in generations. From the housing and rental crisis to the deficit of appropriate jobs, it is clearly evidenced that the downward spiral of conditions faced by young people is not stopping of its own accord. Much of this is shaped and can be influenced by policy. However, in the Catch-22 between young people that see no point in voting if policy makers don’t represent their interests and policy makers that see little value in representing young people’s interests when so few young people vote, the opportunity to correct the course has stalled.”

Partnership for Young London

http://www.partnershipforyounglondon.org.uk/documents/2015/Apr%20Jun/Who.stands.for.youth_report_April15.pdf

these characteristics could be considered markers of London's success as a global city – some people would argue that these drawbacks are inextricably intertwined with London's most attractive attributes as a place to live.

To go into these issues in sufficient detail to outline substantive solutions is beyond the scope of this report. While measures such as rent control may serve to alleviate loneliness amongst the young, further research will be needed to establish the efficacy of such approaches. Where organisations such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation⁶⁴ and the Resolution Foundation⁶⁵ have begun looking at these issues, we need a renewed impetus in order to find genuine solutions to these problems. Specifically, such solutions would have ramifications far beyond the alleviation of youth loneliness, and must be considered as such.

Since the dissolution of the London Development Agency in 2012, it has often been unclear where funding for initiatives to improve the lives of Londoners will come from. The Mayor of London has a budget of nearly £15

billion, but it is largely taken up by transport and policing concerns. With the LDA's £400million budget largely absorbed by the GLA and Mayor's Office, it is important that schemes to ensure outcomes such as regenerating outer London and ensuring sustained employment remain a priority for the Mayor.

In addition to these highly complex structural issues,

barriers to addressing youth loneliness in London include underinvestment in the third sector and prevention by the Mayor's Office.

Underinvestment in the third sector in London

Over the past five years, London's youth organisations have been cushioned from the damage reaped by local authority cuts in the rest of England and Wales as a result of funding from the Greater London Authority, from trusts and foundations which focus specifically on London, and from the large London-based corporations with generous CSR programmes. In addition, umbrella organisations such as London Youth and Partnership for Young London have played a role in brokering partnerships and knowledge-sharing between young people's organisations and between young people's organisations and public sector bodies.

However, funding cuts are likely to hit London's young people's organisations particularly hard in the next five years. Alongside continued local authority cuts, London-based organisations will see significant cuts in funding from the Greater London Authority. Combined GLA expenditure on Youth ESF Projects and the ESF Youth Innovation Project, which ran to £1,498,000 in 2015-16, will drop to just £584,000 in 2016-17. In 2015-16, a sum of £1,500,000 was budgeted for further education and a sum of £62,000 was budgeted for youth volunteering. There is no expenditure at all budgeted against these areas in 2016-17.⁶⁶

Jenny's story, aged 16:

oo

I felt constantly lonely for around four years and it completely drained me. I wanted to reach out but I didn't want to be a burden.

Being lonely doesn't always mean being alone. I always felt that despite having friends and loving family around me, no one liked me and no one could possibly understand how awful I was feeling inside.

When I began to feel less alone this actually made my anxiety worse - it was like I was waiting for the moment I would snap and the feeling of loneliness would come back. In the end I completely isolated myself from everyone and everything, which destroyed my friendships and the relationship I had with my mother and father. A year later, this is still a work in progress.

oo



One of the ways in which the Mayor's Office has been promoting the third sector in London is the Mayor's Fund for London. This is an independent charity, with the Mayor as its patron, and has as its aim 'improving the life chances and aspirations of disadvantaged children, young people and their families in London'. Although none of the Fund's income comes directly from the Mayor's Office, it does receive funding from Mayoral initiatives such as 'Penny for London', launched in 2015. While this shows a valuable intention to tackle the problems of young people via the third sector, it has not been matched by a financial commitment.

Underinvestment in prevention in London

Given that young Londoners face tough challenges in establishing stable and fulfilling lives for themselves in London, services to prevent young people from succumbing to gang crime, radicalisation, and mental health problems are essential. However, the Mayor's Office and wider GLA group do not invest significant sums in prevention and prevention is rarely acknowledged as an explicit aim in their programmes.⁶⁷ At present, the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) invests £21.3 million a year in prevention via the London Crime Prevention Fund which supports projects across a huge range of fields from gang crime and youth crime to mental health. While the forward-thinking ethos of the fund and its unequivocal allocation to prevention are to be praised, it is a small sum in the context of the Metropolitan Police's overall annual budget of £3.6 billion – equating to just 0.6% of total spend.⁶⁸ This means that MOPAC's preventative spending falls well below the 5% target advocated by ACEVO's 'Five for the Future' campaign.

The GLA funds a range of programmes for young people that play some role in preventing them from experiencing health problems or entering into destructive lifestyles. For example, the Healthy Schools London awards programme encourages teachers to develop initiatives to improve pupils' fitness and encourage healthy eating, while the London Schools Excellence Fund aims to raise the aspirations and achievements of children living with foster families. However, there is only one preventative youth service overtly labelled as such in the Mayor's Draft GLA budget for 2016-17 – 'a schools-based, preventative intervention aimed at vulnerable pupils who are considered at risk during the transition from primary (Year 6) to secondary school (Year 7)'.⁶⁹ Greater acknowledgement from the Mayor's Office of the efficacy and importance of preventative initiatives would be a desirable first step in embedding a 'prevention-first' approach into the GLA group's activities. Having begun the transition to a more prevention-focussed agenda, the Mayor's Office may then wish to consider broadening the GLA's preventative youth initiatives from their current focus on educational attainment and employment support to a more rounded offering addressing children and young people's wider personal and social development.

Chapter Six: Recommendations

10 Step Programme to Escape the Grey Zone

This 10 step plan, for the Mayor of London, central government, local authorities and others, is designed to help reduce levels of youth loneliness over the long term.

1. A Deputy Mayor for Young People should be created to ensure strategic oversight of youth service provision, and to promote the interests of this often overlooked demographic
2. The Mayor of London should create a new BeConnected Fund for Young People with an annual budget of £3.2 million, to tackle youth loneliness within London
3. Monitor the prevalence and severity of loneliness on a population level, via two new measures in the Office for National Statistics (ONS) National Wellbeing indicators
4. Adopt the Scottish Government's 'Getting it Right for Every Child and Young Person' (GIRFEC) outcomes framework to replace the outdated 'Every Child Matters' framework as the national gold standard for all professionals working with children
5. Ensure that loneliness among all age groups features in local authorities' Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS) and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)
6. Incorporate loneliness prevention and alleviation strategies into Early Help services
7. Ensure that links are made between NHS initiatives to tackle loneliness and initiatives led by relevant third sector organisations
8. Private business should invest in the local community by reaching out to young people and encouraging the workforce to contribute to their communities through volunteering
9. Conduct broad-based studies of youth loneliness to better understand how it impacts their social behaviour and the communities they live in
10. Funders who have traditionally funded projects to reduce loneliness among older people, should consider intervening to reduce levels of youth loneliness

This report has explained what causes loneliness and what puts young people living in London at especially high risk. It has laid out the reasons why loneliness is a threat to young people's health and to community cohesion, security, and prosperity. We have explored some services which prevent and alleviate youth loneliness and have shown that these are cost-effective. In the previous section, we explained some barriers to wider implementation of initiatives of this kind.

We now turn to recommendations about the next steps with regard to turning the tide on youth loneliness in the capital and beyond. These recommendations are broken down into recommendations for the public sector, for the third sector, for the private sector, and for further research.

Recommendations for the public sector

Despite significant lobbying from organisations which combat older people's loneliness in recent years, the public sector at large has not taken up the mantle of loneliness prevention and alleviation. Across the various bodies involved, there is a common uncertainty about the State's role and responsibilities – even when it is acknowledged that loneliness causes a variety of social ills for which the taxpayer picks up the bill. With respect to youth loneliness in particular, the relevant policy areas – prevention, young people, and working with the third sector – are incoherent and unaligned.

A first step in ameliorating this situation would be for public sector organisations to explicitly acknowledge loneliness as a social problem distinct from mental health issues such as depression or anxiety and, crucially, distinct from and not necessarily caused by physical mobility issues. This latter point is especially important because by conflating mobility problems with loneliness, the assumption is that only older people and disabled people are at risk.

Having acknowledged loneliness as a social problem in its own right – and therefore an issue for which effective interventions are needed – public sector organisations should incorporate loneliness prevention and alleviation into the frameworks and strategies which govern their work. A central component of public sector measures to combat loneliness should be supporting the role of the third sector to make change through good commissioning and adequate funding. Most importantly, public bodies at all levels must strengthen and synchronise their strategies with regard to prevention, youth work, and the third sector.

For the Mayor of London, London Assembly, and Greater London Authority (GLA)

The winner of the May 2016 London Mayoral Election should prioritise improving the quality of life of young people who face a variety of challenges in building fulfilling and stable lifestyles in London. ACEVO recommends that the Mayor:

- Recognises the unique challenges that are faced by young people in London through the creation of a new Deputy Mayor for Young People. This would be on a par with existing deputy mayors for issues such as Transport, Policing and Environment. The role of the Deputy Mayor would include;
 - Liaising with schools to ensure that they are effectively delivering extra-curricular activities and pastoral support to the young people under their charge. This will be increasingly important as academisation becomes more widespread
 - Commissioning young people's services across London, as well as working with local councils to ensure that they are commissioning young people's services in a constructive manner. This should include working with the voluntary sector to ensure that they are offering appropriate services
 - Bringing together the strategic actors in the Mayor's office, the GLA and from local authorities across London. There have, in the past, been difficulties getting these partners to work together in an effective way. The Deputy Mayor

- would be tasked with promoting this ‘joined up thinking’ in relation to young people
 - Acting as a public advocate not only for young people’s services, but also for young people themselves. This group often have a public image problem, and a strong public voice in their favour would be highly beneficial
 - Conducting further research into the prevalence of youth loneliness, potentially filtering for age, ethnicity, gender and socio-economic circumstance
- Creates a new Mayor’s BeConnected Fund for Young People with an annual budget of £3.2 million. This sum would represent a meaningful contribution towards beginning to tackle the wide range of issues contributing to youth loneliness in the capital, providing 1,600 full youth service interventions a year. We suggest the funds for this be hypothecated from the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime as a means to help prevent gang crime and radicalisation, which has been proven to emerge from endemic loneliness – representing less than 0.1% of this office’s budget. The new Deputy Mayor for Young People should be charged with overseeing this fund.
- Build on improvements to community infrastructure achieved via the Outer London Fund for boosting the capital’s high streets by setting up a new fund to support community development projects in the Outer boroughs – particularly those targeted at young people.
- Should encourage the Mayor’s Fund for London – which is tasked with working with disadvantaged young people across London – to expand its remit to explicitly reference those between the ages of 18 and 32. This would ensure that it pays adequate attention to those issues which manifest in young adulthood, as well as childhood. Funding for this increased remit could be realised through the ‘Penny for London’ scheme.
- Provide strategic oversight of youth provision across London to ensure that open access services are evenly distributed geographically and accessible to as many young people as possible. This may include encouraging local authorities to pool youth budgets to make their money go further or stepping in to lobby a local authority on behalf of young people where services have been cut particularly dramatically. The Mayor, London Assembly, and GLA should work with London Councils, the Partnership for Young London, and London Youth in establishing this oversight mechanism.

