

# **Community Insights Loneliness in Kirklees**

## **Final Summary Report**

drafted by:

Helen Gilchrist on behalf of  
Kirklees Loneliness Strategy Group

2 July 2019

# Context

## Tackling Loneliness in Kirklees

# **Kirklees Joint Health and Wellbeing Plan 2018-2023 Priorities**

- Creating Resilient, Vibrant and Connected Communities
- Reducing Social Isolation

# Kirklees Health and Wellbeing Plan 2018-2023

## Shared outcomes with Kirklees Economic Strategy

Our shared outcomes are the pillars that support our overall vision for Kirklees to be a place that combines a strong, sustainable economy with a great quality of life. Our shared outcomes are:

-  Children have the **best start** in life
-  People in Kirklees are as **well** as possible for as long as possible
-  People in Kirklees **live independently** and have control over their lives
-  People in Kirklees live in **safe, cohesive communities** and are protected from harm
-  People in Kirklees have aspiration and **achieve their ambitions** through education, training, employment and lifelong learning
-  Kirklees has **sustainable economic growth** and provides good employment for and with communities and businesses
-  People in Kirklees experience a high quality, **clean, and green environment**



# Kirklees Loneliness Strategy Group

Understanding the Lived Experience  
of Loneliness in Local Areas to Inform  
Local Partnership Action

# Methods

- Methodology development by Jill Greenfield and Helen Gilchrist
- Interview schedule developed by Helen Gilchrist, Sharron McMahon, Community Plus Early Intervention and Prevention Managers, Nicola Boothman
- Groups set up and facilitated by Community Plus Early Intervention and Prevention Managers and Community Coordinators and supported by Helen Gilchrist and Ruth Devine (January – March 2019)
- Groups were analysed by Helen Gilchrist
- Report was drafted by Helen Gilchrist

# Methods

4 Focus Groups – one in each community hub area of Kirklees – Dewsbury , Huddersfield, Batley and Spen, Kirklees Rural that took place January – March 2019.

## Key questions:

- What does loneliness mean to you?
- What activities / services or other things **in your local community** help reduce loneliness?
- What can make it hard for people to connect with each other **in your local community**?

# Results – Group Composition

- **Dewsbury** – mixed gender group of 6 adults with experience of their own or other people's loneliness, peer support and volunteering, linked to improving mental health and overcoming barriers linked to physical disabilities. Two additional people shared insight via email as they could not attend on the day.
- **Kirklees Rural** – mixed gender pre-existing group of 10 people that meet on a regular basis around a shared activity. The group was predominantly aged 50 plus with one member in their 20's. There was 1 male in the group.



# Results – Group Composition

- **Huddersfield** – Mixed gender pre-existing group of 9 people, 8 of which were female. The group meet weekly as part of a social group.
- **Batley and Spen** – All male pre-existing group of 6 who meet on a regular basis to socialise and participate in activities.

# Results

## **Setting the Scene**

What Loneliness Feels Like

Some examples across the groups

# What loneliness feels like



*'..beyond any realms of reality.. the worst feeling in the world..that makes you question your own existence and desire to be alive.'*

*'..you can be lonely in a room full of people, feeling like you are on the outside looking in, not feeling part of it..'*

*'..it hits you like a bomb in your mind, what am I going to do now that I am on my own?'*

*'.. no- one to support you when you are ill, no-one to make you a cuppa..'*

*'...you can know a lot of people, but not have a 'best friend', someone to confide in..'*

# Results

## Summary of Findings for Each Group

# Dewsbury – mixed male and female group

## Contributing Factors to Loneliness

### Individual

- Not feeling accepted, feeling anxious, feeling judged, difficulties connecting about things that matter, lack of confidence and self belief
- Inability to get out/ interact due to physical or sensory impairment and barriers

### Societal

- More distrust amongst people, people don't say 'hello', people don't know their neighbours, people are too busy to talk, children don't play out, too much concrete and not enough green open space

