

LIVING WITH LONELINESS?

How can a neighbourhood support people who are lonely? That's what the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Housing Trust (JRF and JRHT) aim to find out through our 'Neighbourhood approaches to loneliness' action research and community development programme.

We know that home can be a lonely place and we're concerned about the wellbeing of people experiencing problematic loneliness.

Neighbourhoods are where we have our homes. They affect how we feel and our neighbours can be a vital source of support, or a constant reminder of how lonely we are. There are things we all can do within our neighbourhoods to enable ourselves and others to feel more supported and less alone.

We're working with local people in four neighbourhoods – two in York and two in Bradford – to find out how a neighbourhood as a whole can support those who live with loneliness, whatever their backgrounds or experiences.

Our first task was to find out what issues they experience in their own neighbourhoods and how they can address them.

What are people's experiences of loneliness in the neighbourhoods?

"Due to cultural reasons people won't talk about it."

"No-one to play with at school when you first go."

"Women really do feel isolated and do not see what's available."

"Summer better, winter is worse. Doomed in winter."

"I was scared to live here."

"I feel very lonely. Stuck in the house on crutches. Been homeless for 12 years."

"It's a lonely life. When I've worked all day I come home and I drink when I get home."

"We are all frightened to smile at [each] other."

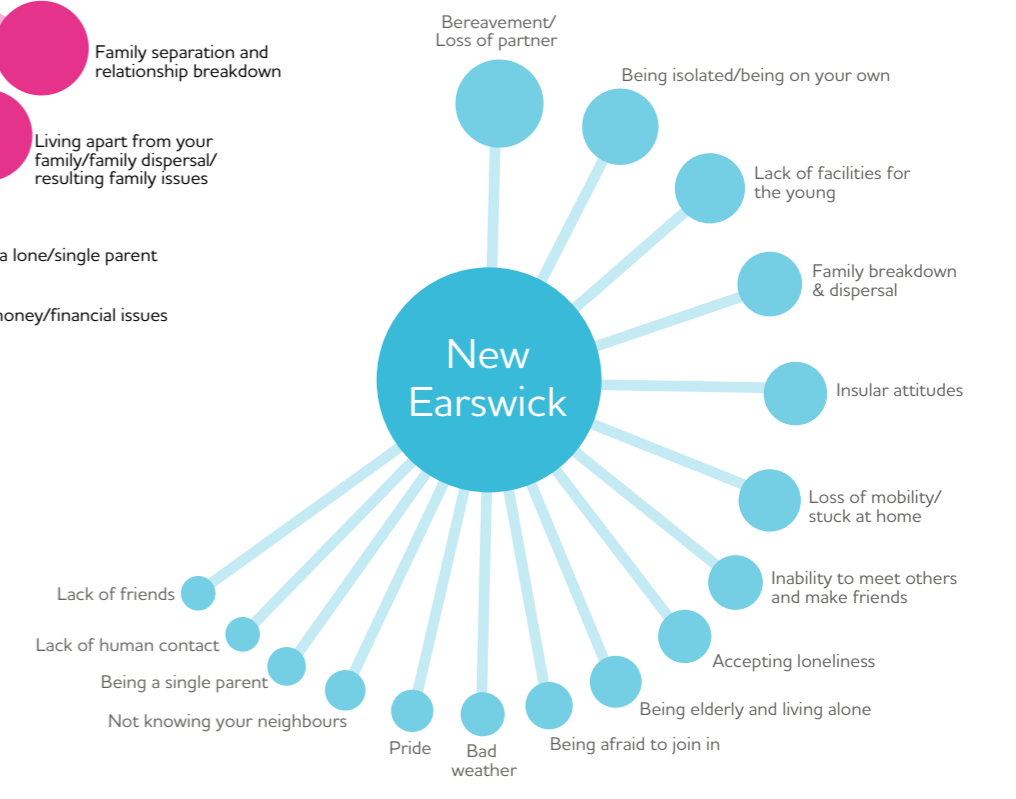
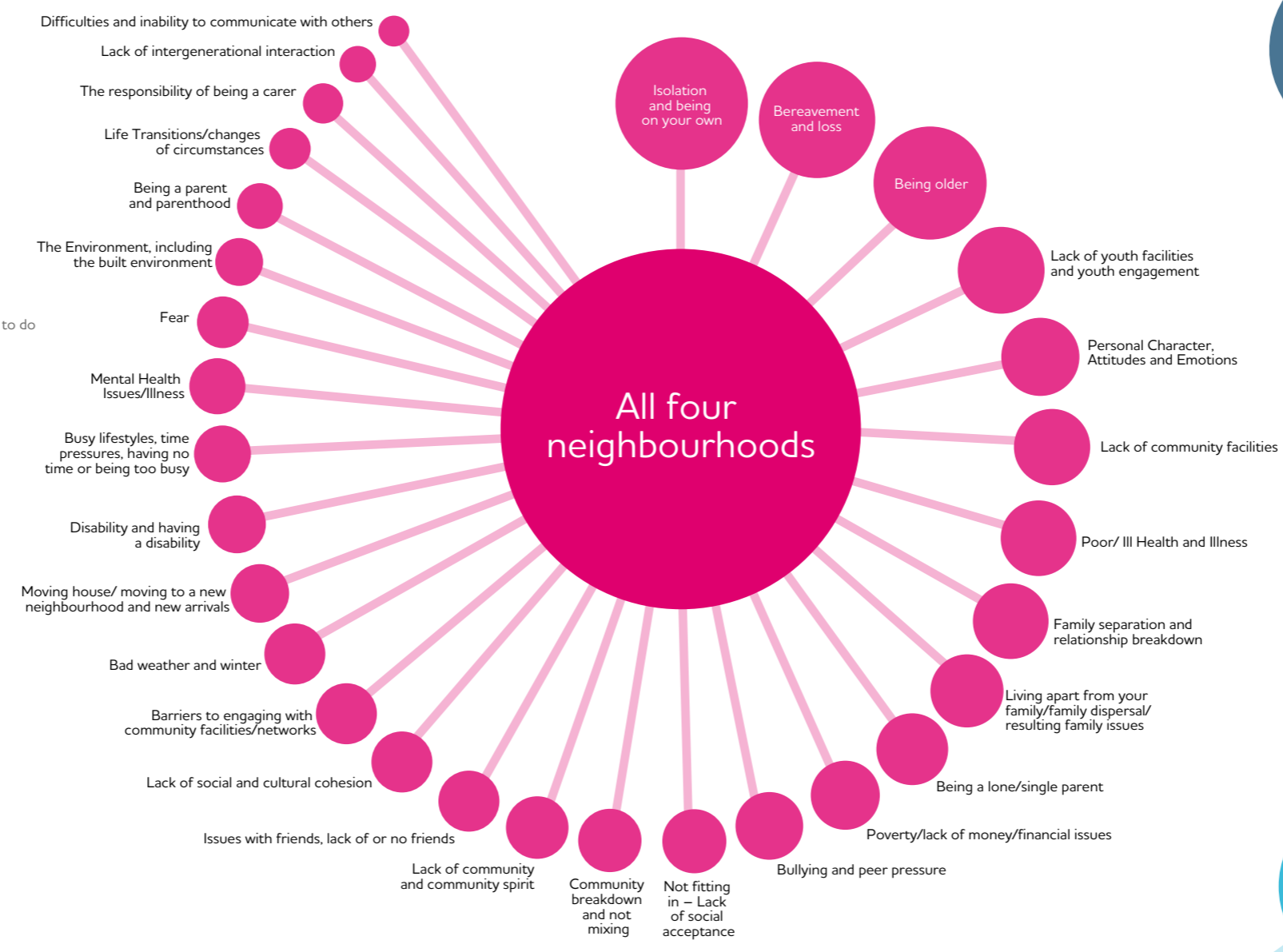
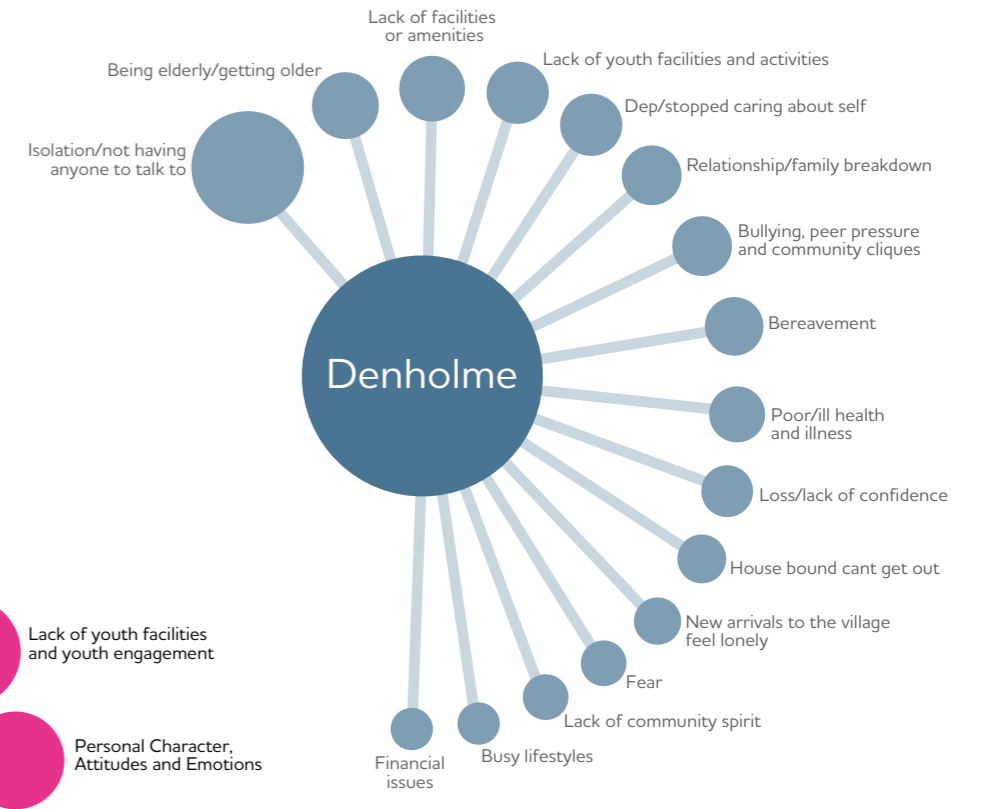
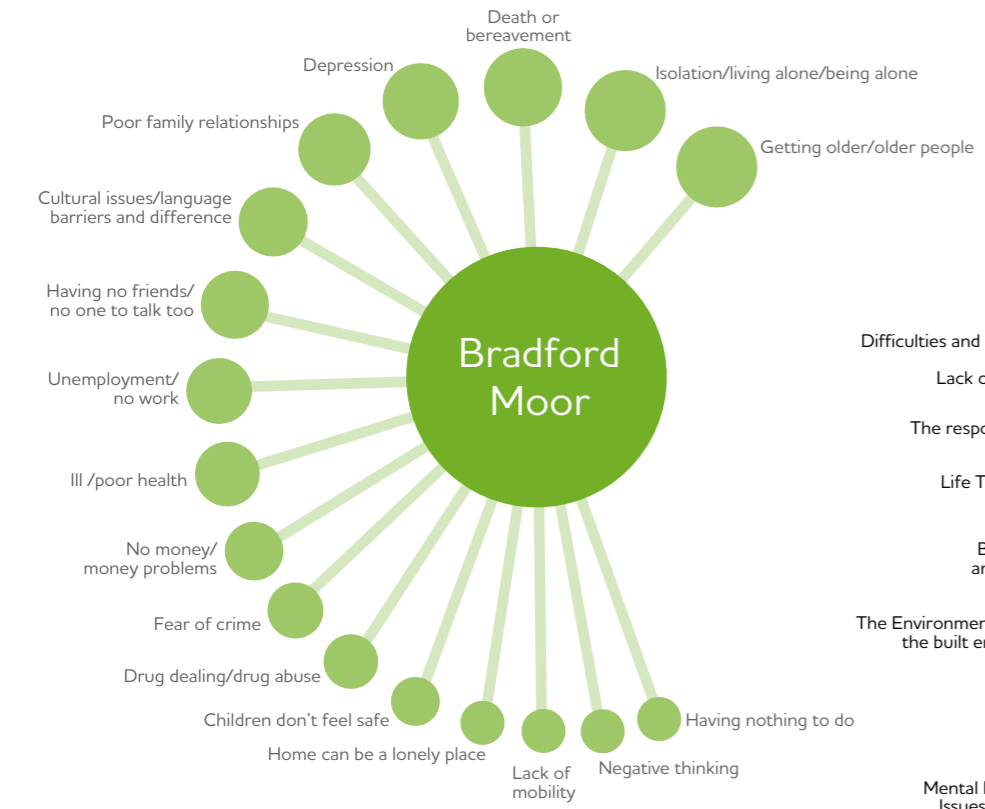
"Our neighbour is housebound. We help with practicalities but not with her loneliness."