For central government

The development of the National Citizen Service is a promising sign that the government is in tune with the notion of promoting life skills for young people to enable them to cope with adversity, even if politicians have not engaged with the phenomenon of ‘youth loneliness’ per se.

ACEVO believes that, in order to combat the problem of youth loneliness, central government must drive a preventative agenda. In a time of cuts, it is easy to dismiss any project which does not respond to an acute and immediate crisis as an ‘added extra’. We must move to a model whereby we

prevent crises, rather than collude in their slow and painful evolution. ACEVO recommends that central government:

- Revises the Office for National Statistics (ONS) National Wellbeing indicators to include two measures to monitor the prevalence and severity of loneliness on a population level. By including these in the ONS' annual survey of the populations' wellbeing, a greater understanding of the issue of loneliness can be gained – including a better breakdown of such information by age group.⁷⁰
- Adopts the Scottish Government's 'Getting it Right for Every Child and Young Person' (GIRFEC) outcomes framework to replace the outdated 'Every Child Matters' framework as the national gold standard for all professionals working with children. The GIRFEC framework is much more comprehensive and has a stronger focus on healthy relationships. Key outcomes relevant to loneliness in the GIRFEC framework include 'Feels accepted, trusted and valued by the school and the wider community', 'Demonstrates capacity to act altruistically on behalf of others (e.g. gets involved in voluntary activities), and 'Positive about self and confident and competent when faced by problems and adverse circumstances'.⁷¹
- Expands the National Citizens' Service to offer places to all young people in the UK.

Local Authorities in London and beyond

There is evidence that on the national level some local authorities are engaging with loneliness – for example, by writing it into their joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS) and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). However, most authorities are only looking at loneliness among older people, possibly because the impact of older people's loneliness is much more apparent given that local authorities provide social care to frail older people but little one-to-one support to younger people.

In having recognised that loneliness is a serious social problem and begun to explore how to tackle it, local authorities are ahead of central government. However, there is more that local authorities could be doing both with respect to increasing supply of provision for young people in crisis and reducing demand. Local authorities could better support the voluntary sector to deliver the help needed through smarter and more long-term commissioning. They could also play a coordinating role in bringing together organisations across the public, private, and third sectors within local areas to tackle this issue.

They could reduce the numbers of young people experiencing loneliness through incorporating loneliness prevention and alleviation strategies into Early Help services. ACEVO recommends that local authorities:

- Ensure that loneliness among all age groups features in their Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS) and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).
- Adopt a long-term approach to young people's commissioning, taking into account evidence which shows the savings to be made through preventative youth work. Commissioners should recognise that preventative services can be effective for all age groups – it is not only through investing in early year's provision (0-5 years) that savings in other areas can be generated. Commissioners should put

aside a given percentage – we would suggest 10% - for investment in preventative services.

- Where possible, commission with a view to evaluating services using a menu of quantitative and qualitative types of evidence, avoiding arbitrary and abstruse KPIs. Reduction in levels of youth loneliness should be incorporated into reporting frameworks.
- Incorporate loneliness prevention and alleviation strategies into Early Help services. This could potentially involve modifying the service (as per recommendations for third sector youth organisations above) and training staff to recognise symptoms of loneliness among young people.
- Adopt a planning approach which seeks to actively build social connections within communities. This will involve maximising the value of 'community assets' by ensuring that they are welcoming to people of all ages and backgrounds and are used to capacity. It may also include creating new community focal points such as temporary art installations, pop up information stands, or events at a 'micro-local' level.
- Ensure that young people have places to go where they feel safe, included, and respected. These spaces could be youth clubs, cafes, or hubs for entertainment and creative pursuits.

For NHS and public health bodies

Research shows that loneliness has a noxious effect on the nation's health and results in a significant annual outlay of NHS resources. To reduce reactive spending on the issue, the NHS and public health bodies must put loneliness prevention and alleviation on the agenda in both a strategic sense and a practical one. Loneliness must be incorporated into population monitoring and service outcomes targets at all levels. Staff on the ground must be educated with respect to the attitudes and behaviours which are helpful in engaging effectively with lonely patients of all ages. ACEVO recommends that the NHS and public health bodies:

- Ensure loneliness prevention and alleviation are incorporated into all high-level strategic targets and service delivery outcomes, including the Public Health Outcomes framework, NHS Outcomes Framework, and The Children and Young People's Health Outcomes Framework.
- Consider how to incorporate the loneliness prevention/alleviation service delivery principals above into training for all primary healthcare providers.
- Launch a national information campaign encouraging GPs and other primary healthcare workers to build links with local services relevant to loneliness prevention/alleviation among any and all age groups. This will ensure that professionals can signpost patients presenting with symptoms of loneliness to help more effectively.
- Ensure that links are made between NHS initiatives to tackle loneliness and initiatives led by relevant third sector organisations. For example, IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) services should refer patients on to local third sector organisations after discharge.

Recommendations for the third sector

The third sector plays a critical role with respect to reducing loneliness amongst all age groups. Many organisations may not see loneliness prevention or alleviation as part of their mission and yet may be providing services which significantly reduce the burden of loneliness for their beneficiaries, volunteers, and even paid staff. Arguably, the third sector's core business is that of building social connections in order to make society kinder, fairer, and happier.

Given that this report is particularly concerned with youth loneliness, we address the recommendations which follow to children and young people's organisations. However, we have attempted to demonstrate throughout that youth loneliness has a pernicious effect on society as a whole. It is also important to consider that loneliness can become a chronic and increasingly destructive condition so by helping young people to feel less lonely, we may prevent them succumbing to loneliness and isolation in middle or older age. As such, loneliness should be a concern for all of civil society and organisations working outside of the youth sector may consider implementing these recommendations.

Children and young people's organisations should:

- Consider whether preventing or alleviating youth loneliness is an unacknowledged goal of their service. It may also be an important enabler for a service to fulfil other aims. In either case, organisations should consider making a reduction in the level of youth loneliness an explicit aim of their service.
- Review and re-evaluate their services to ensure that they are configured to detect, prevent, and alleviate youth loneliness, where appropriate. This may involve 'mainstreaming' aspects of an organisation's existing functioning – for example, incorporating the principles of CBT into all interactions with young people, rather than just those with the most vulnerable. Alternatively, this might involve a frank reassessment of the way a service is designed. Below, we explain some elements which are particularly important in order to design services through the 'loneliness lens.'

Service Delivery Principals for Reducing Youth Loneliness

- **Staff trained to spot risk factors** – The risk factors for loneliness are well understood, as explained in 'Psychological Triggers' above. Perceiving that a young person is at risk of loneliness and putting in place a small degree of additional support may be enough to prevent them from entering into a negative spiral of behaviour which is more difficult to correct later on.
- **No checkboxes** – Services should allow time and space for free conversation to allow young people to express their difficulties, especially during initial assessments of need. This ensures that an individual's loneliness isn't 'missed' among the other issues they may be facing. This approach also reduces embarrassment and feelings of shame. If asked, 'Are you lonely?' most of us are likely to say 'no' instantly because of the stigmatising nature of the question. However, given the chance to talk freely, many of us might admit that we experience periods during which we feel

isolated.

- **Support through transitions** – People of all ages are especially vulnerable to loneliness during times of transition such as the end of a romantic relationship, moving to a new area, or having a new child. Services will be effective in preventing and alleviating youth loneliness when they anticipate transitions in their beneficiaries' lives and plan proactively to provide enhanced support before, during, and after the transition.
- **Resilience training or coaching** – Resilience is crucial to enable young people to bounce back from inevitable periods of loneliness or isolation following a life transition. These interventions may involve building young people's self-esteem, developing their social skills, or coaching them to break harmful patterns of thinking. As young people are currently grappling with difficult economic conditions which mean that jobs are in shorter supply than formerly and living costs are high, equipping them to deal with the potential effects of financial instability on their personal relationships is important. Interventions of this nature, which have a long-lasting effect, are likely to be more cost-effective than other initiatives.
- **Flexibility** – Evidence shows that the best loneliness interventions are those which are tailored to an individual's needs and preferences. For example, one young person may benefit from some resilience training prior to seeking out new social connections in order to build her confidence. Another may benefit simply from being signposted to a social opportunity which aligns with his interests. A creative, person-orientated approach is likely to require less resource in the long run than one which treats all beneficiaries as a homogenous group.
- **Balance between face-to-face/telephone and online/digital components of service** – The relative weightings of these elements will depend on what is appropriate and financially feasible for a particular service. However, it is important to make conscious decisions about the part these two aspects play in your service rather than simply assuming "digital by default" is always best' or 'only face-to-face will do the job'. ACEVO's focus groups with providers and young people themselves suggest that the most useful roles for digital technology are in establishing first contact, facilitating contact in person, and maintaining casual contact when meetings in person are not possible. Face-to-face or telephone contact allows for a much deeper connection to be made between individuals and is important for deeply engrained psychological reasons. In an age where efficiency and value-for-money are prized above all else, services are increasingly mechanised and digitised without regard for the value human contact brings to the exchange. Furthermore, the great possibilities offered by rapidly advancing technology are exciting and 'trendy' meaning that it is easy to be carried away by the potential. Maintaining a focus on the desired outcomes and the best way to achieve them is important.
- **Balance between community and individual solutions** – As above, this means working out the best compromise between methods of delivery to achieve your desired outcome in the context you are working within. Both community-focused solutions and one-to-one solutions are important for purposes of

preventing and alleviating loneliness. For example, North London Cares, one of the organisations featured in a case study earlier in this report, organises both social clubs for groups of people as well as one-on-one meetings between an older person and a younger person.

