Tackling loneliness and isolation
What we are doing, and why it matters

An introduction to the Campaign

The Campaign to End Loneliness is a coalition of organisations and individuals, working together through research, policy, campaigning and innovation to combat loneliness and inspire individuals to keep connected in older age.

- Launched February 2011

- Led by Age UK Oxfordshire, Independent Age, Manchester City Council, Sense and WRVS

- 200 organisations and 230 individuals have signed-up to support our work across the United Kingdom

Loneliness in the United Kingdom

Loneliness is "an individual's subjective evaluation of his or her social participation or social isolation and is the outcome of …having a mismatch between the quantity and quality of existing relationships on the one hand and relationship standards on the other" [Perlman and Peplau, 1981]
•Social or emotional loneliness?
•Can be transient, situational or chronic

Social isolation is related but different to loneliness. It is an objective state that measures the number of contacts or interactions someone has.

Solitude is the opposite to loneliness: "Language… has created the word "loneliness" to express the pain of being alone. And it has created the word "solitude" to express the glory of being alone." [Paul Johannes Tillich]

Loneliness in the United Kingdom

- 6 - 13% of older people say they feel very or always lonely

- 6% of older people leave their house once a week or less

- 17% of older people are in contact with family, friends and neighbours less than once a week, and 11% are in contact less than once a month

- Over half (51%) of all people aged 75 and over live alone (ONS, 2010)

- Almost 5 million older people say that the television is their main form of company

Photo: F.Stroganov (Flickr)

Why should we act on loneliness?

- Those aged 60+ will rise to 24 per cent by 2030. In the next 20 years, the population of those aged over 80 will treble and those over 90 will double.

- Loneliness has a very negative impact on our health, research has demonstrated it has an effect on mortality that is similar in size to cigarette smoking, and is worse for us than obesity

- It is also associated with conditions such as cardiovascular disease, dementia, poor sleep and depression

- More "risk factors" in older age: For example retirement; bereavement; hearing or sight loss; declining mobility; lower incomes can all contribute to isolation and loneliness

- All of these things mean we should act to make sure we can all stay better connected in older age

Prioritising action - health and wellbeing

Over the past 12 months:

• Raising awareness of the 'health message' of loneliness to the public and policy makers

• Building network of supporters taking action locally

• Improving work of councils – joint guide with Local Government Association

• Starting 2 of 6 local 'Raising Awareness' Campaigns

• Working with the Department of Health – Summit to tackle loneliness and commissioning toolkit

Paul Burstow MP, Minister for Care Services meets WRVS befrienders before Campaign Summit

www.campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk

What the Campaign will be doing…

- We have 4 remaining pilot areas for the Raising Awareness campaigns and will be inspiring other local groups across the country to make sure their health and wellbeing boards take the views of older people on this issue into account

- We have a upcoming review with the Baring Foundation which will focus on the benefit of arts in alleviating loneliness

- We will continue to build the evidence base, supporting a research conference in July

- We are developing a new 'Resilience Project' to support those approaching retirement to plan for a 'social future'
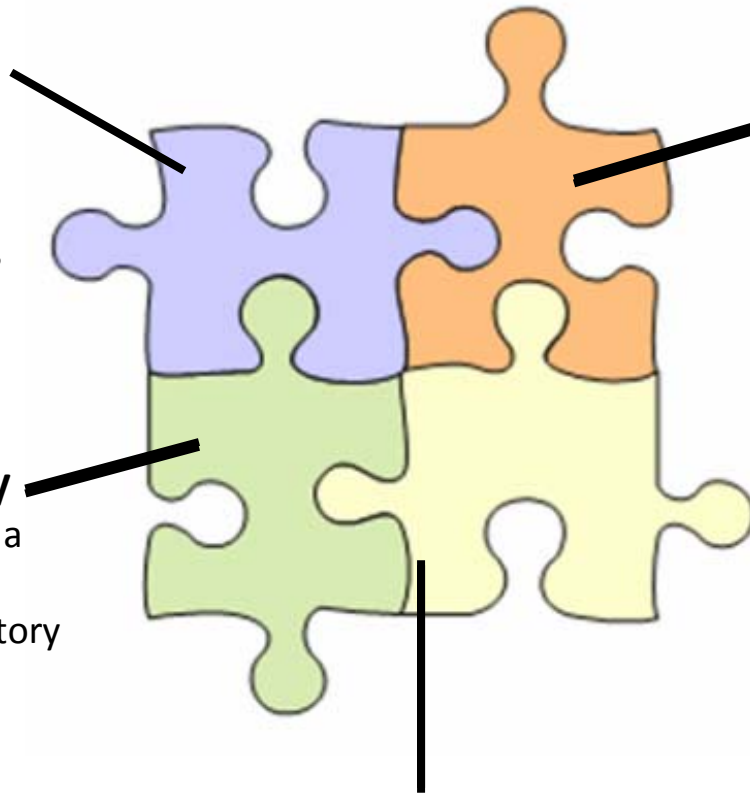
The bigger picture – a national movement

Campaign to EndLoneliness
CONNECTIONS IN OLDER AGE

Businesses and employers
•Support pre-retirees through retirement to stay connected
•Offer products and services with built-in ways to bring people together

Government
•Tackling loneliness as a health and wellbeing priority
•Ensure there is regular, affordable public transport
•Identify populations most at risk of loneliness
•Prioritise preventative services or activities that alleviate loneliness
•Provide information and advice for people who are lonely
•Reduce fear of crime

Charities and civil society
•Include tackling loneliness as a specific goal of their work
•Build partnerships with statutory bodies and other charities
•Reach out to *most* isolated people
•Involve older people in service design

Individuals
•Prepare for your own future social life
•Volunteer (keep contributing after retirement)

For more information…

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