

Cumbria County Council
Using the Adult Social Care
Outcomes Toolkit (ASCOT) in
Cumbria

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Hidden Citizens

The aims of the study were to identify:

- a) How service providers and communities recognise loneliness amongst older adults.
- b) The availability and use of recent research or tools to help policy makers & practitioners to improve their outreach to the loneliest.

The research was conducted in 3 stages:

A review of over 120 systematic literature reviews investigated different aspects of loneliness, social isolation and exclusion in later life, with a focus on risk factors for loneliness, and pathways into and out of loneliness.

From the key issues identified a semi-structured schedule was developed for 4 focus groups and 16 telephone interviews: Older People (n=9); CEO's of Charities (n=4); Service Research & Data Managers (n=3); LA Commissioners & Managers (n=5); Community Development Manager (n=1); Domiciliary & Residential Service Providers (n=9) & Carer Support Staff (n=8).

The results of these two stages were then compared and analysed

Our findings confirmed:

There are discernible pathways into loneliness in older age, which generally commence with a loss, usually of a partner, friend or family member who had provided the person with a primary affective bond or intimate relationship.

The loss of this relationship was subsequently compounded by the experience of other losses, for example the loss of familiar neighbourhood contacts and networks, which in turn lead to a loss of self confidence and identity.

Loneliness, as a subjective experience, is therefore related to but distinct from the social conditions of isolation and detachment

The experience of loneliness has a detrimental impact on health and wellbeing outcomes, and is associated with increased risk of morbidity and mortality

Dissemination and Future Development



- The Campaign to End Loneliness held a workshop on **November 17th** to present these findings to interested services and commissioners.
- A final report and the workshop presentations and discussions will be available by the end of the year.
- Building on 'Hidden Citizens' a further study is under development. This study will comprise a **realist evaluation** (Pawson and Tilley 1997) of the design of a programme that is intended to increase rates of social activity and participation amongst the loneliest older people and a reduction in their experience of loneliness.
- **The research question is:** What scale, intensity and characteristics of an intervention or programme are required in order for it to impact effectively on unwanted social isolation and the experience of loneliness among older adults?

Objectives

- Map research capacity in local authorities
- Explore the infrastructure for research in local authorities
- Examine the impact or potential impact of Public Health joining the local authority portfolio

Response

- 108 responses received
- 68/70 different authorities
- All types of authority represented
- All regions represented

Infrastructure

- Preference for on-line learning
- Little support for academic qualifications
- Financial pressures on training and development
- Members of a wide range of organisations-SSRG and LARIA
- Go to places –ADASS, ONS, PSSRU

Conclusions

- Revealed some of the difficulties of the current situation
- Level of research competence required both quantitative and qualitative
- Effective use of decreasing resources requires sound evidence
- Time for a fuller review of roles, function and need?

Social Care Research in Practice

Service user research

At first workshop:

- 25 researchers and 25 thematic ideas!
- Ranging from disabled people as carers to social work education
- Agreement for a service user research consortium

At second workshop:

- Shaping Our Lives to co-ordinate a consortium
Theme – monitoring and evaluation
- Hub of research with local spoke projects

Outcomes

1. Funding enabled researchers to come together
2. A diverse and highly skilled group
3. Many years of lived experience
4. Extensive sharing of practitioner experience
5. A range of projects covering the cycle of social care
6. An equal partnership
7. An application that would not have been possible as individuals.

What did we learn?

- We should have started a year earlier!
- We need capacity building support
- The process is not accessible to user-controlled organisations/consortiums
- This is just the beginning of further collaboration
- The combination of academic, practice and lived experience is unique and valuable.