- **Stepped approach** – Loneliness may be the primary problem or a secondary one. Where it is a secondary problem, more than one intervention may be required. For example, you might refer a beneficiary to both a housing advice service and a counselling service.

- Evidence the effect of their work in preventing and alleviating youth loneliness. Youth organisations must improve their impact and evaluation processes in order to provide commissioners with persuasive evidence of the benefit of their services to beneficiaries and the community at large. The Campaign to End Loneliness provides the follow resources which will be of use to organisations wishing to develop their own loneliness impact assessments:
 - <http://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/wp-content/uploads/Summary-of-Loneliness-Scales.pdf>
 - <http://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/wp-content/uploads/Loneliness-Measurement-Guidance1.pdf>
 - <http://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/frequently-asked-questions/measuring-loneliness/>

It may also be of benefit to measure whether loneliness is associated with another problem your beneficiaries are experiencing and to what degree loneliness is compounding the other issue. Once organisations have put these measurements in place, they should open up conversations with commissioners about youth loneliness and the benefits of their services in tackling the problem.

- Work together more collaboratively. As described above, an important element of provision with respect to loneliness is flexibility. Organisations will deliver better outcomes where they are aware of other local organisations to which they can signpost beneficiaries. Moreover, the youth sector as a whole needs to come together to convince the public sector that the savings produced through its activities far outweigh the costs, much though this may be difficult in an environment in which organisations are competing with each other for contracts. See ACEVO's 'Strategy for driving change at the local level led by voluntary and social enterprise organisations' in Chapter 7 for more guidance on how to lead change within your area.

Recommendations for private business

Private businesses are likely to see youth loneliness as a matter for the public and third sectors. However, small and medium businesses already play an important role in supporting and engaging their local communities, to mutual benefit. Prudent employers will recognise that a happy workforce is a productive workforce. A small investment in employee welfare can result in a major boost to a business' profits. ACEVO recommends that private business:

- Invests in the local community by reaching out to young people. This could be as simple as offering free access to a space and use of Wi-Fi during quiet periods or offering an afternoon's work experience to interested young people.
- Pays special attention to the wellbeing of younger members of staff – in particular, watching out for signs of loneliness and isolation. Employers should consider how the working conditions they impose (such as anti-social hours, for example) might contribute to loneliness and take steps to ameliorate any potential hazards. Involving young employees in company decision-making, as demonstrated by the Co-operative through their Young Members' Board, may be one way to ensure their particular needs are taken into account.
- Encourages the workforce to contribute to their communities through volunteering. Setting up a partnership with a local charity is one way to make it easy for your staff to undertake voluntary roles which fit around their working commitments.

Recommendations for further research

Although the impact of modern Western lifestyles in increasing the prevalence of loneliness has been recognised by researchers internationally for at least the last 15 years, there has still been little population-level research in the British context. The research which does exist is predominately concerned with loneliness among older people. The What Works Centre for Wellbeing, the Early Intervention Foundation, and the Centre for Youth Impact should take the lead in carving out a new field of research pertaining to youth loneliness. ACEVO recommends that researchers should:

- Conduct broad-based studies of youth loneliness to better understand how it impacts their social behaviour and the communities they live in. Interventions should be rigorously analysed and theories of change developed. In particular, the merits or otherwise of intergenerational approaches to combatting loneliness among the young and old should be investigated given high needs among both groups and lifestyle changes which mean that young people are likely to spend less time with their extended families than in previous generations.
- Do more work to understand how youth loneliness manifests itself in vulnerable subgroups. This is especially important with respect to young men in light of the astronomically high rates of suicide among this group.
- Develop costing tools which enable commissioners at the local and national level to understand the savings generated by measures to prevent youth loneliness.

Recommendations for funders

- Funders which have traditionally funded projects to reduce loneliness among older people, should consider intervening to reduce levels of youth loneliness – particularly with a view to preventing loneliness when those young people reach middle or older age.

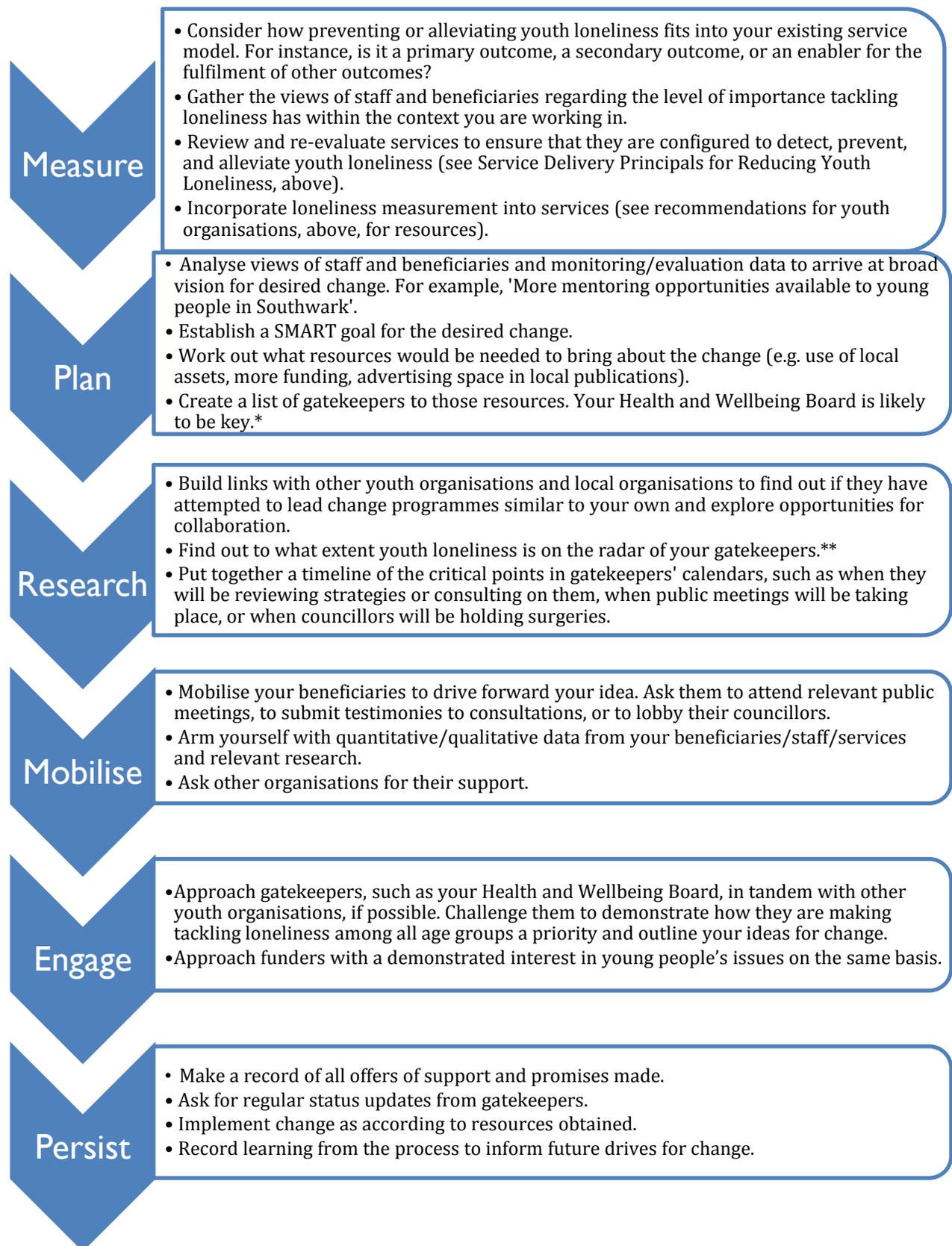
Chapter Seven: Implementation Strategy for driving change at the local level led by voluntary and social enterprise organisations

When considering a subject as complex and multifaceted as loneliness among the young, it is crucial that we offer not only ideas but that we also have the beginnings of a plan for action that enjoins agencies in a way that – in some cases - they may not be used to. This chapter therefore outlines a strategy for how these organisations can drive expansion in service provision to combat youth loneliness at the local level, as well as inspire members of the public to take action. Expanding services may, to a large extent, involve lobbying the public sector to fund and champion relevant organisations. Public bodies may therefore wish to read this strategy as a means of identifying how they can best support voluntary organisations to end youth loneliness.

Overview of change-making for leaders of voluntary sector youth organisations

The Campaign to End Loneliness has published a range of helpful documents to assist voluntary organisations and individuals in raising awareness of older people's loneliness among public sector bodies and the general public (see www.campaigntoendloneliness.org). This section seeks to condense the information in these materials into a top-level overview of change-making for leaders of youth organisations, incorporating additional insights from leaders of youth organisations.

We recommend that social leaders wishing to combat youth loneliness follow the process below.



* 'Health and wellbeing boards are forums for leaders in the health and care system to work together to understand and address the health and social care needs of the local population. The boards will work with those who allocate health and social care resources (called commissioners) and support them to work together in a more 'joined up' way. There are 152 health and wellbeing boards across the country and each top tier and unitary authority will have its own board. Each health and wellbeing board has two main strategic jobs to do. One of these is to develop and update a large data-set on the current and future health care and wellbeing needs of the people within the local area: the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). Over 50 per cent of health and wellbeing boards have committed to addressing loneliness and/or isolation in their strategies.'

