

Webinar: Promising approaches to tackle loneliness in later life

Host: Campaign to end loneliness



Background: In 2015 the Campaign to End Loneliness and Age UK published a set of promising approaches to tackle loneliness in later life. In 2020 they revisited this work and in https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/wp-content/uploads/Promising_Approaches_Revisited_FULL_REPORT.pdf they share an update on this work. This includes a refreshed promising approaches framework and some new case studies of work underway across the UK.

Why is this relevant to people working in community safety? There is a strong link between loneliness, frailty and falls in later life, two things that have been exacerbated due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

We know there is a link between loneliness and wider wellbeing, and an emerging link between the strength of networks/connections and how safe people feel in their communities and their sense of belonging to their community.

Summary:

Kate Jopling shared some of the psychological factors associated with loneliness

- Social cognition - how people perceive or make sense of social situations
- Attribution – how people explain the reason for their loneliness
 - internal (themselves) / external (situation)
 - stable / variable
- Confidence, self-efficacy, self-esteem
 - Motivation
- Depression, anxiety, social anxiety
- Personality types
 - Conscientiousness, extraversion / neuroticism
- Internalised ageism

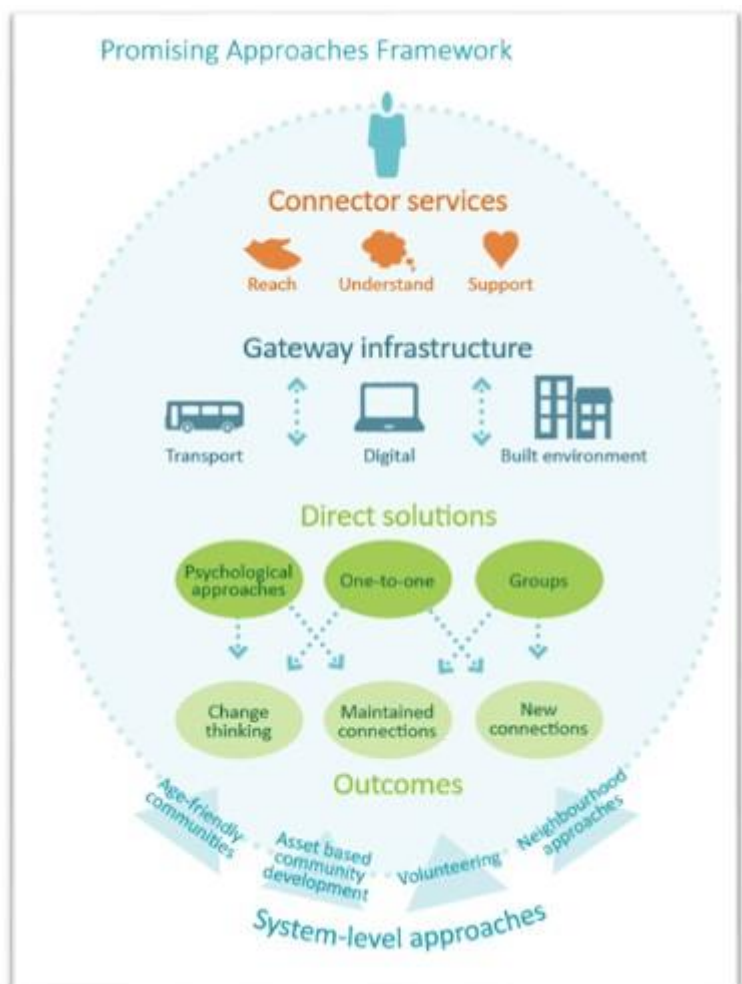


Kate spent some time talking about the Promising approaches revised framework:

The promising approaches framework considers Connector services, Gateway infrastructure and Direct solutions as important approaches to tackling loneliness in later life. It also considers the system-level approaches that can aid tackling loneliness.

We think the approaches of Community Safety Partnerships is important to enable some of the system-level approaches and the connector services.

