



healthwatch York

Loneliness: a modern epidemic and the search for a cure



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Loneliness: a modern epidemic and the search for a cure

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to investigate loneliness, now emerging as a modern epidemic across the world. The report begins with an explanation of why the problem of loneliness is a priority for Healthwatch York. It explores who is affected by loneliness and the many factors that contribute to it. The report then summarises the finding of several studies done about loneliness specifically in York. Finally, it lists the activities and initiatives of the many local organisations that are working to alleviate loneliness.

Definitions of loneliness

“a subjective, unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship. It happens when we have a mismatch between the quantity and quality of social relationships that we have, and those that we want” (Perlman and Peplau, 1981).ⁱ

‘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, The Eternal Nowⁱⁱ

“Feelings of being on your own and missing having friends and relationships with people around you. That no one understands and you can’t connect”.ⁱⁱⁱ ChildLine

The Campaign to End Loneliness defines two types of loneliness which they feel should be treated as separate types of experiences. These two types are;

- Emotional loneliness or the lack of personal companionship (i.e. a spouse, relative or friend).
- Social loneliness or the lack of a wider social network, as a community or group of friends.^{iv}

Why is Healthwatch York looking at loneliness?

In a recent survey carried out by Healthwatch York to set priorities for our current work plan, loneliness was one of the main concerns identified. Healthwatch York found that a number of other organisations in York were also concerned with the problem. Loneliness is now becoming recognised as a key public health issue affecting people from all walks of life.

For individuals, loneliness is linked to an increased risk of depression, anxiety, sleeping disorders, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, cognitive decline and early onset of dementia. It can take the enjoyment out of many of life's experiences and day-to-day living, creating a downward spiral of negative feelings and behaviour.

Research shows that 59% of adults aged over 52 who reported themselves in poor health said they feel lonely "often or some of the time", compared to only 21% in excellent health. Lonely people have been found to partake more often in self-destructive behaviour such as excessive drinking, unhealthy eating and reduced physical activity.^v (Beaumont).

There is a stigma attached to loneliness. People may feel ashamed to admit they experience problems, making them less likely to seek support from others. They may feel ashamed to discuss personal matters, resulting in a greater sense of loneliness and social isolation, with a fear they have no one to turn to.

For communities also, loneliness can have a negative impact. In today's mobile society, many people no longer feel a sense of belonging to a neighbourhood. This can lead to a deterioration of community activities and interaction, contributing to a negative spiral of isolation from one's neighbours, thereby increasing loneliness.

Healthwatch York has found that loneliness is a problem recognised across organisations, both statutory and voluntary, concerned with

health and social wellbeing. This report summarises research findings, as well as listing organisations working to address the problem in York. This will ensure that workers know about each others' projects and signpost people in need to sources of help.

Who is lonely?

Loneliness can affect anyone at any age or at any point in life. Feelings of loneliness often occur in response to a change in circumstance, such as a crisis, or as a result of dealing with one of life's many transitions. Loneliness is often a transient emotion, which most people will overcome. However, research is now highlighting that the experience of loneliness can be chronic having a severe impact on the quality of life and wellbeing.

Some of the reasons people may feel lonely include bereavement, relationship breakdown, redundancy, moving house or country, declining health or becoming disabled, retirement or living in isolated and rural areas. Other risk factors include living with addiction such as drug or alcohol abuse, having an eating disorder, or living with mental ill health. Being lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans can be a lonely or isolating experience. Carers of all ages, including single parents, often feel lonely. This is only a small sample of the possible reasons why people feel lonely, showing the complex diversity of the problem.

Loneliness is not synonymous with isolation. It can also affect individuals who have a wide social circle and yet paradoxically may feel very alone, such as when their relationships lack support or intimacy. Feeling unconnected from others can be an excruciatingly lonely experience.