<http://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/wp-content/uploads/Background-about-health-and-wellbeing-boards2.pdf>

**The Campaign to End Loneliness can tell you whether loneliness and/or isolation is mentioned in a local authority's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS) or Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), They can also tell you whether loneliness is mentioned in any other local authority strategy document and whether the JSNA sets out an action plan to reduce loneliness with quantifiable targets.

Overview of change-making for leaders of local and national umbrella organisations

As discussed in the 'Barriers to Change' section, voluntary sector children's and young people's organisations have been hit particularly hard by public sector cuts because they have historically been more reliant on public sector funding than other parts of the voluntary sector and they have received a greater cut than that experienced by the voluntary sector as a whole.⁷² As local authority budgets continue to tighten, there are likely to be further cuts to non-statutory children's and young people's services, alongside increasing demand.

Youth organisations have not coped well with this challenging environment and the strategy employed by many has been simply to shrink, rather than to fundamentally change their operating models to allow them to sustain or grow their services.⁷³ Unfortunately, the further they shrink the less capacity they have to manage the transition to a different model as cuts are often made to back office functions such as business development in order to protect frontline service delivery. The National Children's Bureau (NCB) says that the main problems are: lack of capacity to develop partnerships; a lack of understanding and experience of new business and funding models; and confusion about service reforms.⁷⁴ Inability to establish effective partnerships is a particularly damaging weakness in that the youth sector consists predominately of small organisations and public sector contracts are increasingly awarded only to large organisations or well-established consortia.

The NCB believes that there is 'a role for infrastructure organisations to work with children's charities to explore and tackle these barriers'.⁷⁵ In particular, the NCB recommends that infrastructure organisations help to broker new relationships between children's charities facing financial difficulties and between children's charities and the private sector.⁷⁶ The need for infrastructure organisations to intervene in a practical way to

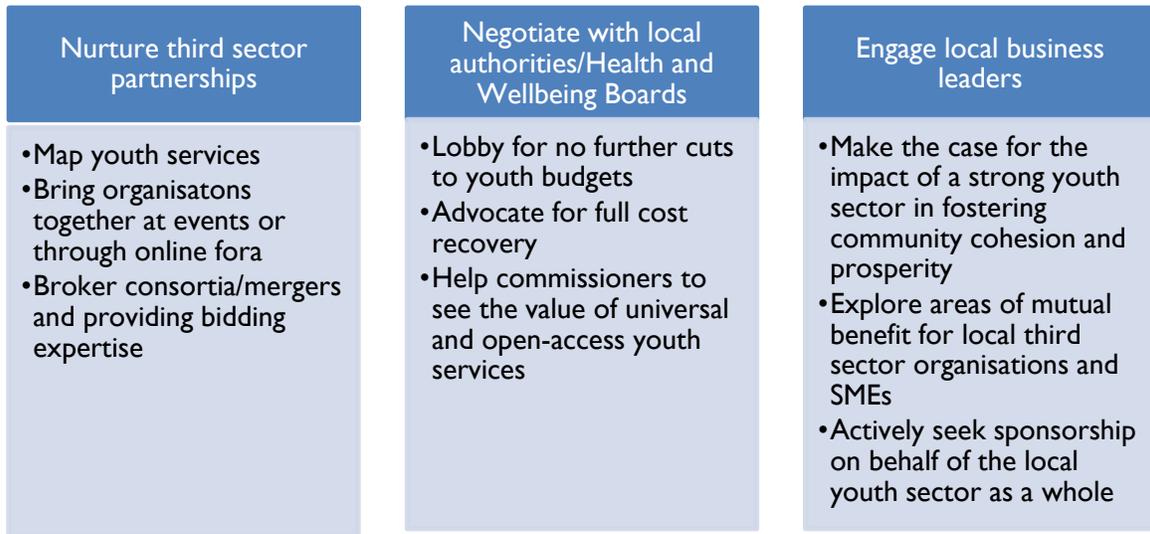
support the youth sector's business development needs was also put across strongly by ACEVO's Steering Group for this research. The Steering Group identified three roles for these organisations:

- 1) To take on the mandate of breaking down siloes in the sector and building consortia. The Steering Group discussed the need for a 'social enterprise Serco' to bring organisations together to bid for contracts and provide the specialist bidding expertise needed in a highly competitive market. Together North London is an example of an initiative of this kind on the local level.⁷⁷
- 2) To engage with local authorities as a neutral arbiter, arguing forcefully for the benefits of commissioning voluntary sector organisations and for fair contractual payment mechanisms which cover an organisation's full costs in delivering a project.
- 3) To convene funders to respond to the youth loneliness crisis and to the need for support to bolster the youth sector during this difficult period.

We therefore advocate the following change-making processes for local and national umbrella organisations.

Local umbrella organisations

In the opinion of ACEVO's Steering Group, youth provision in London boroughs is fragmented and disjointed. Local umbrella organisations could be doing more to bring youth organisations together to merge and form partnerships. Local umbrella organisations could also play a stronger role in advocating for the interests of third sector organisations among public sector bodies, where individual charities do not feel able to undertake difficult conversations themselves. Youth organisations are less likely than the rest of the voluntary sector to receive income from private businesses – a source of funding 'increasingly identified as a means of addressing gaps in the public purse' according to the NCB – which therefore represent an untapped income stream.⁷⁸ Local umbrella organisations should reach out to SMEs in their localities to explore what resources might be available. The core activities local umbrella organisations should be undertaking are represented in the diagram below.



National umbrella organisations

According to the NCB, youth organisations lack knowledge about franchise models and they have difficulties in demonstrating service impact in order to win payment-by-results contracts. Confusion over service reforms, in particular with respect to the Coalition government's reorganization of health and social care provision, prevents charities from engaging effectively with public bodies to win contracts where there may still be money available.⁷⁹ National umbrella organisations could be doing more to disseminate relevant information and expertise, particularly through engaging with local umbrella organisations. As previously discussed, there is a 'void' in national youth policy which is leading to large budget cuts for youth services on the local level without robust statutory guidance to ensure minimum standards of provision. Youth organisations are receiving limited funding from business and the youth sector's financial credibility has been tarnished by accusations of financial mismanagement at high-profile charity Kids Company. Umbrella bodies must build links to business and remedy this reputational damage for the sake of the sector's survival. The core activities national umbrella organisations should be undertaking to facilitate change are represented in the diagram below.

Disseminate information

- Give youth organisations easy access to business development expertise
- Ensure youth organisations understand developments in national policy across all fields
- Ensure local umbrella organisations have the tools they need to operate effectively at the local level

Lobby for stronger youth policy

- Advocate for government to establish clear lines of responsibility for youth policy
- Advocate for clearer, more robust statutory guidance around local youth provision
- Emphasise the need for preventative commissioning at all levels to achieve long-term cost savings

Convene funders

- Convince big business that youth provision is a worthy partner for both CSR funding and social investment
- Protect and strengthen thereputation of the youth sector in the wake of accusations of financial mismanagement at Kids Company
- Advocate for transition funds among trusts and foundations to enable organisations to move to new business models

Appendix A: Case Studies of Organisations working to Tackle Youth Loneliness

Case Study 1: Building personal resilience through training and coaching, Worth-It Projects



Worth-it Projects is a Leicestershire-based award-winning social enterprise that provides positive psychological interventions and evidence-based coaching to improve the mental wellbeing of children and young people. The organisation was founded in May 2011 by Liz Robson-Kelly, CEO, who saw an opportunity to use positive psychology and coaching to prevent mental health problems in young people. Worth-it Projects works with schools, organisations, and communities to help people learn, develop, and use skills that improve mental wellbeing.

Among the many services offered by Worth-It Projects, the organisation has developed an innovative, evidence-based positive education programme for young

people to help them develop essential skills to improve mental wellbeing. 'FIRST' is a targeted intervention that has been co-produced with young people and is underpinned by positive coaching psychology. It is a fun, interactive 6-week group work programme which encourages young people to build resilience, manage stress, and develop interpersonal and communication skills.

Worth-It Projects also offers targeted coaching for school students aged 13 and over who are falling behind due to problems inside and/or outside of school. These problems may be impacting behaviour, attendance, academic performance or overall mental wellbeing. To date, Worth-It Projects has provided individual coaching sessions for 86 young people. Evaluation data shows, on average, a 77% decrease in levels of depression and an 81% decrease in levels of anxiety. There is a 66% improvement with respect to positive social interaction with peers.

In total, Worth-It Projects positively impacted upon 4,675 young people in 2014/15. The social enterprise has ongoing relationships with schools in Leicestershire, West Yorkshire, and Derbyshire. In the future, Worth-It Projects plans to expand across the East Midlands and UK. This could be either through working directly with young people or indirectly by providing training to the professionals, peers, and parents who support them. The organisation wishes to lead a sustainable systemic change to a more proactive, preventative approach to improving young people's mental and emotional wellbeing.

WORTH-IT -PROJECTS-

"Young people's ability to make and sustain healthy relationships can have a huge effect on their mental wellbeing. Supporting young people to improve communication and interpersonal skills helps prevent loneliness and improve their mental health."

Liz Robson-Kelly, Founder and CEO

"I don't get angry as much any more, I talk to people more which has helped me with my friends and not feeling on my own."

Worth-It Projects
Beneficiary

"I am a great supporter of the work of Worth-It projects and have heard from constituents just how valuable and life-enhancing their support has been. Ensuring good mental health and well-being is critical, particularly for our young people. Growing up today is tougher than it has ever been and Worth-It projects offer a real life line to young people, their families and those who work with them when things get too much."

Nicky Morgan, Secretary for Education MP for
Loughborough

Case Study 2: Building young people's ability to cope through telephone support and counselling, Get Connected

Get Connected is a free, confidential helpline service for children and young people under 25. Launched in 1999 as a helpline to support young people who had run away from – or been forced to leave – home, the helpline has evolved into a comprehensive young people's service. Young people can contact Get Connected via phone, email, and webchat regarding any issue. They can also access support through Get Connected's WebHelp 24/7 online directory and its mobile App which can signpost users to other more specialised and/or localised services.