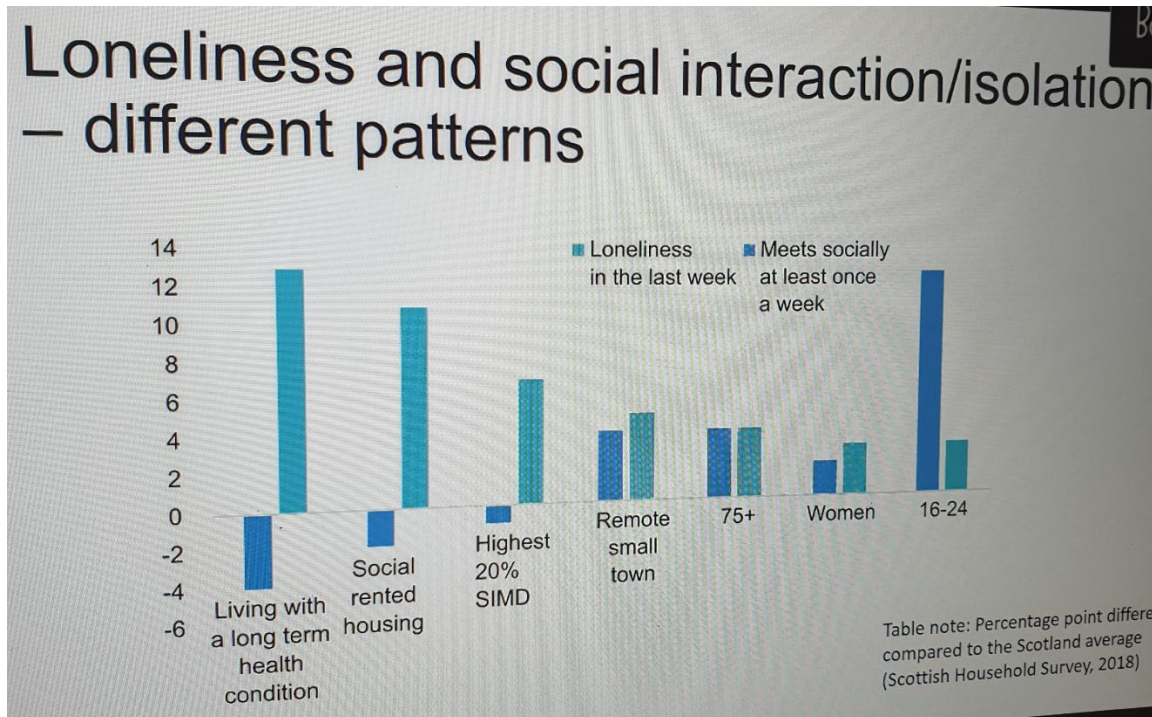
- There is an opportunity for CSPs to think about the role they play in the system-level approaches to reducing loneliness e.g. age-friendly communities, ABCD and neighbourhood approaches.
- Councils have a particular role to play in the gateway infrastructure (in particular the built environment as it relates to the Place standard). Potentially CSPs/community safety partners also have a role to play in the safety of the gateway infrastructure of transport too.
- Understanding community safety through an age-friendly lens is important too – SCSN's 'community safety experiences' research has a section on older people's experiences and perceptions of community safety.



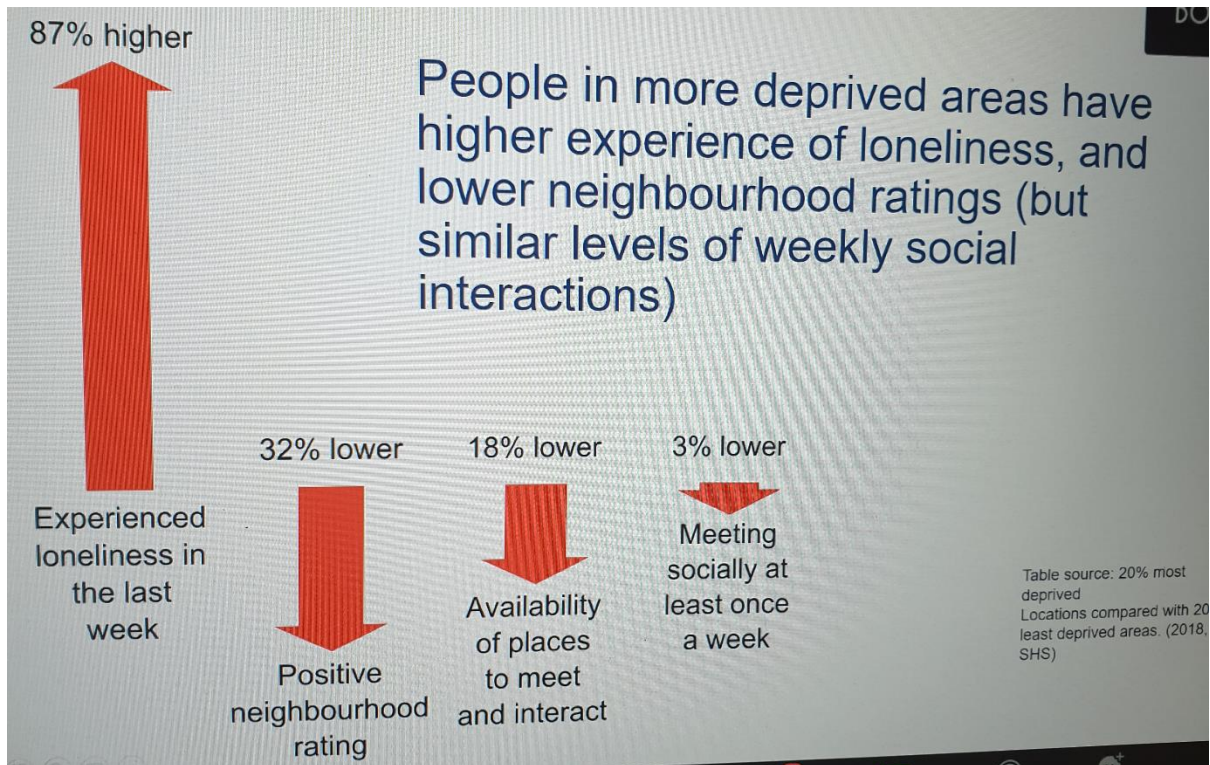
Ben Cavanagh from the Scottish Government shared some data about loneliness in Scotland and the impact of the Covid19 pandemic on loneliness in Scotland.