Many people feel they have no one to turn to, or are ashamed to reveal the difficulties they are experiencing. They perceive themselves as a burden on others and so avoid asking for help or seeking out the company of others. Some put up barriers as a way of protecting themselves from the outside world, perpetuating feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Loneliness in older people

In the UK, getting older is often regarded as something to dread. The aging population is felt to be a problem rather than something that should be celebrated and embraced. Despite their financial and social contribution through taxes and volunteering activity, and their role in

wider family life, a growing number of older people report feeling like a burden and exhibit signs of loneliness.^{vi}

In the UK, two fifths of older people (about 3.9 million) say that television is their main source of company.^{vii} Age UK research recently reported that 1 million older people regularly go an entire month without speaking to anyone at all.^{viii} They highlight that 50% of people over the age of 75 live alone; living alone is believed to be a risk factor for people experiencing loneliness later in life. One in 10 people over the age of 65 commented that they felt lonely always or often. Loneliness has been shown to make people more vulnerable to illness as well as leading to the possibility of depression and a loss of confidence and motivation.^{ix}

Loneliness in children and young people

Loneliness can lead many young people to feel uncomfortable and unable to talk about personal matters with family or friends. They may not realise that the negative feelings they are experiencing could be linked to loneliness. They may feel embarrassed to discuss it, often as a result of peer pressure or the expectations of others. Between April 2008 and March 2009, **5,525 children** spoke to ChildLine, referring to loneliness, sadness and isolation as a major problem in their lives. In addition, **4,399 children** were counselled about loneliness as a problem in addition to the stated reason they called for help. ChildLine reported that some children were finding their feelings of loneliness and social isolation debilitating, having a major impact on their daily lives and happiness.

Loneliness in children can occur for many reasons such as being bullied, being left alone at home frequently, experiencing abuse, or having issues with peer groups. Young people often feel they do not fit in or conform to how their friends are behaving. Low self-esteem, anxiety in social situations and shyness can be contributing factors, with the break-up or relationships or friendships adding to the risk of loneliness. Even children who appear to have a good social network, surrounded by friends, can feel socially disconnected, and thus, very lonely.

Loneliness in people with drug or alcohol addiction

Feelings of loneliness can arise as a result of an addiction. Trapped in what seems an unbreakable cycle of destructive behaviour, apparently unable, or ashamed, to discuss the situation with anyone can be very lonely. When addiction is seen as a way of escaping difficult feelings such as loneliness, the problem is compounded. In addition, those in the recovery stage can also experience intense feelings of loneliness as they struggle with the challenge of overcoming their addiction.^x

Loneliness in people with eating disorders

Since 2000, the number of those reporting an eating disorder has increased by 15%, including many more males than in the past. Loneliness and isolation can be crippling for people with eating disorders. This is often the result of individuals feeling unable, or ashamed, to be open about their day-to-day struggles. In a survey carried out by Beat (formerly known as the Eating Disorders Association) only 1% of respondents said they felt able to talk with their parents about the issue and only 17% were willing to discuss it with a GP or nurse. 92% of children with an eating disorder who responded to the survey felt they couldn't tell anyone.^{xi}

Loneliness in people with cancer

Macmillan Cancer Support found that cancer patients who are lonely are three times more likely to struggle to follow their cancer treatment plan than those who are not (31% versus 11%). As more than one in five (22%) cancer patients experience loneliness following diagnosis, this becomes a significant number. Indeed, Macmillan estimates loneliness is putting the recovery of 21,000 cancer patients at risk. Using research conducted by Ipsos MORI, they found that more than 20,000 lonely cancer patients in the UK each year are missing appointments, not taking their medicine properly, are unable to pick up prescriptions or are even refusing some types of treatment.

Among cancer patients who are lonely:

- 1 in 30, an estimated 2,100 people skipped treatment appointments

- 1 in 17, an estimated 4,200 people didn't take medicine as they should
 - 1 in 8, an estimated 9,000 people, were unable to pick up their prescriptions
 - 1 in 11, an estimated 6,200 people, refused some types of treatment
- 1 in 20 (5%) lonely cancer patients refused treatment all together.

Macmillan believes there are a number of reasons why lonely cancer patients are unable to complete treatment. They may not have the practical support they need to get out of the house to attend appointments, or pick up prescriptions, especially if they can't drive or live in a remote area. They may feel emotionally overwhelmed and too anxious to attend appointments or have treatment. This makes it all the more important that people are aware of the support available to them.^{xii}

Loneliness in other populations ...

Loneliness in disabled people

Loneliness in new mums

Loneliness in people from cultural minority groups

Lone carers

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans people

These are further groups of people who have been mentioned in research as at risk of loneliness.

Research into Loneliness in York

Healthwatch York Work Plan

Our first work plan survey, launched in the summer of 2013, received 97 responses. Of these, 96 people felt that loneliness should be a priority.