“I contacted Get Connected when my sister was going through a massive bout of depression. I didn't feel like I could talk to anyone within the family, there was too much going on... Get Connected has helped me feel better and more able to talk about what's going on. They put me in touch with the Samaritans, but also talked through the help my doctor may be able to give me and other options open to me as well. I'd recommend Get Connected to other young people - I find it a lot easier to talk about my feelings now.”

Francesca, Get Connected Beneficiary

Get Connected's services are available to children and young people anywhere in the UK for 365 days a year. Over the past 15 years, they have been accessed by more than 825,000 young people. In a recent survey, 91% of young people who accessed Get Connected said that the service had made it easier to find the help they needed. 82% of young people, when asked a year after contacting Get Connected, said that their lives had improved because they contacted the service.

In 2015, Get Connected was awarded a grant by the Department for Education to launch a new counselling service, which provides pre-arranged sessions by phone to promote psychological health and wellbeing. Get Connected counsellors can support service users for up to seven sessions to help them work out how to cope with a particular problem. The sessions are designed to be a safe, confidential space for young people experiencing urgent issues.

In response to rapidly rising demand, including a 27% increase in contacts last year, Get Connected plans to grow. This may include expanding to create another hub of helpline volunteers outside of London. The charity will also continue to expand its UK network of digital volunteers (people who work from home to respond to contacts from service users via digital channels). Get Connected's Youth Panel advises on all activities and this year the charity has hosted focus groups to learn from young people first-hand about what new support services are needed.



Case Study 3: Developing digital skills and confidence, HEBA Women's Project

Tinder Foundation is a not-for-profit social enterprise that aims to make good things happen through digital technology. Established in 2011, Tinder Foundation leads a network of 5,000 local community partners and works with a variety of national organisations to empower people to use the internet to improve their lives. Over the past four years, these organisations have helped 1.6 million people to develop basic online skills.

HEBA Women's Project, a training and enterprise project located on Brick Lane in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, is a

"I would like to say HEBA English classes brought great changes in my life. I can speak fluently with full confidence. I voluntarily worked with HEBA as an administrator, I gain confidence I learnt more about office management, how to use computer and communicate with students, teachers and also with other businesses via e-mail taking data etc.."
Hamida, 27, student and voluntary teacher/administrator

member of the Tinder Foundation's UK online centres network. The project was originally set up to help BAME women in the area through support to learn English and develop their sewing skills. Tower Hamlets has the highest rate of youth unemployment in London and women in their 20s, many of whom have young children, face even greater barriers to social inclusion. Many BAME women living in the area spend the majority of their time in their homes on big estates looking after their children. They rarely meet up with other people and they can feel very lonely.

Women will often engage with HEBA in the first instance in order to improve their English and sewing, but the organisation makes sure to connect beneficiaries to

technology as soon as possible, supporting them to gain confidence in using computers and the internet. Many of the women find that the internet extends their horizons and they realise they can look online for jobs and explore their interests. The classes also give them a reason to get out of the house. HEBA therefore connects the women it serves both to the world at large and other women in their local communities. Once the women feel more confident with their English and technology, they have the opportunity to extend their skills through enterprise activities.

Last year, HEBA supported over 100 young women. HEBA's

long-term aim is for the women it works with to feel more confident and have the skills and motivation to seek work that they are interested in. The organisation believes that the key to its success is using a popular, culturally-relevant activity – in this case, sewing – to draw in beneficiaries as a means to support them to build their digital skills and confidence. This in turn helps them to form connections with their local communities and beyond, reducing feelings of loneliness.



HEBA
WOMEN'S PROJECT

"When young women in the area leave school, they can feel lost as they are no longer looked after by children's services. Some are at risk of radicalisation as they don't necessarily feel part of something. Many also lack skills and have low prospects of finding work. We know that sewing is a big hit, so we want to use this to attract the youngsters to attend the centre, get their computer and internet skills up to scratch, and also give them the opportunity to benefit from the experience of the older women in the group who often take on motherly roles with the younger girls."

Jackie Remfry, Manager of HEBA



Case Study 4: Building empathy and creating purpose through intergenerational mentoring and rites of passage, **abandofbrothers**

abandofbrothers offers programmes in Brighton, Crawley, Eastbourne, and London, which include mentoring and rights of passage for young male ex-offenders



“I am 26 years old. Seven years ago, I'd recently been released from prison, my connections worker introduced me to the charity, abandofbrothers in Brighton. For me, the community of abandofbrothers is a resource, if I'm feeling down, I know I'm not alone. I can always attend one of the weekly circles. This community of men has shown me that I'm not the only person in the world who has these feelings and they give me the space to express them. This in turn enables me to connect more deeply with other people in my life like friends and family.”

abandofbrothers Beneficiary

between the ages of 18-25, who often experience isolation and loneliness when they leave prison. Founders Michael Boyle, Richard Olivier, and Nathan Roberts believe that there is a crisis among young men in the UK, as demonstrated by the fact that most offenders are men and men are much more likely than women to commit suicide. They see the cause of these destructive behaviours as society's failure to support men to transition from adolescence to responsible adult life. Launched in 2009, the key aim of abandofbrothers is to help young men to make this transition and create networks that they can call upon in times of need.

abandofbrothers has an innovative model, not only because it works with rites of passage, but because it creates highly diverse communities of older and younger men from all sorts of backgrounds and ethnicities. The organisation runs a 13-week mentoring programme called The Quest aimed at young men, as well as a residential weekend programme called Beyond the Hero for men of all ages. These programmes allow participants to develop a new awareness of their personal needs and their role within society.

Another defining aspect is the weekly sharing circle which all the men and young men in the local areas are invited to participate after completing The Quest or Beyond the Hero. This is a place where they all contribute how they are feeling about their lives – emotion is allowed and encouraged. The aim is to provide participants with a safe outlet for their emotions to prevent them from turning to destructive means of releasing them such as perpetrating violence or abusing illicit substances. This approach appears to work well: 68% of young people leaving prison go on to re-offend but involvement in abandofbrothers reduces re-offending by an average of 80%.

abandofbrothers has an ambitious vision, with the mantra of ‘change the world one man at a time.’ In 2015, they received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, and in the future the organisation would like to expand nationally and internationally.

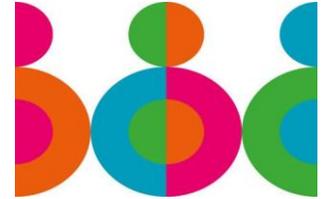


Coming in from the Cold

Case Study 5: Supporting voice and choice through peer mentoring during a life transition, Shoreditch Trust's Bump Buddies Programme

Shoreditch Trust

Shoreditch Trust works to reduce social and economic disadvantage in Hackney, East London, by supporting people to access the services and support they need, achieve greater independence and resilience, and participate fully in the workplace and in civil society. The charity works with a variety of stakeholder groups but it places particular emphasis on helping people who are experiencing difficult transitions (such as moving on from care or custody); struggling with peer pressure or difficult family circumstances; or living in poverty.



Bump Buddies was developed in 2007 in response to higher than average infant mortality rates in Hackney. Pregnancy is a time when most women turn to family and friends for guidance about what to expect, how to prepare for having a baby, and where to go for help. For a variety of reasons (including poverty, immigration, and poor language skills), some mothers do not have that support network during pregnancy and early parenthood. Bump Buddies is targeted at these socially isolated women, who may also be coping with a range of issues, such as poverty, homelessness, domestic violence, insecure immigration status, poor mental and/or physical health and FGM.

Women are matched with a Bump Buddy mentor following either referral by statutory services or self-referral. The mentors will support mentees to make connections within the community and to access statutory services that may seem intimidating or bewildering. Mentors also provide a listening ear to help women through the emotional journey of pregnancy and childbirth.

"I was feeling alone and isolated from the community before Bump Buddies. I had no knowledge of services available to me. I had no one and Bump Buddies made me feel like I wasn't alone. It was really helpful. The best parts of Bump Buddies were the regular meetings (with the volunteer and programme managers)... I feel more confident now. I'd like to be a Bump Buddy to help another mum to be."

Bump Buddies Beneficiary



Bump Buddies contributes to a wide range of positive outcomes, including greater voice and control for mentees with respect to accessing services and increased resilience by helping programme participants to bounce back from adverse circumstances. In 2014/15, 67 service users were supported with advice and advocacy related to needs in pregnancy or parenthood and/or mentoring. 75% mentees reported improved health and wellbeing as a result of participating in Bump Buddies and 78% of mentees reported decreased stress and anxiety.

Bump Buddies contributed to a 2014 research project on community services providing maternity peer support to vulnerable women led by the Department of Health. This research found that Bump Buddies plays a valuable role in mobilising the skills and resources of local mothers to help others and creating social capital in a highly multi-cultural area. The research highlighted the importance mentees placed upon feeling 'listened to' and being able to offload difficult thoughts and experiences. This was crucial to reducing feelings of stress and loneliness to improve emotional wellbeing. Bump Buddies is in the process of developing a programme model which it believes could be successfully replicated outside of Hackney.

Case Study 6: Creating community hubs for young people by young people, Catch22's Axis Service



Catch22 is a social business that provides services to help people in tough situations to turn their lives around. Catch22 is the only provider that works with individuals at every stage of the social

welfare cycle. This includes apprenticeships and employability; alternative education; justice; and young people and families services.

“Unlike how I often feel as a young person, when I’m working on this project I am respected, and encouraged to push my ideas forward. I feel like I’m valued, and can take charge of something that will actually make a difference; and it makes sense that the people who use a service should create it. The hub will give youths who are going through a difficult and daunting time in their lives a place where they can get all manner of help, and hopefully bring the community together.”

Young People’s Board Member,
Axis Service, Catch22

Earlier this year, Camden Council and Camden CCG commissioned Catch22 to create and deliver a new borough-wide emotional health and wellbeing service for young people aged 16-25. The aim was to fill the gap between children’s and adults’ mental health and social services, which has been shown to be a highly vulnerable period for young people.⁸⁰ The service will engage socially isolated and disenfranchised young people who are often hard to reach.

Known as Axis, the resultant service is based at a new purposely renovated youth hub called The Hive. It employs a team of young adults trained to help other young people in many areas of their life – including with education, employment, housing, social care, mental health, and wellbeing. The Hive is also a place

for young people to relax, study, meet new people and to get information about local services. Crucially, young people from Camden took a leading role in the hub’s design and implementation. A Young People’s Board was involved at every stage of the process – for example, choosing a name for the service, designing the logos and branding, and recruiting staff.