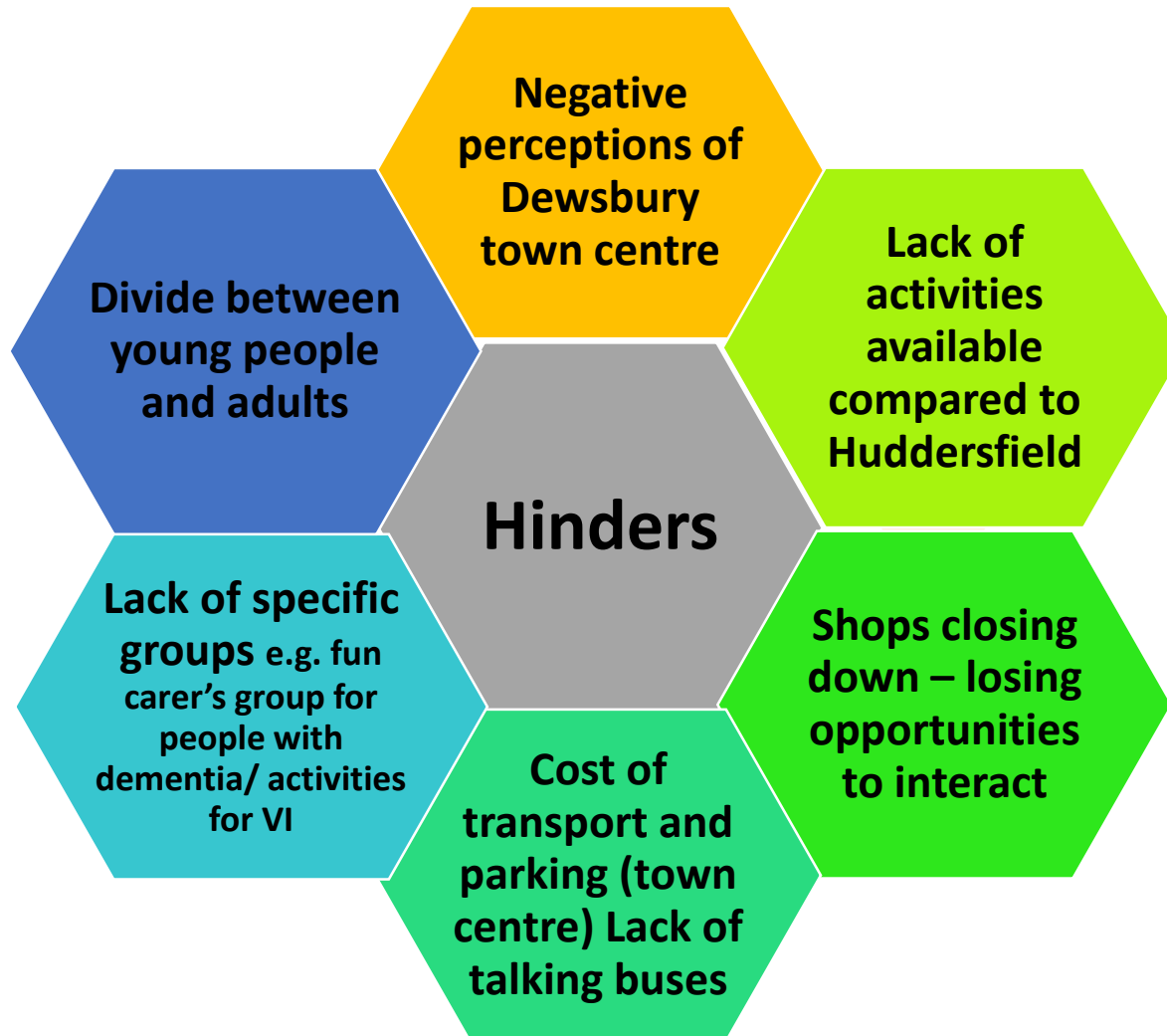
### Life course

- Divorce, bereavement, being a carer, serious mental health issues such a suicide/ post traumatic stress disorder

# Dewsbury – What Helps Tackle Loneliness



# Dewsbury – What hinders interaction



# Kirklees Rural – Mixed but mainly female group

## Contributing Factors to Loneliness

### Individual

- Shyness, feeling intimidated, lack of confidence or motivation to join a group on own, focussing on family rather than maintaining other friendships, being caught in a cycle of not interacting, 'becoming your own worst enemy'

### Societal

- People don't know their neighbours, modern living is making it difficult for people to get to know each other with people working longer, modern technology is stopping people from talking to each other face to face, it's all done over the internet or on social media.