The following are quotes from the survey;

1. Loneliness, isolation are massive issues.
2. Exercise, no matter how little, is in my experience a key issue; our classes are becoming part of the lives of many of the members who attend; as well as the exercise it relieves stress and the loneliness problem.
3. Loneliness can turn to depression particularly if you are living with a long term condition or life shortening illness. GPs are too busy to sit and talk so possibly organising self help groups with a counsellor may be a way forward to look at three issues in one.
4. Loneliness amongst mothers with small children.
5. How about promoting "talking therapies" tied in with loneliness?
6. Support for those with dementia living alone; isolation of older people.
7. Organise outings on door to door basis.
8. Support voluntary organisations to identify older isolated people
9. Do more for the elderly who are alone.
10. Help beat stress, loneliness & isolation by having regular programme of activities & make access to events easy & cheap.
11. I do not think there is enough support for old people who live alone.

In addition, thirty-three respondents mentioned other groups in York already researching the problem, suggesting we co-ordinate our work with theirs. This section summarises their findings.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation / Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust (JRF/JRHT), local church groups, and the University of York have undertaken research which shows that the problems caused by loneliness are growing in York and North Yorkshire. These include the detrimental impact loneliness can have both on an individual's physical and mental health as well as the quality of life in communities.

The JRF project – loneliness and place

JRF and JRHT's Neighbourhood approaches to loneliness was a three year action research programme exploring and identifying what makes us all feel lonely where we live and work and what we can do about it – personally and professionally. Based in four neighbourhoods – two in Bradford and two in York, more than 40 people were trained in Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) methods, then supported to investigate what causes loneliness in the areas where they live. The programme wanted to compare local experience in different communities.

In Bradford the neighbourhoods of Bradford Moor and Denholme allowed for an urban and rural comparison. Bradford Moor was the programme's only ethnically diverse neighbourhood, was the most economically deprived and was unique in identifying childhood loneliness and children not feeling safe as key factors. Denholme is a village eight miles outside Bradford . It has lost its industrial base and has a higher than average older population. New build housing has attracted young families and there is something of a generational divide in the village.

In York, New Earswick has a long history of involvement with JRF/JRHT. York's highest level of unpaid carers' hours is provided by people living in the village. The Carr Estate in York has little by way of community focus, social amenities or natural meeting places. There is a high proportion of young families. Carr has little sense of its own identity.

During the programme, JRF

- explored what people who are experiencing loneliness (or at risk of experiencing it) thought they could do to change their situation;
- worked with local communities and providers to identify what people could do personally and professionally to reduce loneliness.

The result is a wealth of information about loneliness, and effective ways to tackle it, including a [free resource pack](#) to help individuals, groups, communities and neighbourhoods take a closer look at, and to reduce, loneliness.

In York two projects were born out of the JRF research – the Community café at Lidgett Grove Methodist Church, and New Earswick Less Loneliness Initiative (NELLI) at New Earswick Folk Hall. See the ‘Support from Self Help and Voluntary Groups’ section of this report – page 17 onwards.

Community Surveys

Recent surveys carried out in the **Copmanthorpe, Lidgett Grove and Acomb** of York, commissioned by church groups in partnership with local organisations and Parish Councils, also highlighted growing issues around loneliness.

The **Lidgett Grove community survey**^{xiii} revealed that the main causes of loneliness were: living alone, family issues, and feelings of low confidence. Respondents also mentioned not knowing their neighbours, and not having a sense of community as there were few community facilities and not enough opportunities to participate in community-based activities. 68% said that feelings of loneliness and isolation affected their quality of life. 73% of respondents commented that being unaware of what was going on locally prevented them from getting involved in social activities. Additionally, 55% of respondents mentioned being unable to travel to activities was a reason why they did not partake in them.

The **Copmanthorpe community survey**^{xiv} found that loneliness was an issue which affected quality of life for 35% respondents.

Key issues were loneliness in mums with young children, and a lack of facilities for young people such as places to hang out after school. 40% of people also commented that being unaware of what was going on in their community was a reason for not attending local activities.

Data from the **Acomb community survey**^{xv} showed that 48% of people reported loneliness and isolation affected their quality of life. 60% of respondents reported being unaware of what was going on in their community, which like respondents to the other surveys, prevented them from participating in activities. They also commented on a lack of activities aimed at people with disabilities.