The vision is to create a co-produced, consistent, welcoming, and containing environment – not a ‘mental health’ service. The scheme has been deliberately marketed in this way to avoid the label and associated stigma of mental illness as it is well known that stigma can lead to loneliness, depression, and loss of confidence on top of whatever presenting issues the individual has, further compounding their problems.

Catch22 hopes that the new service will deliver responsive services with young people, for young people. It will be led by their own needs and wants and by the outcomes that matter to them such as better opportunities with regard to education, training, and employment. The work will be evaluated and the aim is to develop a tried and tested service delivery model with young people that meets needs – one which could be implemented elsewhere within the country but tailored to meet the needs of local populations and the vision of local young people.



Case Study 7: Creating intergenerational communities, North London Cares

Founded in 2011, North London Cares brings together young professionals and their older neighbours in Islington and Camden. Older people living in these areas often have deep roots in their communities – having lived their whole lives in the same street in some cases – but few more casual connections. At the same time, young professionals tend to have many connections but few roots, particularly because they may have moved to London from other parts of the UK or the world for their careers.



The two groups often live side by side without having any interaction, yet there is mutual benefit to spending time together: young professionals feel a greater sense of belonging to their communities, while older people gain people a wider and more varied social network. Given that Islington and Camden are places of extremes which contain some of Britain's most well-off people – including high-flying graduates – as well as the most deprived, North London Cares helps to bridge not only a generational divide but a socioeconomic one, too.



North London Cares' core activities are social clubs and one-to-one 'Love Your Neighbour' activities. The charity runs 4 to 6 Social Clubs each week, with activities ranging from men's cookery clubs to film nights to pub games. The Love Your Neighbour project matches young professionals and older neighbours so that they can offer one another practical, social and emotional connection, often in people's homes or on walks together. The organisation

also runs a 'Winter Wellbeing' project every winter to help older people stay healthy and happy over the winter.

Research conducted in 2014 found that following participation in North London Cares' activities, 81% of older neighbours felt better connected to other people and 73% said they felt less isolated. 98% of the young professionals who volunteered said that they have a greater connection to the community. North London Cares' networked approach to managing volunteers ensures that these young people are able to make new friends their own age, as well as building relationships with older people, and the charity organises regular celebratory events in trendy locations to make volunteers feel valued.

Building upon the success of North London Cares, a sister charity was established last year. South London Cares operates in Southwark and Lambeth and offers very similar services to North London Cares, although the decision was made to establish a new charity in order to ensure a community-specific approach. There are now 1,500 volunteers working across the two charities supporting 1,500 older people. There are 66 different kinds of social club. Alex Smith, CEO and Founder, hopes that as the success of the model becomes more widely known, it will be replicated elsewhere. He anticipates that, little by little, initiatives like North London Cares could help to bring about a national cultural shift, inspiring young people to proactively engage with and look out for their older neighbours – to mutual benefit.

"Originally I'm from Newcastle and it could have been easy to feel disconnected from the community when I moved to London... Volunteering made me feel more connected and stopped the move to London being a lonely experience. My confidence in working with older people and participating in my community has definitely increased."
Emma, North London Cares Volunteer

Case Study 8: Creating communities of experience, Rees Foundation's Revolution Networking



Rees Foundation works with anyone who has foster care or residential care experience and has left care. The organisation provides a range of practical support as well as help to cope with the psychological challenges of having care experience by encouraging its beneficiaries to reflect on their experiences, identify the positives in their personal history, and connect with others who have had similar experiences.

“Hearing others’ ideas made me realise I was not alone. I felt weak admitting things at first.”

Rees Foundation
Beneficiary

As care leavers often lack the emotional reinforcement provided by a family unit, they are especially vulnerable to loneliness and social isolation. This is a particular risk when a care leaver makes the transition to independent living as a young adult. Inspired by care leavers’ need to explore how care experience has shaped their identity, Rees Foundation has developed a programme of meetings tackling core issues for care leavers, known as Revolution Networking events. These gatherings offer an opportunity for purposeful and structured contact with others: the aim being to learn

knowledge with others, with all attendees given opportunity to speak, perform, or present on the theme. This format means that beneficiaries are not situated as passive and dependent service users but as active participants building mutually-beneficial relationships with others.

“It was special an opportunity to share with like-minded people.”

Rees Foundation Beneficiary

The project was launched in May 2015 and the first two events engaged with 10 care-experienced people. Rees Foundation expects to see at least 50 people take part next year. Feedback from participants has been very positive with attendees pointing to the need for a safe, welcoming environment in which to share feelings they have not had a forum for previously. Quotes from participants include “Communal spaces for care leavers to network are vital” and “[The session was a] good place to be outspoken about your experiences and be able to give your opinions on how certain issues can be dealt with”.

The events are taking place in the Midlands at the moment but participants have travelled from all over the UK to attend, including from London. Rees



Foundation pays attendees’ travel costs to ensure the events are as inclusive as possible and encourages attendees to stay in touch after the events. In this respect, Rees Foundation creates communities of shared experience which can be vital for reducing levels of loneliness where a person’s geographical community is not able to provide the support an individual needs.

Each event contributes to a good practice guide for professionals and others with care experience, produced by Rees Foundation after the event. These guides are available on the Rees Foundation website. Contributing to other people’s understanding and connecting to professionals can be a powerful weapon against loneliness as having one’s views valued and making an impact on the world are experiences many participants would not have had during their time in care.

Case Study 9: Creating micro-communities, The Big Lunch

The Big Lunch is an initiative which fosters

“With three in five people in our survey admitting that more social interaction would help them to feel less lonely, The Big Lunch is even more important in 2015 than it was when we launched it six years ago. In the tens of thousands of neighbourhoods around the UK where Big Lunches have taken place, people often comment how it has helped to build community spirit and make their street a happier and less lonely place.”

Sir Tim Smit KBE, Executive Vice Chairman & Co-Founder of the Eden Project and The Big Lunch

community spirit by encouraging members of the public to hold an annual lunch for their neighbours on the first Sunday in June. Launched by the Eden Project in 2009, its scale has grown annually from 600,000 participants in 2009 to an estimated 7.29 million in 2015. The model has been successful across the UK but according to the Local Government Information Unit’s (LGIU) 2013 study, take up has been particularly high in London and the South East. The Big Lunch has the support of dozens of local authorities which have made a special commitment to facilitate Big Lunches in their areas. These councils include the London Boroughs of Croydon, Newham, and Lewisham.

Perhaps the greatest strength of The Big Lunch is its accessibility. The Big Lunch website provides advice and support for

people wishing to hold a lunch – for example, The Big Lunch team will help you apply to have your road closed by a local authority – but there is nothing prescriptive about how the lunches are organised. They can be anything from a couple of households eating around a table in the garden to large street parties with dozens of guests. The LGIU study found that Big Lunches are evenly distributed across areas of differing deprivations in England – from the most to least deprived areas. This is important given that loneliness and social isolation are particularly prevalent in poorer communities. The Big Lunch reaches all communities and has caught on in very deprived areas.

Independent research, conducted by Havas Sports & Entertainment, following the 2014 Big Lunch demonstrated positive outcomes. 97% of people who took part said they would recommend The Big Lunch to their friends and 84% of people who took part said it made them feel better about their neighbourhood. 8 out of 10 people who took part have kept in touch with people they met at Big Lunches in previous years.

The Eden Project hopes that the project will continue to grow organically, becoming a UK tradition. Embedding The Big Lunch into the lifeblood of the nation in this way means that it could have greater endurance power than traditional service delivery models, which often face an annual battle for funding. In 2013, the Eden Project launched Big Lunch Extras, a programme which builds upon the success of The Big Lunch by encouraging and supporting people to undertake additional community development initiatives. So far, over 900 people have registered to be a part of Big Lunch Extras.



“Loneliness doesn’t just affect older people. Between work and family life, it’s hard for single parents to meet new people too. I live in a diverse community and The Big Lunch has helped to bring everyone together.”

Lyn Juniper-Solley (Big Lunch organiser, London)



Credit: The Big Lunch

Case Study 10: Creating activist communities through nurturing young social leaders, vInspired



“Volunteering has really opened up my world. I live in a tiny village just outside of Leeds where the community is largely white, middle class and Christian. It has been great to get to know people from different cultures through volunteering. I have also had so many different experiences and feel as though I have learnt more than I ever did at school. Volunteering teaches you real things such as how to solve problems and how to get on with people which are skills that you don't really learn at school.”

Naomi – Team v Leader

vInspired is the UK's leading youth volunteering charity. Their vision is a world where all young people are inspired to reach their full potential through social action. To help them achieve this, the organisation provides young people with inspiring, high quality social action opportunities to gain new experiences and skills for life. Founded in 2006, vInspired has created more than a million volunteering opportunities and worked with more than 4,400 charities.

vInspired launched ‘Team v’ in 2011 to give 18-to-25-year-olds the opportunity to develop themselves, while making an impact in their communities by tackling diverse social issues. Each year, 100 talented young people were selected as Team v Leaders. Their challenge was to lead a team of volunteers to run three campaigns in their community following three action-packed residential weekends. During its four-year lifespan, Team v mobilised over 300

Leaders, created over 2,000 volunteering opportunities, and delivered 12 campaigns.

Team v Leaders developed a wealth of transferable skills through the programme. Some of these are particularly relevant to preventing and alleviating youth loneliness such as improvement in resilience (15% increase), communication (13% increase), and confidence (11% increase). Team v placed emphasis on bringing a diverse range of young people together with a wide range of organisations and people to forge relationships to tackle social problems. Almost 90% of Leaders expanded their social networks and 75% of Leaders expanded their professional networks as a result of programme. vInspired believes this plays a key role in improving a young person's life opportunities.