### Life course

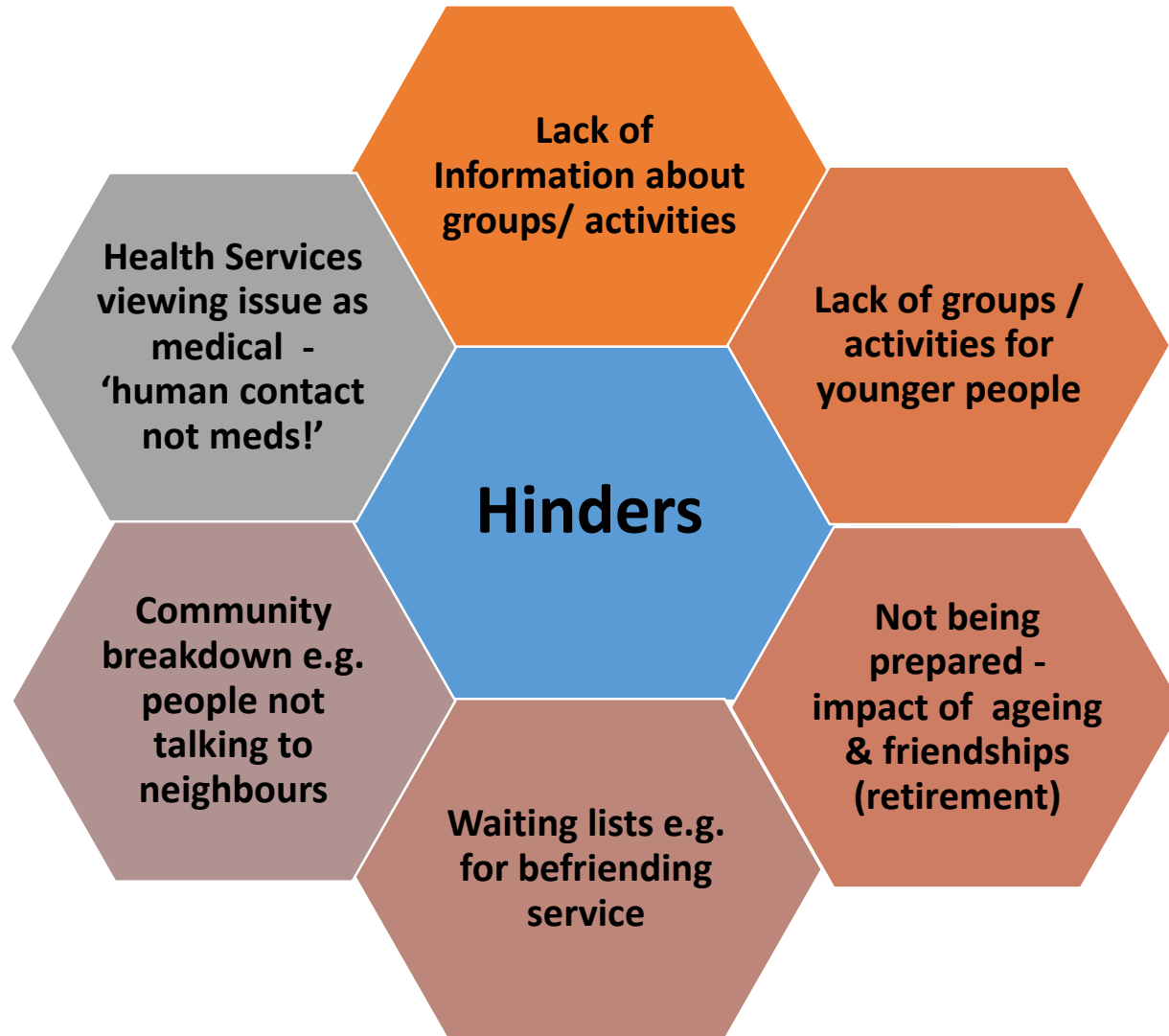
- Bereavement, being a carer, retirement