North Yorkshire Older People's Partnership Board

Research undertaken by the University of York (Bernard, 2013), commissioned by North Yorkshire Older People's Partnership Board (NYOPPB), investigated loneliness and social isolation in people over the age of 65 in York. Bernard comments that lonely and isolated people are more likely to need long-term care, and that loneliness can be detrimental to sustaining 'healthy communities'. The study finds that over a third (37%) of people aged 65 and over in North Yorkshire are living alone with over two fifths (43%) having a limiting long-term illness or a hearing impairment.^{xvi}

City of York Council Pupil Survey

The pupil survey 'Someone to Turn to' completed by City of York Council, found 8.4% of pupils in 2011/12, and 5.3% in 2012/13, reported "often" feeling lonely in Primary School.

Age UK York / Healthwatch York: Escorted Transport Service

Healthwatch York recently carried out research into an escorted transport service provided by Age UK York during January to March. This transport service helped people get home in the early evening following discharge from hospital. Patients over the age of 50 were contacted by telephone using a survey which included open-ended questions to allow respondents to describe in detail their experiences. Further to the information sought regarding the hospital discharge service, this survey also revealed themes including people experiencing loneliness and social isolation. People reported missing having regular company and social contact. For some, the experience of going into hospital and then receiving home support following a stay in hospital was a pleasant experience as it meant they had company and conversation with others. We also found that a number of people expressed feelings of loneliness, which was often also linked to feeling like a burden.

Comments received included: *“I have no family or friends, so having a nurse come round who listens to me has been great.”*

“I miss the nurses coming round... was nice to have company”

“The one-to-ones with nurses who came round was great... it’s nice to feel listened to and cared about...”

“They (my family) are all getting on with their lives... they are busy... I don’t want to burden people”

Some were not able to be as socially active as they used to be, due to lack of mobility either through health issues or simply no longer being able to drive;

“I’m not mentally or physically stable enough to drive anymore”. This was contributing to feeling “trapped indoors”.

“I’ve always been independent, I like to be independent... but I can’t drive now... I have problems getting about... I can’t cope with the garden anymore... have no motivation to do housework, I’m sleeping a lot... have lost the will as I’m in a lot of pain”

Other comments from this survey that suggested feelings of loneliness and the negative symptoms associated with loneliness were:

“I have no motivation to socialise or make an effort to get ready”

“I’ve lost confidence... feel depressed all the time... with lack of mobility”

“I’ve lost motivation”,

“I’m deteriorating”,

“just a part of getting old”.

“I was agoraphobic and get bad anxiety....I joined York Mind... think I’ve benefited from sharing my experiences with others who’ve experienced similar problems...and I’ve started going out again...”

Activities in York that address loneliness

This report has shown how prevalent a problem loneliness has become in today's world. Further to the research noted above, Healthwatch York found a collection of essays published by The Campaign to End Loneliness which emphasises the diversity of the profile of the lonely person. Called "Alone in the Crowd: Loneliness and Diversity", it sheds light on the individuals behind the statistics. They also highlight the need for interventions tailored to the needs and situations of those experiencing loneliness in order for them to be effective.

York is fortunate to have a wealth of information about those suffering loneliness. We also benefit from a wide range of organisations working to alleviate the difficulties people experience as a result. In this section, these groups are listed along with a short description of the projects they are carrying out;

Volunteering York

Volunteering within the community can offer a multitude of benefits for everyone involved! The volunteers themselves can feel more of a sense of community spirit and social connectedness which can consequently lead to increase wellbeing, self-esteem, confidence, sense of purpose, reduced loneliness, increased motivation, expansion of social networks, and these are just a few of the benefits volunteers report.

<http://www.yorkcvs.org.uk/how-we-help/volunteering-york/>

<http://www.do-it.org.uk/search/vc/899847>

Support from Self Help and Voluntary Groups

Acomb Timebank

A twist on traditional volunteering, the Timebank is a community scheme which currently has a hub in the Acomb area of York, although the aim is to make the project citywide. The Timebank is based on the premise that people give their time and utilise their own knowledge and skills to help and support others within the community. Each time a volunteer gives an hour of their own time, this hour is 'banked' as a 'time credit'. People who sign up to the initiative can then exchange this 'time credit' when they need help themselves. Or perhaps they just fancy learning a new skill such as playing an instrument, learning a language, receiving some job coaching or trying out meditation. Other useful skills and areas which current members offer include DIY, computer skills, hairdressing, plant watering, companionship, housework and cooking! These are just a few of the many skills people in the Timebank collectively offer. Additionally, Timebank credits can even be used at the Energise leisure centre!