- People living with a long-term health condition, people living in socially rented housing and people living in the highest 20% of 'deprived' areas of Scotland had lower weekly social interaction than the Scottish average. They also felt 'loneliness in the past week' higher than the Scottish average.

- Women, people living in 'remote small towns', people over 75 years old and people aged 16-24 years old were more likely than the Scottish average to meet socially at least once a week; but were also more likely than the Scottish average to have felt loneliness in the past week.

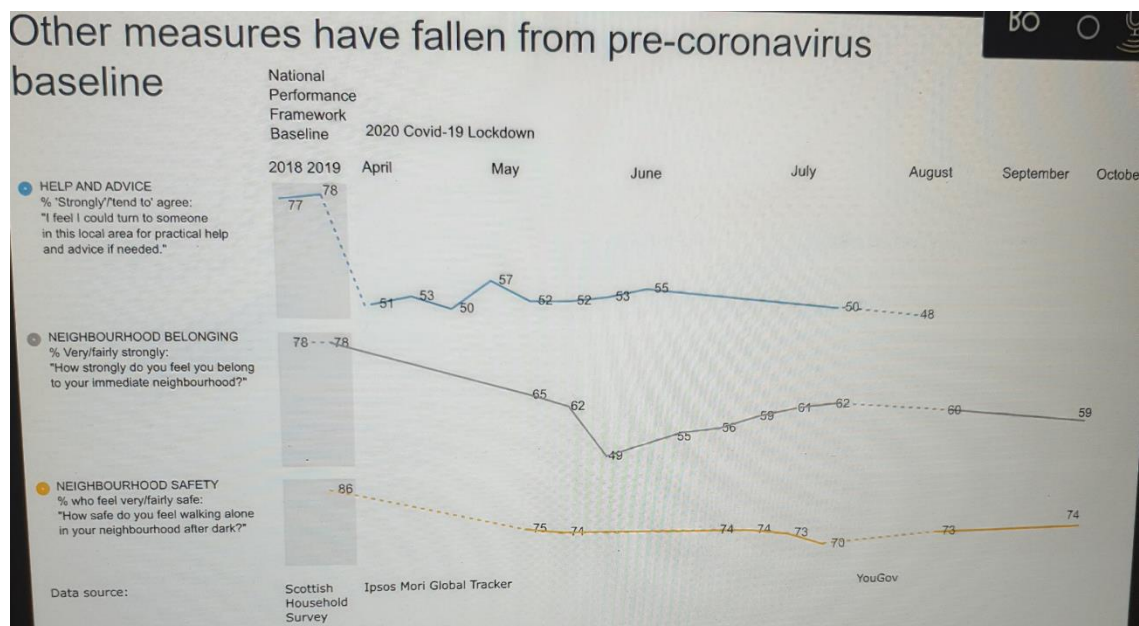


Compared to people living in more affluent areas, people living in more deprived areas have lower positive neighbourhood rating, lower availability of places to meet and higher experience of loneliness (despite having similar levels of weekly social interactions).



Loneliness in Scotland has increased as a result of the pandemic, according to studies. While the 2018 Scottish Household Survey found that 21% said they had felt lonely 'in the last week', this rose to 40% in the 2020 wellbeing survey.

Other measures have fallen from their pre-Covid19 baseline including relating to support in their local area, sense of belonging to their neighbourhood and how safe they feel in their neighbourhood.



The promising approaches framework gives some helpful action for national bodies and local ones:

- The targeted national and devolved dedicated loneliness strategies helpfully recognise the breadth of issues that impact upon and are impacted by loneliness, and pledge action across a range of governmental portfolios, some of the bigger structural issues underpinning loneliness – such as inadequate social care support to enable people to live independently, lack of transport and poverty – are side-stepped.
- Furthermore, across all the strategies, there was a lack of significant new funding.
- Loneliness agendas tend to be focused on older people and fewer areas are developing all-age agendas for loneliness. This is despite evidence showing that younger age groups experience loneliness too *and* this is not correlated to the amount of social interaction they have.
- At local level, action on loneliness requires commitment from elected members and officials, as well as from health system and public health leaders to produce a whole system response including proactive commissioning of effective interventions.
- Local leaders need to make a firm strategic commitment to tackling loneliness as a priority. They need to identify the system level approaches that will be most effective for building a community-wide response in their area, and then they should use the Promising Approaches framework to assess what assets already exist in the community that can play a role in addressing loneliness and where there are gaps to fill.
- Building the evidence base on loneliness remains a priority. We also need to better understand to what extent there are other measures that can be used as proxies for loneliness. Potential options include objective measures of connectedness, as well as other positive subjective measures, like confidence and self-efficacy. However, at present we do not know which ones are the best fit.