"I was very lonely when my mother died. I cared for her for four years."

"We need to find a way to stop people laughing at me because I'm different."

For the full range of issues, see the centre pages.

What are the issues affecting people in the four neighbourhoods?



We have shared these issues with those who live in the four neighbourhoods and gathered their ideas for how to address loneliness in their communities. We're also working with partners and groups to see what else we can do, and we're engaging those who want to help initiate and establish some of the ideas and actions.

The community researchers continue to work tirelessly and voluntarily within their neighbourhoods. Here's what some of them have said about their work:

"There's an increased confidence ... a real sense of ownership and fellowship."

"This has boosted my confidence. I met new people, and found new ways to make new friends, say hello to others and now I have a worthwhile job."

"I believe this programme is helping with the awareness of loneliness and giving people a chance to talk about such a stigmatised topic."

"I was on the edge of loneliness and knew something had to be done. Joining this group has given me a wonderful new group of friends and kept my mind wonderfully stimulated."

Some of the ideas from the neighbourhoods

"Use Skype to keep in touch with my sister in London."

"Community – everyone should get involved when they see someone being bullied."

"Go to places where you can meet people and make friends; talk to people, volunteer, be kind."

"Have more sessions about bullying – take young people out more to help educate them."

"Help elderly neighbours – call in and see if you can help with any tasks – cleaning/meals."

"Go out there and give an old lady like me a hug today."

"Teach people to be nice, courteous, respect, stop hating each other."

"Think before you speak."

"Places to make new friends outside school; hold after-school clubs as I don't have many friends at school."

"A welcome wagon – personal welcome for new neighbours."

"A 'pop up café' near the school so parents and children have chance to meet."

"Landlords could be more helpful – encourage growing flowers/veg with neighbours."

"Different generations share their skills. Young people interacting with older (all ages)."

"Something like a befriending scheme but linked to homecare service to get people out, or homecare to do it so instead of homecare popping in for half an hour for a chat allow them to take the person out instead; at the moment they're not allowed."

"Confidence building courses with childcare facilities."

"Do more for dads – activities for dads and kids at convenient times, more flexibility."

"Peer to peer support for families with children with disabilities: for parents and for children to meet other children with similar problems so they feel less afraid and isolated. I started one and know 180 families."

"RNIB really helpful when I lost my sight – technology to help me adjust, organised trips out."

It has been an amazing journey to date and we warmly invite you to join us on it. To find out more about neighbourhood approaches to loneliness, visit <http://www.jrf.org.uk/work/workarea/neighbourhood-approaches-loneliness> or call Tracey Robbins on 07580 071818.