Many of the volunteers in the Timebank have reported positive changes not only in themselves but in the community. For example one volunteer commented "As a society we've grown apart and it's time we came back together again. Timebank gives you a sense of pride in what you can do. I think it's brilliant."^{xvii}

People get to know each other by using their skills and knowledge to help others from within the community. A stronger sense of community can create a sense of belonging and purpose, which can in turn help to reduce feelings of loneliness and social isolation. The scheme so far has allowed many people to form friendships and bonds with others in their local area, widening their social networks and feel more supported.

<http://www.yorktimebank.org.uk/>

Age UK York provides a range of services which can help to alleviate some of the symptoms commonly faced by older people such as loneliness or social isolation. Their Befriending Service can help to provide companionship, reassurance and can also provide a gateway to

other services and support. The befriending scheme can include things such as home visits and regular telephone calls for people who feel lonely or cut off from society. Age UK York can also offer other ways of helping to overcome feelings of loneliness and isolation. For instance, they provide some social clubs, outings, coffee mornings, exercise classes, as well as some opportunities to volunteer which can also make a big difference in increasing physical and mental wellbeing. By increasing the hours of contact people have with others, this has been found to increase confidence and decrease negative emotions such as loneliness.

Age UK also run First Call 50+. This is a signposting scheme for anyone aged 50 or over, to help them find the right help, support, advice and information. Telephone (01904) 634061 or visit www.firstcall50plus.org.uk/

You can contact Age UK York by phone, email or post. The office is open from Monday to Friday 09:30am to 3:30pm.

<http://www.ageuk.org.uk/york>

Tel: 01904 627995

Email: ageukyork@ageukyork.org.uk

Belfrey Neighbours

Everybody goes through times when a bit of extra support or advice is needed, due to changes in circumstances such as illness, injury or periods of transition. This can lead to feelings of loneliness, social isolation or simply not knowing who to turn to. The Belfrey Neighbours is a church led group which seeks to lend a hand to people aged 65+. The support provided by them can help to retain independence living at home but who are in need of help or companionship. People can contact the Belfrey Neighbours to receive help and support with a range of different things which may be either short-term or long-term. This might be odd jobs around the house that people can no longer manage by themselves, helping out with meals or shopping, or a regular phone call from someone which can provide support, company and reassurance. People can also contact the Belfrey Neighbours to become helpers. Helpers themselves can also really benefit from this, by

generating a greater sense of community, purpose in the local community and well-being.

<http://www.belfrey.org/neighbours>

Phone 01904 891627

Contact - neighbours@belfrey.org

Carr Connectors

Carr connectors are a small group of volunteers who came together to help the JRF with their loneliness and place project

After 18 months of research into the local community, getting out and about, talking to local people from all over the Carr Estate, we were supplied with a detailed understanding of what it is that causes loneliness; who suffers from it and opinions and ideas on how to go about changing it.

We hope to continue to organise different events and activities for the people of Carr and enable others to do the same.

[http://www.carrconnectors.org.uk/](http://www.carrconnectors.org.uk)

Changing Lives (addiction)

Changing Lives in York can offer support and treatment programmes to help individuals experiencing addiction. Peer support is offered and regular drop-ins every Thursday are available at St Bede's Pastoral Centre on Blossom Street, York. People need to be referred to Changing Lives York by a Drug and Alcohol Treatment Agency such as the Lifeline Project (01904 464680).

http://www.york.gov.uk/info/200505/alcohol_drugs_and_substance_abuse/230/alcohol_drugs_and_substance_abuse/2

Community Cafe at Lidgett Grove Methodist Church

The cafe takes place every Wednesday morning from 9.30am to 11.30am. All ages are welcome to pop in – activities include craft and knitting tables. There is a baby area and song time.

<http://lidgettgrovemethodistchurch.org.uk/groups/community-cafe/>

Fighting Eating Disorders (FED)

Fighting Eating Disorders (FED) is a recently established charity in York which can help provide people who are suffering from an eating disorder with a safe, caring and confidential place to find support. Alleviating issues of loneliness and knowing there are other people who understand what you are going through and can discuss things with, can be helpful to moving forward in the road to recovery or finding the strength to seek help. Peer support groups are available at FED which can help with some of the mental and physical challenges faced by those with eating disorders, such as loneliness and isolation. Information about where to go for help in overcoming eating disorders is also provided by this supportive group.

<http://fightingeatingdisorders.org.uk/>

Macmillan Cancer Support

If you need information, or just someone to talk to, the Macmillan Support Line team is here for you on 0808 808 00 00 (Monday to Friday, 9am–8pm).