# Kirklees Rural- what helps tackle loneliness



# Kirklees Rural - What hinders interaction



# Huddersfield – Mixed but mainly female group

## Contributing Factors to Loneliness

### Individual

- Lack of confidence, feeling trapped in vicious cycle of feeling low and spending time alone, feeling like an 'outsider looking in', lack of willingness to take steps to start socialising, feelings at personal milestones and key calendar dates such as birthdays, public holidays
- Barriers to leaving home due to physical impairment or health issues

### Societal

- People not knowing their neighbours as much as they used to in the past, not knowing them well enough to rely on them or ask for help

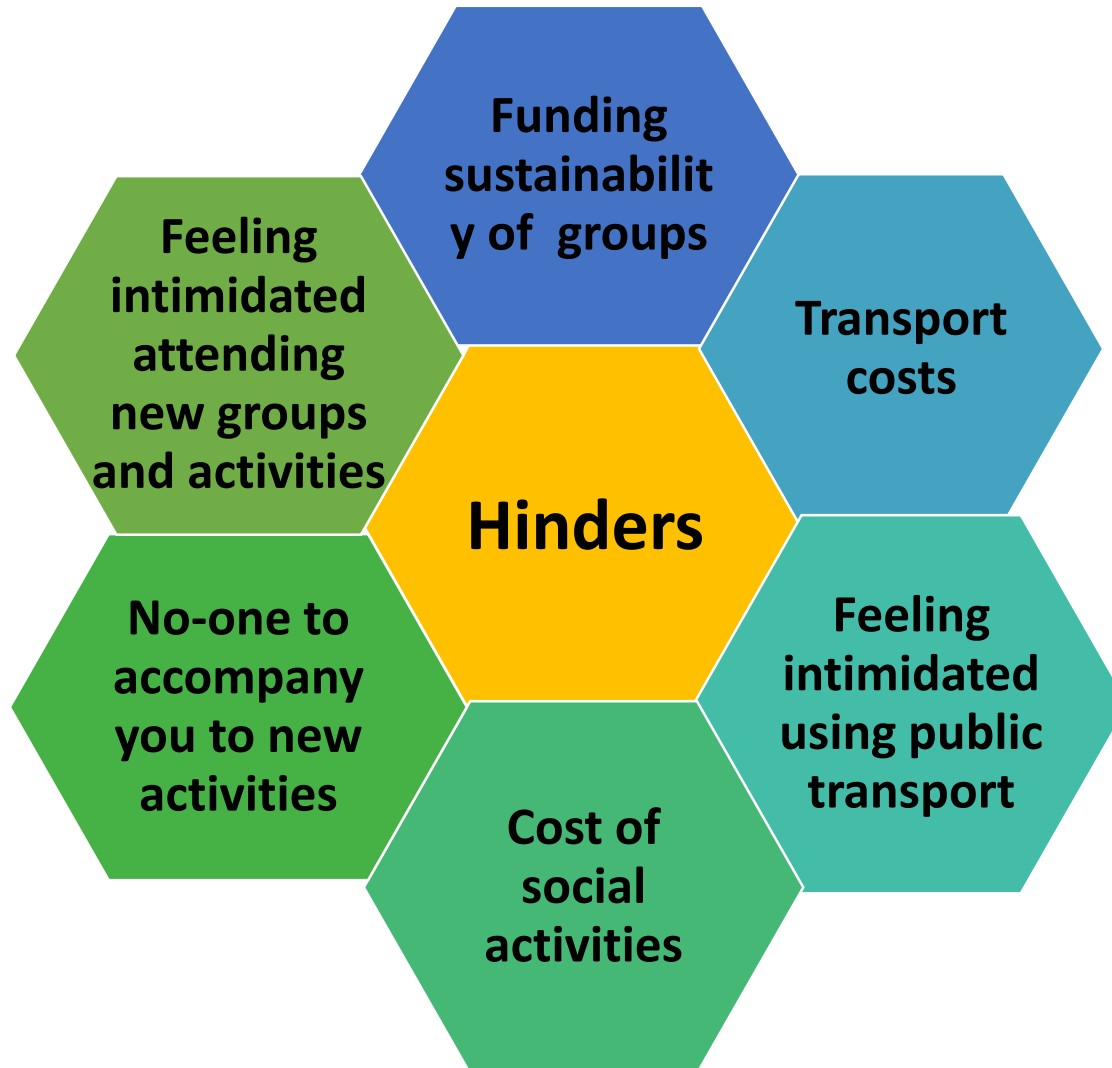
### Life course

- Divorce, bereavement, moving house, serious health events such as heart attack and period of ill health

# Huddersfield - What helps tackle loneliness



# Huddersfield - What Hinders Interaction



# Batley and Spen – Men's group

## Contributing Factors to Loneliness

### Individual

- Depression, feeling bullied, having health issues (such as a back problem), living alone, lack of family support, being on your own makes you antisocial, anxiety, phobia of being around people.

