United Kingdom Advisory Forum on Ageing: Update from the Campaign to End Loneliness

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Recap

“The Campaign to End Loneliness is a network of national, regional and local organisations and individuals working through community action, good practice, research and policy to tackle loneliness in older age.”
Establishing a campaign

Long-term objectives:
- Improve the quality and quantity of services that tackle loneliness in older people
- Improve the commissioning of services that can combat loneliness in older age
- *Enable older people to reduce their own loneliness*

Shorter-term objectives:
- ‘Reframe’ loneliness as a health issue
- Organisations and commissioners are better informed about the issue and what can be done
## Establishing a campaign

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Main Activity</th>
<th>Target Audience</th>
<th>How?</th>
<th>Aim</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate learning to improve effectiveness of services and partnerships addressing loneliness</td>
<td>Charities and service providers working with older people; health and care professionals</td>
<td>Publications; events; presentations; social media; press (media)</td>
<td>Organisations/commisioners are better informed about issue and what can be done</td>
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<td><strong>Influence commissioners</strong> <em>(Loneliness Harms Health campaign)</em></td>
<td>National government; health and wellbeing boards; health and care professionals</td>
<td>Local campaigners; events; ‘loneliness toolkit for HWBs’; press (media)</td>
<td>Improve commissioning of services that combat loneliness in older age</td>
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<td>Develop an evidence base</td>
<td>Researchers; service providers; commissioners; government</td>
<td>Research Hub; Research Bulletin; events; press (media)</td>
<td>Make research relevant and practical for service providers and commissioners</td>
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Loneliness Harms Health

- Facilitate local activists to raise awareness of health risks of loneliness with their health and wellbeing board (HWB)
- Argue for loneliness to be included in a Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS) priority
- April 2012 – 5 flagship campaigns
- October 2012 – England-wide launch, resources for campaigners
- At the same time, lobbied Department of Health for national measure
Campaign strategy

**Top down**
- Department of Health – funding, networks
- Prominent supporters
- Online resource: *Loneliness toolkit for health and wellbeing boards*

**Bottom up**
- In 5 flagship areas - charities, services, older people facilitated to campaign together
- Loneliness Harms Health Action Pack – to equip supporters to start own campaigns
- E-campaigning with partner charity Sense
- ‘Internal’ champions – councillors; officers

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*Addressing loneliness and isolation amongst older people makes a positive difference.*

It’s low cost but addresses more than one problem;

It moves us from a story of deficit to one in which older people are no longer regarded as a drain, rather their contribution is valued.
Developing the evidence base

For (and with) practitioners and commissioners

- Publications and Research Bulletins - “easy and digestible evidence”
- Events (e.g. Connect + Act)
- Academic research has enabled others to get better local evidence (e.g. Essex Isolation Index)
- Case studies and evaluations

With researchers

- Events (e.g. international research conference in July 2012 and roundtable at the British Society of Gerontology conference September 2013)
- Campaign ‘Communications Partner’ in bids
Early success

National government:

▪ New measure of loneliness in Adult Social Care and Public Health Outcomes Framework – develop with advice from Research Hub

In the media:

▪ Health message – increased use of Campaign-quoted research in articles and presentations

Supporter organisations

▪ 72% respondents said resources had “improved their understanding of loneliness in older age”, 55% said “considerably”
▪ 65% said the Campaign had made them “want to do more to reduce loneliness” in older people, 47% said “considerably more”
Early success

Health and wellbeing boards:

- **61 out of 128** published JHWS at least acknowledged loneliness and/or isolation as issue for local population

- **33 of these 61** had measurable actions/targets to tackle loneliness or isolation

- **8 out of 61** were “Gold Standard”

- Website analysis suggested **40 out of the 61** boards had frequently used Campaign toolkit

- Measurement: Essex, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Manchester, Stockton-On-Tees, Warrington

- New initiatives: Halton, Oxfordshire, Sutton, York
Early success

Case Study: York Health and Wellbeing Board

Action:
• Loneliness on health was raised as health issue by local groups
• A local councillor has also been campaigning on the issue of loneliness since 2011 in Yorkshire
• In October 2012, council employees attended a Campaign-run workshop on tackling loneliness in older age

Response:
• Addressing loneliness is now a guiding principle for the board
• Commit to investing in services that help isolated older people participate in existing social groups
• Investigating ‘social prescribing scheme’
Early success

Chart 6: The extent to which the Campaign has affected the actions of influencers

- Developed other plans or strategies that address the issue of loneliness or isolation (n=26)
- Involved older people more in planning, delivering or assessing services (n=24)
- Developed or commissioned new service/activities to tackle loneliness in people 55+ (n=23)
- Included loneliness or isolation in your joint health and wellbeing strategy (n=18)
- Collected data on the needs of the local older population for a JSNA (n=18)
- Investigated the costs of loneliness or cost-benefits of services that tackle loneliness (n=6)

What has contributed to this success?

- ‘Two-pronged’ approach. Evaluation found good evidence that:
  - Supporters are lobbying influencers on behalf of the Campaign
  - Local authorities using toolkit/publications
- Positive effect of bringing evidence together to influence policy:
  “Good evidence and powerful statistics help you to create a case for driving work in this area. It’s really difficult without these powerful statistics to get anyone to sit up and take notice.” National government interviewee
- Solid partnerships – management group; researchers
- Responding to all opportunities in first two years, e.g. DH
- Good timing?
  “We were already buying our ticket for the bus before they approached us.”
  Local authority interviewee
Initial lessons

For campaigners:
- Two-pronged approach
- Commissioners require solid evidence
- Still a long way to go!

For practitioners:
- Use evidence to demonstrate need and effectiveness of your service
- Use experience to influence policy

For researchers:
- Research Hub helped steer work in a more applied direction
- ‘Springboard’ for funding?
What next?

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