The Macmillan Online Community is open 24/7 and is full of supportive people who understand how it feels to live with cancer.

<http://community.macmillan.org.uk>

Tel: 0808 808 0000

New Earswick Less Loneliness Initiative (NELLI)

Café NELLI is open every Wednesday from 10am -12 noon at New Earswick Folk Hall. As well as crafts and games there is a book, dvd and jigsaw exchange. All ages are welcome – there are toys and activities for pre-school children. To find out more e mail: newearswicklli@gmail.com

<http://www.nelli.org.uk/>

Oaken Grove Surfers

Oaken Grove is recognised as an "UK On Line" Centre. A team of volunteers offer one to one mentoring on computer skills. Each person is offered 30 minutes per week dedicated time to concentrate on improving their skills. Beginners can follow three taster lessons using material from the BBC "First Click" scheme. People can follow and complete the "Go ON" course, or simply improve their skills, usually over a period of 8 – 10 weeks.

Every Monday morning 10.00 -12 noon, Thursday afternoon 2.00 –

4.00pm.

£2.00 per session, open to all adults

Call 01904 769176 to book a place and leave a message for Joan or Jeannette.

Royal Voluntary Service – this befriending service is offered to older people as part of their “Good Neighbours” service. This can provide company and friendly social contact to people. Many people can experience feelings of loneliness and social isolation for a host of different reasons, and this befriending service can help to overcome some of these often debilitating negative emotions. Whether it be face-to-face contact, or a telephone call, having regular contact with others and retaining a link to the community, has been shown to have a huge positive impact on mental and physical health and wellbeing. The Royal Voluntary Service also offers other ways to help keep older people socially active and increase social interaction. For instance, social activities within the community, such as lunches and bingo, have guest speakers, or provide community transport for people where mobility may be an issue. They also run a lunch club in York for partially sighted people.

www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/service/1420-leeds-and-york

Tel: 0845 600 5885

Email: leedsyorkhunb@royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk

Sycamore House

There is a reading café at Sycamore House, the mental health centre at 30 Clarence Street in York. The centre offers a book lending service, information point, free wi-fi and a café. The book collection contains a range of popular fiction and non-fiction, particularly books about health and wellbeing.

York Carers Centre is an independent body that helps unpaid carers in York find the support they need. All help is free for carers and includes information and advice, a Carers Emergency Card, services for Young Carers (8-18) and Young Adult Carers (18-25), and a wide range of social activities and support groups.

www.yorkcarerscentre.co.uk

Tel: 01904 715490

Email: enquiries@yorkcarerscentre.co.uk

York Carers Forum is a user-led group of unpaid carers and former carers (over the age of 18) who live, work or care for someone who lives in the York area. We are a UK Registered Charity and so we rely on fundraising, donations and freely given time in order to provide support to unpaid carers living in the York area.

www.yorkcarersforum.org

Tel: 01904 422437

York Libraries

Libraries are a good place to find out more about what is happening locally. Many have free wi-fi, and hold regular events and interest groups.

<https://www.exploreyork.org.uk/>

York Mind provides a befriending service to adults of all ages which offer emotional support for people who are experiencing mental health issues or who may be feeling socially isolated or lonely. The befrienders will provide company and support as well as help to build confidence and self-esteem in social relationships. This can in turn lead to individuals feeling increasingly able to become more involved in the community, or involved in more social activities, and therefore reduce social isolation and feelings of loneliness. Befrienders can go along to social activities with individuals, or spend time one-to-one. Befriending one of York Mind's trained volunteers can not only help reduce feelings of loneliness and social isolation but can also increase mental wellbeing and promote recovery.

www.yorkmind.org.uk/what-we-do/befriending/

Tel: 01904 643 364

Email: office@yorkmind.org.uk

York Older People's Assembly (YOPA)

YOPA members are all over 50. Member organisations represent the main groups working with older people in York.

Our aim is to raise awareness of policy issues affecting our lives, to be well represented on the boards of the Council, Hospital Trust and Primary Care Trust through our Champions, to sit on policy-making committees, and to speak out in the press and media on local and national issues of concern to older people. We debate issues at public meetings, communicate through our quarterly newsletter, organise information fairs, and co-ordinate the York 50+ Festival in which over 7,000 people participate annually.

We are part of a national initiative which created older people's forums where the voice of older people could be heard and taken into account by local and national government. We are aiming for a sea-change in the public image of older people - from dependency to resourcefulness - which will benefit the entire community over the years to come.