Team v came to an end in 2015 but vInspired is currently seeking funding to revive the programme. vInspired believes that initiatives of this kind have the following key benefits:

- 1) They bring together people from a range of backgrounds and circumstances who share the same passion to make a difference. This creates strong, dynamic activist communities.
- 2) They give young people a platform to have their say and leave a mark on their communities, making them feel heard and included.
- 3) Volunteering gives young people an opportunity to discover who they are and to arrival at life goals.
- 4) Through intensive training and action on the ground, young people are given an insight into social issues and are inspired to keep driving for change throughout their lives. These social leaders will be linchpins within their communities, driving collective action to prevent loneliness and isolation



Coming in from the Cold

**Appendix B: Full results of ACEVO's
Specially Commissioned Data Analysis
by young people's helpline Get
Connected**

Loneliness in London:

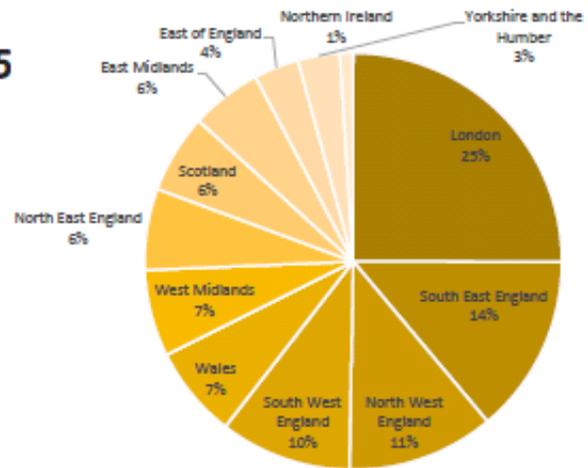
Summary of Get Connected Helpline Data and Case Studies



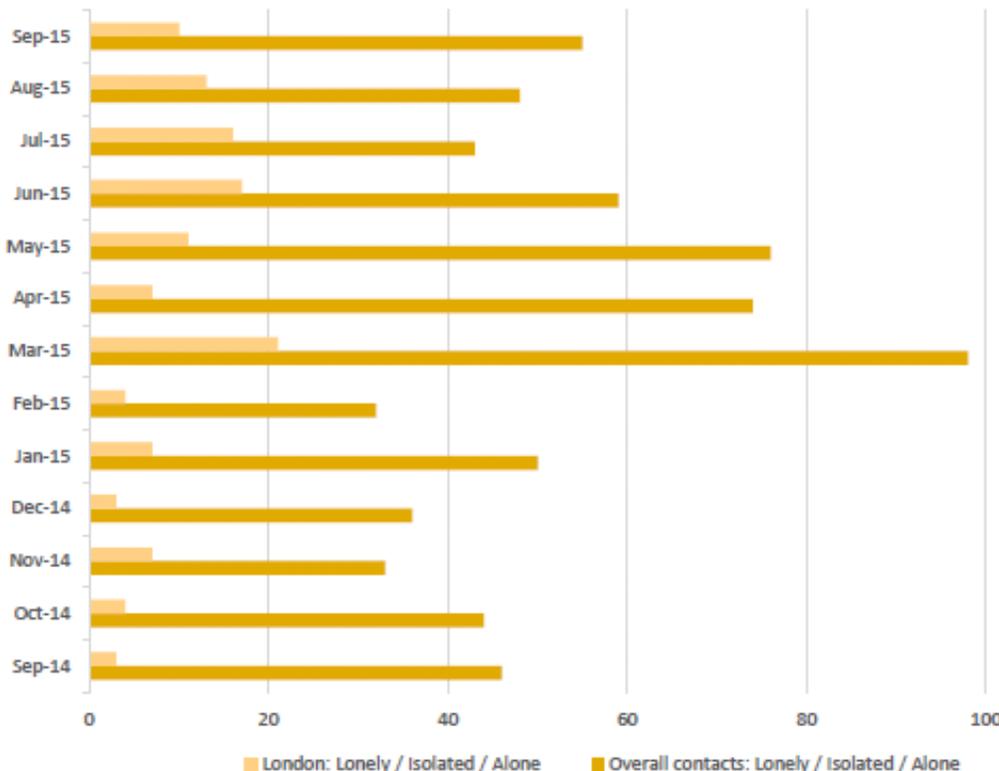
free confidential help for young people under 25

Contacts logged across phone, email and web chat: September 2014 - September 2015

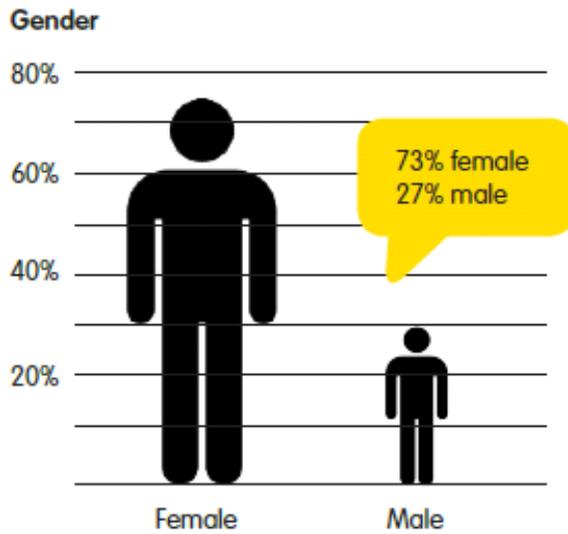
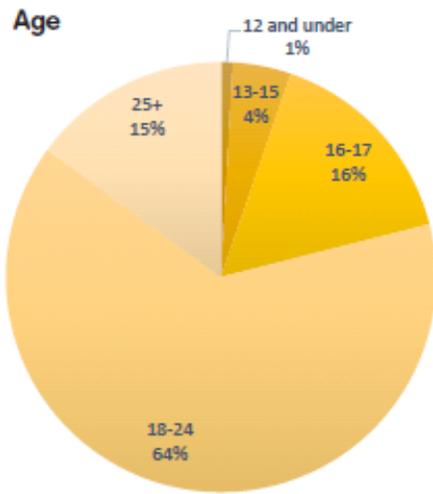
694 contacts were logged with the keywords 'lonely', 'isolated' or 'alone' during this time. Overall, young people in London accounted for 25% of these contacts, however if demographic information was logged for every contact we would expect this figure to be higher.



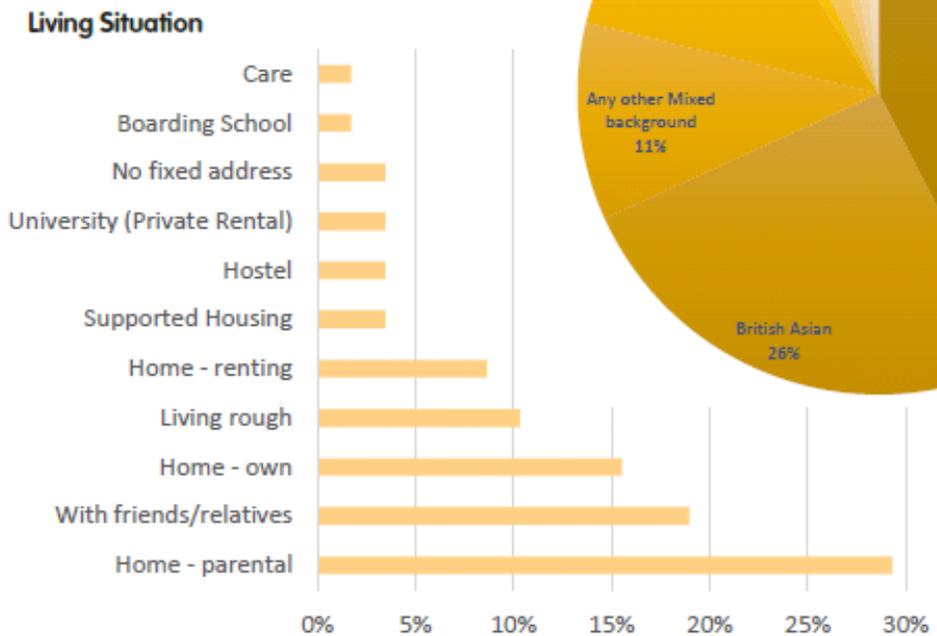
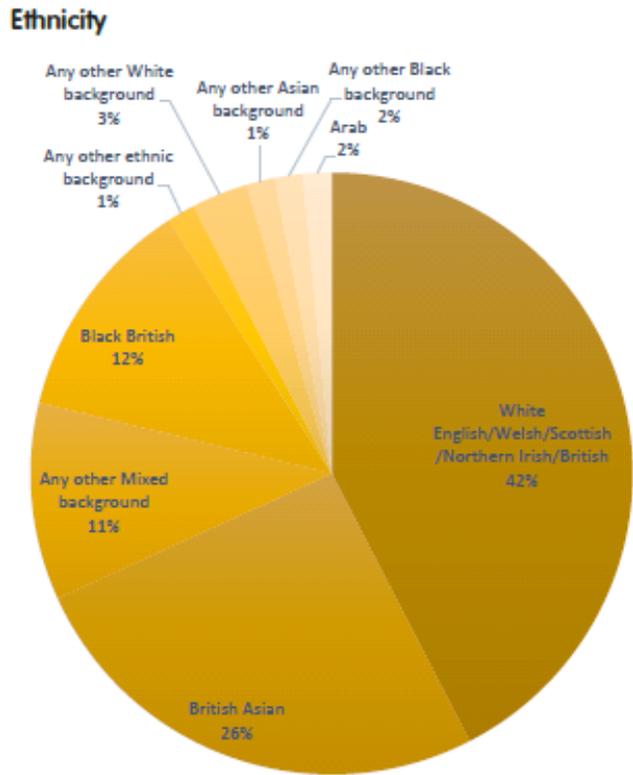
Contacts describing loneliness by month:



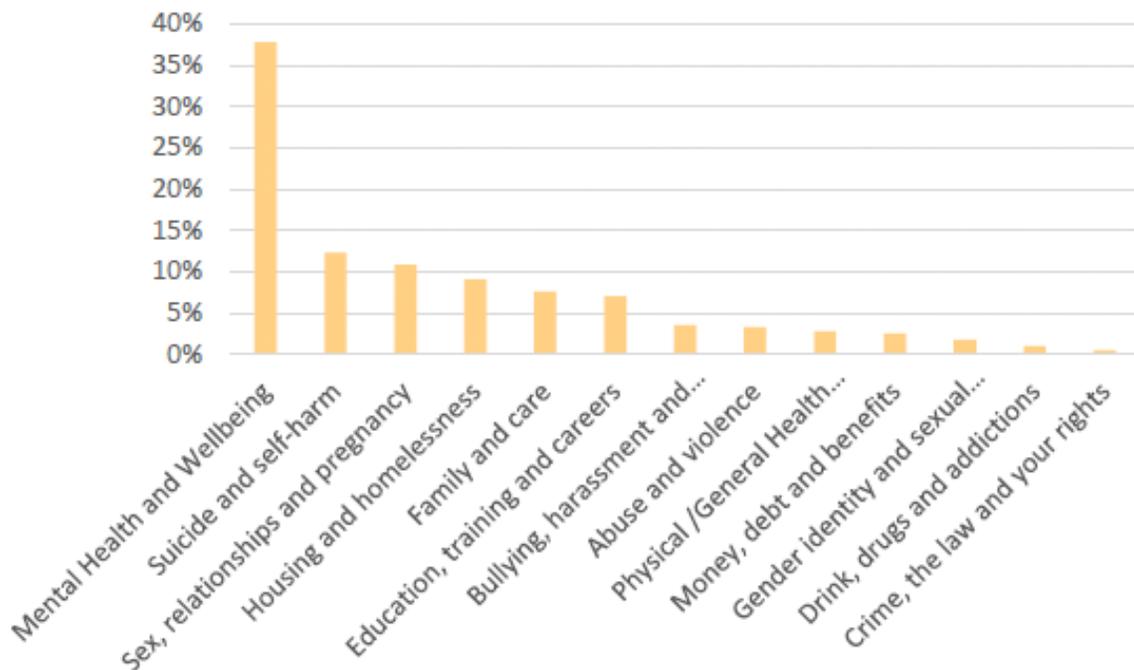
In London, we saw the following demographic trends for young people who told us they were lonely or isolated, (where these fields were measured):



This age and gender data reflects the demographic of our service users overall. Of our data sample, proportionally more BME service users in London described loneliness. Overall, we receive a high number of contacts from BME young people in London (18% of recorded data in 2014/15).



What are the issues most commonly logged alongside loneliness via the Get Connected helpline?



We asked some of the young people who contact Get Connected what can be done to help young people feel less lonely in London:

"...the media play a huge role in young people's self esteem and they must stop making it seem that there is only one way to live your life and if... you're different that is bad."

"Thank you for caring. I felt that you really cared and that's amazing. Thank you. I needed this. It has definitely changed things for me, for the better."

"I think all teachers, especially secondary school, sixth form/college and university teachers, need to be trained and aware on how to spot a lonely person and how to deal with them correctly."

"What needs to change is that charities that support lonely young people need more advertisement and more funding to get the word out that they are there to help."

More knowable services and help for mental issues that prevent social interactions e.g. depression and autism.

Get Connected

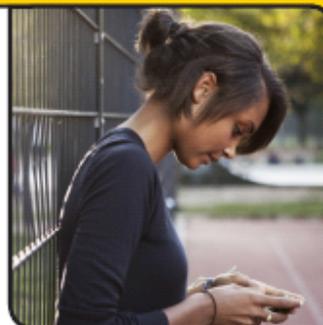
Case studies: Loneliness in London



Gabby's story, age 24

OO I never felt like I fitted in and I just didn't know how to make them. I became disabled from a young age and my peers just didn't understand - I was bullied and very isolated. The feeling of being alone scares me. I live alone but have friends and family to talk to every day, but there are just too many people in London. We all co-exist but everything flashes past so quickly. Not many people have time for others - the world is constantly moving and I feel like I'm at a standstill.

I think that to combat loneliness in London there needs to be more Intergenerational work and better awareness of loneliness as a public health issue. We all experience fear, anxiety, anger and frustration but loneliness doesn't have to be permanent with the right care and support." OO

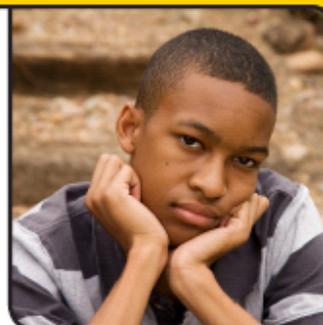


James' story, aged 16:

OO I lives with my family and I talk to people every day but I never feel comfortable discussing how I feel. I feel the worst in social situations - I don't fully understand why parties make me feel so lonely but when my friends are having a good time I'm generally not. I don't drink much, so I tend to become slightly out of the group and I'm nervous when people get drunk - I can't connect or understand their behaviour.

I think loneliness comes through most predominantly when people can't quite connect with the group that they're a part of. I think hobbies and clubs are hugely important to get people connected and feel like they're part of a group that they have things in common with. Schools often promote extra-curricular activities but they usually stress the idea of getting involved purely to add something to your CV, rather than enjoyment.

It's important for young people to be able to socialise in settings that they feel secure in, without pressure to drink alcohol or anything like that. I think that this will allow people to feel fully involved and engaged in a group so they feel included." OO



Jenny's story, aged 16:



I felt constantly lonely for around four years and it completely drained me. I wanted to reach out but I didn't want to be a burden.

Being lonely doesn't always mean being alone. I always felt that despite having friends and loving family around me, no one liked me and no one could possibly understand how awful I was feeling inside.

When I began to feel less alone this actually made my anxiety worse - it was like I was waiting for the moment I would snap and the feeling of loneliness would come back. In the end I completely isolated myself from everyone and everything, which destroyed my friendships and the relationship I had with my mother and father. A year later, this is still a work in progress.



Luke's story, aged 17:



My loneliest points came during secondary school, when I was being bullied and all my classmates turned on me. I had no one to talk to or work with and that made me feel incredibly alone.

I lives with my parents and two siblings but I don't really talk to them much - we don't have common interests and am too scared to tell them about my struggles with mental health. I Get Connected and ChildLine to talk about how I felt. I think there needs to be more help with the pressures of school and college, with more awareness on mental health issues.

Young people in London might feel lonely in such a big city - they may not know who they can talk to as it's such a big place."



91%

felt Get Connected made it easier to find the help they needed

82%

of respondents agree life has improved since contacting Get Connected

83%

would recommend GC to a friend

free confidential help for young people under 25

getconnected.org.uk / 0808 808 4994

Appendix C: More information about this report

Quotes from young people featured throughout the report

These are real quotes gathered by ACEVO through focus groups but names and ages have been changed to preserve anonymity.

Estimates for the cost of loneliness to the public purse

Nationally

The annual costs of particular health and social problems on a national level were estimated using the following sources:

Obesity (£47 billion):

<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/nov/20/obesity-bigger-cost-than-war-and-terror>

Alcohol abuse (£21 billion): <https://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk/help-and-advice/statistics-on-alcohol/>

Drug abuse (£15 billion):

<http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/UserStorage/pdf/Pdf%20reports/addict.pdf>

Smoking (£13 billion):

http://www.ash.org.uk/files/documents/ASH_121.pdf

Schizophrenia and psychosis (£12 billion):

https://www.rethink.org/media/514088/TSC_executive_summary_14_nov.pdf

Loss of earnings from people who commit suicide (£1.5 billion):

<http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/escalating-depression-crisis-is-costing-britain-11bn-a-year-6282994.html>

Depression (£520 million): <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/escalating-depression-crisis-is-costing-britain-11bn-a-year-6282994.html>

Insomnia (£50 million): <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2012/may/11/nhs-spending-sleeping-pills-50m> [In fact, £50 million is not the total cost of insomnia to the NHS. This is just the cost of the sleeping pills prescribed.]

Circulatory disease (£7 billion):

<http://www.nuffieldtrust.org.uk/data-and-charts/nhs-spending-top-three-disease-categories-england>

Poor immunity (£1.3 billion): <https://www.rpharms.com/museum-pdfs/b-commoncold.pdf> [No estimate is available for the cost of low immunity to the NHS so we have used the cost of treating the common cold as a proxy.]

Gang crime (£36.5 billion):

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/9825068/Police-battling-7500-crime-gangs-that-cost-the-country-100-million-a-day.html> [Report says it costs £100 million per day.]

Counter-terrorism activities (£1.2 billion):

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/120036/indicative-budget-allocation.pdf

Detention of youth offenders (£245 million):

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/news/features/educationreform-to-youth-custody>

In London

To calculate the cost of loneliness in London specifically, the UK-wide estimates above were scaled to represent the population of London. Wherever possible, estimates were not based simply on the percentage of the national population living in London but also according to the prevalence of a particular health or social issue among Londoners. For example, there are just over 12 million obese people nationwide and 1.6 million of them live in London: 13% of the total number. Therefore, the cost estimate for obesity in London is estimated to be 13% of the national cost. All of these estimates relied on making assumptions about at what point costs would be incurred, and as such they are only rough estimates.

Sources:

Obesity (£6 billion): <http://www.noo.org.uk/visualisation>

Alcohol abuse (£3.4 billion):

<http://www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB13218/HSE2012-Ch6-Alc-cons.pdf>

Drug abuse (£2.8 billion):

<http://www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB15943/drug-misu-eng-2014-rep.pdf>

Smoking (£1.8 billion):

<http://www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB17526/stat-smok-eng-2015-rep.pdf>

Loss of earnings from people who commit suicide (£164 million):

http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_395145.pdf

Mental health problems:

<http://www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB13218/HSE2012-Ch4-Gen-health.pdf>

Other ill health: Calculated at a population level.

Gang crime (£15.6 billion): www.gangslines.com

Counter-terrorism (£185 million): Calculated at a population level.

Detention of youth offenders (£33 million):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-custody-data>

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At a cost of £45 each: <http://www.itv.com/news/update/2014-05-22/one-visit-to-gp-costs-45/>

The Campaign to End Loneliness says one in 10 appointments is a result of loneliness: <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/charity-claims-loneliness-is-the-reason-one-in-10-visit-their-gp-8940392.html>

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