### Societal

- People too busy to support and interact

### Life course

- Episode of ill health

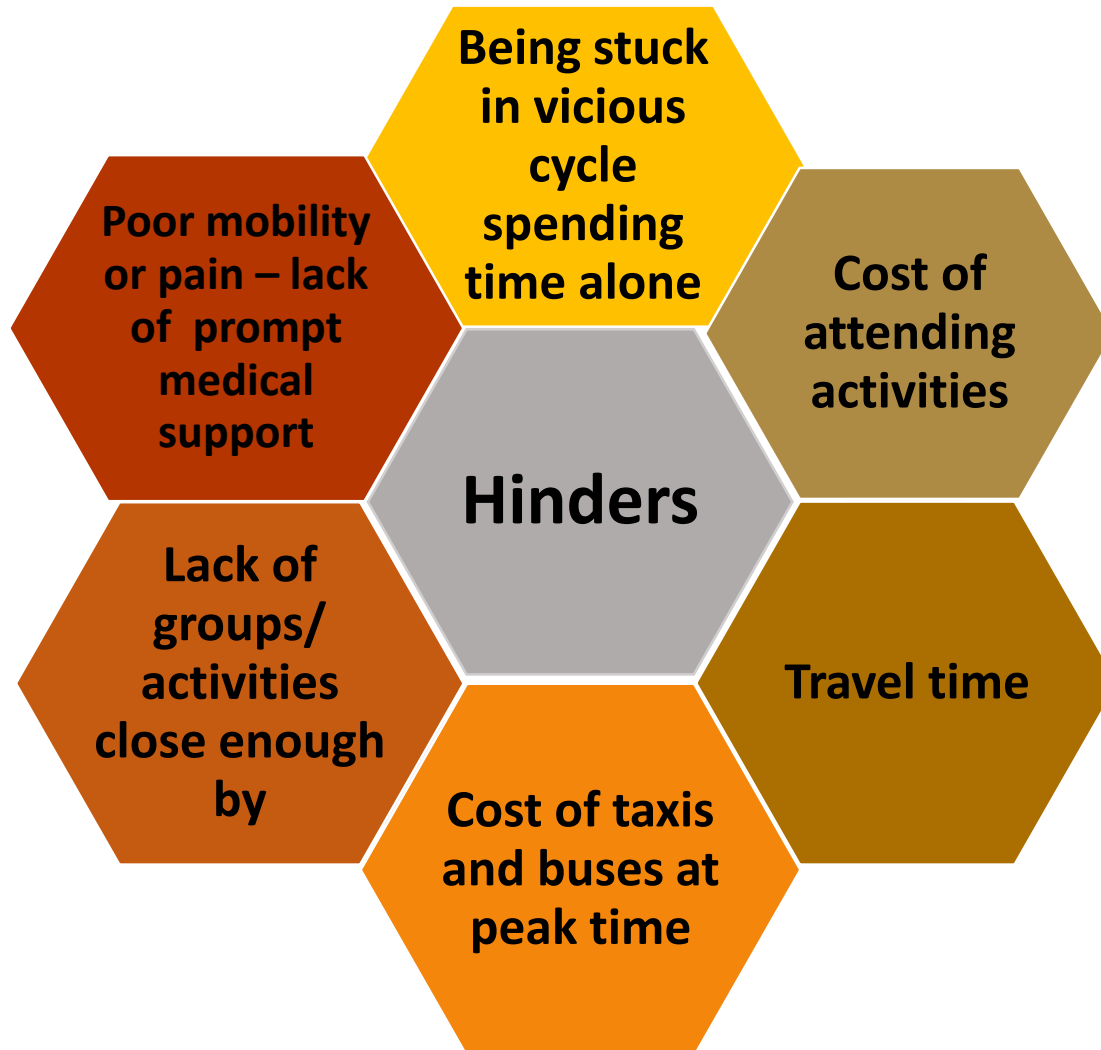
# **Batley and Spen – Men's group**

## **What helps tackle loneliness**



# Batley and Spen - Men's group

## What hinders interaction





# Summary of Themes Across Groups

## Contributing factors

- All of the groups highlighted the link between mental health and loneliness (depression, anxiety, lack of self confidence/ self belief)
- Some of the groups discussed the barriers linked to disability and impairment that can increase the risk of being lonely
- All of the groups highlighted changes in society that are contributing to loneliness, all mentioning lack of neighbourliness
- The groups identified different life course triggers based on personal experience which included: moving house, divorce, retirement, becoming a carer, bereavement, episodes of serious ill health (such as heart attack)

# Recurring Themes Across Groups

## Things that help tackle loneliness in local community

- Support and encouragement to overcome (physical and/or emotional) barriers to participate in new activities or groups
- Being accompanied to attend groups or new activities initially to build up confidence
- Awareness of and availability of local groups and activities in local area to suit range of needs/ interests
- Groups/activities that are accessible financially and physically
- Groups that are welcoming and open access

# Recurring Themes Across Groups

## Things that hinder social interaction/participation in local community

- Being 'stuck in a rut' or vicious cycle of not wanting to interact – with no encouragement to break this
- Lack of accessible, appropriate activities/ groups close by
- Cost of participating in activities
- Travel costs