You are invited to join YOPA if you are over 50 and live within the City of York Council boundary. Membership is £5 p.a. Click on the 'Membership' link to the left for more information about the Assembly and a membership form.

<http://www.yorkassembly.org.uk/>

York Scarlet Ladies (The Red Hat Society)

This is a social organisation which was originally established for ladies over 50 (although women younger are also welcome to join too) which aims to connect women of all backgrounds and ages. The group aims to provide nurturing, social interaction and bonding through group get-togethers. These ladies partake in a number of social outings which include things such as arts and crafts, cinema trips, walks along the walls of York, coffee meetings, theatre trips, meeting for lunches and many more fun activities. As well as providing fun and companionship, these ladies also aim to re-shape the way society and today's culture view women of a certain age group by increasing their "visibility" and aim to achieve this through "good humour and laughter"

(YorkScarletLadies.co.uk). They comment that "Little girls grow up, but they're never too old to play dress-up and have tea parties". Strong

emphasis is placed on ageing as being something to relish and enjoy, rather than something that creates a sense of dread.

The York Scarlet Ladies is a great way of trying to re-connect women, re-create a sense of community, and reduce social isolation in women of all ages. As a group, they pride themselves as being a “dis-organisation” with a distinct lack of rules and regulations. However, there is one rule they stipulate – that when attending social get-togethers women over 50 wear a red hat and purple outfits, and ladies under 50, wear a pink hat and lavender coloured outfit.

<http://www.yorkscarletladies.co.uk/home>

York Unifying Multicultural Initiative - YUMI

Social isolation and loneliness can be an issue for many people who move to a new place and don't know many people, or are perhaps struggling to create a sense of belonging in a community, or a connectedness with others. YUMI aims to celebrate and integrate all the different cultural links we have in York (statistics – how many languages spoken/different cultures in York?) by bringing local people from within the community together with people who have come to live in York from around the world. YUMI is a voluntary, community led organisation, which welcomes all people with different cultural roots, backgrounds and beliefs. By sharing the wide range of skills, traditions and interests that people can bring, and by creating a safe, friendly and supportive environment in which to do so, this can help to create a stronger sense of belonging and purpose within the community. Furthermore, becoming involved and feeling part of a community can really help to increase well-being, confidence and self-esteem in individuals and in the community more widely. There are many activities people can get involved with, such as helping out at the tranquil community gardens and allotments which provide a friendly and peaceful space to enjoy nature, good company and lunch outdoors!

Additionally, there are many opportunities to learn lots of new skills through mentoring, training and becoming involved with the many

fantastic projects YUMI are involved in. YUMI places a strong focus on empowering people and communities by encouraging ideas, nurturing creativity, and sharing of skills, knowledge and experiences, as well as companionship and support.

www.yumiyork.org/

Be involved! – email contact@yumiyork.org

Walking Groups

‘If a medication existed which had a similar effect to physical activity, it would be regarded as a “wonder drug” or a “miracle cure” (Donaldson 2010). Walking is a great way of improving people’s sense of community, has proven benefits to both physical and mental health, and can reduce feelings of loneliness through spending time outdoors and meeting with others as well as increasing wellbeing. Even taking a stroll around urban areas can improve a sense of connectedness within a community which can help to reduce feelings of loneliness and social isolation. It can also help residents take ownership of the streets around where they live which can have a positive impact on wellbeing. Walking in groups can improve social interaction, reduce loneliness and social isolation, help relaxation, and promote discovery and general enjoyment of life! <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/what-we-do/making-the-case-for-walking/the-benefits-of-walking/social-and-community-benefits-of-walking.aspx>.

A study by Dawson et al. (2006) explored the effects people experienced through participating in led walks. Recurring themes emerged from their feedback: people who were prone to social isolation reported feeling healthier, more ‘alive’, and increasingly socially connected.

Yorkshire walking groups:

<http://www.walkinginyorkshire.co.uk/groups.php>

York ramblers - <http://www.communicate.co.uk/york/yorkramblers2/>

Tom Halstead 01904-448380

Vera Silberberg 01904-628134

www.ramblers.org.uk

York Hoboes Rambling Club – <http://www.yorkhoboes.blogspot.com>

Welcomes new members to join a long established walking club. Membership is open to over 16s and over, and children over 11 when accompanied by an adult. Coach rambles are on the second Sunday of every month, with walks to suit all abilities.