# Comments Specific to Individual Groups

## Dewsbury

Members of the group highlighted the negative perceptions of the local area as a key barrier – although one participant disagreed with that. This included perceived safety in the town centre, particularly in the evening, the perceived divide between young and older people. They also mentioned the lack of activities available compared to Huddersfield.

However, lack of activities ‘close by’ was also mentioned in other groups.

The group also talked about the benefits of having a dog (gets people out of the house and interacting with other dog owners)

# Comments Specific to Individual Groups

## Kirklees Rural

The Kirklees rural group were the only group to highlight the need to plan for retirement to ensure that social networks can be maintained.

The rural group also mentioned a lack of activities for younger people.

This group mentioned the waiting list for befriending services as a barrier.

# Comments Specific to Individual Groups

## Huddersfield

Whilst there were many themes from the Huddersfield group that were similar to the other groups, the power of meditation and connecting with self was mentioned.

The group also mentioned feeling intimidated by using public transport.

# Comments Specific to Individual Groups

## **Batley and Spen**

The group mentioned the importance of meeting people to engage in creative and practical tasks.

# Acknowledgements

A big thank you to:

- All those who took the time to participate in the discussion groups, for their honest sharing of experiences and ideas.
- Community Plus for setting up and facilitating the groups – in particular: Andrew Dolman, Tracey Allison, John Thompson, Nigel Addy, Gemma Jenkinson, Rhona Kelly, Claire Baldwin, Hannah King, Yusuf Pandor, Shane Hussain
- Other staff who supported the project – Sharron McMahon, Ruth Devine
- The group leaders who enabled and supported access to their groups