A walks are between 10 and 12 miles, depending on terrain

B walks are 6 to 10 miles (maximum)

Coach leaves York between 8 and 9am, with time at the end of the walk for refreshments. Usually back in York between 6 and 7pm.

Paul Milliner 07939 143846 (Chair)

Ian Welburn 07738 201732 (Rambles secretary)

Rose Raynor 07960 797591 (Secretary)

Campaign to End Loneliness – follow this campaign on Twitter, or tweet about things you have found interesting related to loneliness - [@EndLonelinessUK](https://twitter.com/EndLonelinessUK).

Below are some useful links taking you to **lists of groups and societies within the community of York** that aim to bring people together with shared interests...

Ableweb York

Ableweb York is an information website created by and for people with learning difficulties living in and around York. It includes information about activities people can get involved in.

<http://www.ablewebyork.org/>

Family Information Service

York Family Information Service is a free and impartial information service for mums, dads and carers of children and young people aged 0-19 (or up to 25 for disabled children).

The Family Information Service can help with anything and everything around family life.

<http://www.yor-ok.org.uk/families/FIS/family-information-service.html>

The York Directory

The York Directory is a searchable directory listing voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations in York.

<http://www.yorkcvs.org.uk/york-life/the-york-directory/>

This is York - CommuniGate _

<http://www.communigate.co.uk/york/viewgroup.phtml?group=2>

(list of clubs and societies including volunteers groups)

<http://www.communigate.co.uk/york/viewgroup.phtml?group=2&subgroup=215> (list of shared interest groups)

Yortime

This site has been created to help you find events, festivals, community groups and learning opportunities in and around York.

<https://www.yortime.org.uk/>

Recommendations

Recommendation	Recommended to
1. Set up a working group to look at how we can pro-actively address loneliness in the City of York	Health and Wellbeing Board, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Yor OK Board
2. Consider whether the Campaign to End Loneliness Toolkit, and the JRF Resource pack are useful tools to help further work locally to address loneliness	Health and Wellbeing Board / Working group
3. Make sure the Rewiring work looking at information and advice helps us respond to tackling loneliness	CYC Rewiring team
4. Develop social prescribing options and pathways into volunteering for people able to make the most of these routes	NHS Vale of York CCG, NHS England
5. Consider support to make sure key workers are confident signposting to services that address loneliness where people are more isolated or vulnerable	Collaborative Transformation Board / Care Hub development leads

References

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- ⁱ Taken from <http://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/about-loneliness/> (accessed 8.7.14)
- ⁱⁱ Taken from <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/loneliness-neighbourhoods-engagement-full.pdf>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Taken from http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/publications/casenotes/clcasenotes_loneliness_wdf74260.pdf
- ^{iv} <http://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/about-loneliness/>
- ^v <http://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/loneliness-research/>
- ^{vi} http://www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/Uploads/Documents/gold_age_report_2011.pdf
- ^{vii} (Age UK, 2014 –taken from <http://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/loneliness-research/> - accessed 3.6.14).
- ^{viii} <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/latest-news/1-million-older-people-feel-lonely/>
- ^{ix} http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/content/assets/PDF/publications/the_lonely_society_report.pdf
- ^x http://www.york.gov.uk/info/200505/alcohol_drugs_and_substance_abuse/230/alcohol_drugs_and_substance_abuse/2
- ^{xi} <http://www.b-eat.co.uk/>
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- ^{xiii} http://www.lifewherewelive.co.uk/survey/Lidgett_Grove_FullReport_Web.pdf
- ^{xiv} <http://www.copmanthorpecs.co.uk/>
- ^{xv} <http://www.acombchurchsurvey.co.uk/>
- ^{xvi} Bernard, S. and Perry, H. (2013) *Loneliness and Social Isolation Among Older People in North Yorkshire: Stage 2*, Working Paper, WP 2599, Social Policy Research Unit, University of York, York

^{xvii} Taken from

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(accessed 22.7.14)

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Twitter: @healthwatchyork

Facebook: Like us on Facebook

Web: www.healthwatchyork.co.uk

York CVS

Healthwatch York is a project at York CVS. York CVS works with voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations in York. York CVS aims to help these groups do their best for their communities, and people who take part in their activities or use their services.

This report

This report is available to download from the Healthwatch York website: www.healthwatchyork.co.uk

Paper copies are available from the Healthwatch York office

If you would like this report in any other format, please contact the Healthwatch York office