Laying the Foundations for Change

Scoping Report: Making Prosocial Places through Housing and Social Infrastructure

Dr Jon Bashford

Rahim Daya

BREAKING **BARRIERS** INNOVATIONS

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

About Breaking Barriers Innovations

Breaking Barriers is an independent project with the principal aim of radically improving the delivery of public services across the UK for maximum social impact. We are Chaired by Lord Patel of Bradford OBE and our Research Director is Dr Jon Bashford.

Breaking Barriers works to achieve this by creating an open space for debate in which public service professionals, innovative suppliers, experts and other stakeholders devise new public service models based on innovative place-based working.

Specifically, we act on a place-based agenda. Tackling the paradox of place where too many people talk about it, but not enough act on it.

We work with local authorities, NHS bodies, voluntary and community services, and private industry to deliver bespoke solutions to complex problems at a truly local level.

To do this, we focus on a series of key themes:

- **social determinants of health**
- **place-based solutions**
- **systems change**
- **innovation**
- **policy development**

About the Authors

Dr. Jonathan Bashford

Dr Jon Bashford is Director of Research at Breaking Barriers Innovations and an experienced senior manager, researcher and teacher with over 25 years' experience working in health, social care and education in the public and voluntary sectors. Jon comes from a practitioner background as a Registered Mental Nurse and has been able to successfully bridge the gap between research, innovation and practice.

Jon has been a Director at the Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust where he had the lead responsibility for the development of the Communities, Rights and Inclusion programme known as CORIIN. Prior to working in Leicestershire, Jon was Associate Head at the International School for Communities, Rights and Inclusion (University of Central Lancashire) where he managed a wide range of research projects, learning and teaching programmes and commercial consultancies at regional, national and international levels.

Jon is particularly known for his work on mental health, drug and alcohol use, offender health and equality, human rights and organisational change. This has led to him being appointed an advisor on various government initiatives, including the national Prison Drug Treatment Strategy Review Group, which produced the Patel Report. In 2008, Jon was granted the award of PhD for his work on institutional racism and organisational change.

Rahim Daya

After graduating with a BA in Political Economy from the University of California Berkeley, Rahim joined Breaking Barriers Innovations as a programme manager in 2018. He has provided vital research support on a range of market intelligence and community research projects across the NHS, notably in Solent, Cornwall and West Lancashire where the Playbook programme was developed.

The authors both work for Breaking Barriers Innovations (BBI), which provides research and consultancy on place-based solutions to a variety of health and social care problems. The contents of the report and the recommendations are based on independent research by the authors and are intended to inform wider public debate rather than represent any particular policy direction of government departments.

Contents

Addendum to report: Acknowledging the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic

This report was completed before the onset of the Coronavirus in the United Kingdom brought about large-scale social distancing measures and with it a new understanding about the vulnerabilities of those who are socially isolated. Prior to the Coronavirus pandemic, the health harms and risks of social isolation and loneliness were being increasingly recognised and responded to. The work which has informed this report was directed at preventing those harms and risks through a cross-sector approach that seeks to bring together national government, local authorities and related stakeholders to enable them to create more socially connected places.

The evidence has not changed, the health harms and risks are real. But they have taken on a new urgency in the midst of the pandemic with the subsequent withdrawal and change of focus for many of the services that would normally provide support for those who are socially isolated and lonely. Furthermore, as people have been restricted to their homes, only going outside to buy food and exercise, new sections of the population have become at risk of social isolation and loneliness including those living alone. As people have spent longer at home and only going out in their local area, the quality of their housing and the design of the neighbourhood they live in has played an important role in their overall health and wellbeing. In particular, the pandemic has highlighted two challenges that relate to the residential built environment:

- Digital connectivity

- Air quality

Digital Connectivity

During the lockdown period, there were a number of positive initiatives that were developed through grassroots programmes to connect neighbours the like of which were few and far between before the crisis. These include street-level WhatsApp groups that have helped to forge new relationships and assisted the most vulnerable, community groups such as local yoga groups and befriending groups operating through virtual platforms like Skype and Zoom, and friends and families making special efforts to stay in touch with those who may be living alone or are isolated. Additionally, Visiba Care, one of the eleven providers selected by NHS England to deliver video consultations during the Covid-19 pandemic, reported new user logins spiked by 5,927% However, large sections of the population have not been able to benefit from these initiatives owing either to poor digital literacy or connectivity. It is more important than ever that high levels of digital connectivity are a standard measure for any new settlements that are designed in the months and years to come in the same way we now take for granted water, heat and electricity.

Air Quality

BBI has previously drawn the link between poor housing and the development of chronic respiratory conditions, such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), emphysema, and bronchitis in its HOMES report. During the Coronavirus pandemic, NHS England marked those with severe lung conditions as clinically extremely vulnerable while those with any lung conditions were marked as clinically vulnerable. There has already been a preliminary study suggesting that multiple markers of poor air quality are associated with increased numbers of COVID-19-related deaths across England, after adjusting for population density.

Furthermore, analysis has shown that of the coronavirus deaths across 66 administrative regions in Italy, Spain, France and Germany, 78% of them occurred in just five regions, and these were the most polluted (Ogen, 2020). These studies build on the evidence that shows a strong positive relationship between air pollution and fatalities from the SARS outbreak in 2003. This evidence places added emphasis on ensuring that new homes are designed to reach high scores (61+) on the Indoor Air Quality rating system whilst redoubling pressure on transport and planning teams to work closer together to ensure appropriate walking and cycling routes for residents. It is important to acknowledge that some of those most at risk from poor air quality and/or catching the virus are also vulnerable to isolation under lockdown conditions.

This evidence highlights why it is crucial to adopt an integrated approach to the design and development of new settlements as proposed in the 2nd recommendation of this report. Bringing together local decision-makers including Directors of Housing, Transport, Adults and Children's Services, Economic Development, Neighbourhoods, Finance, Environment and Public Health as well as

NHS experts will ensure a broad range of critical thought is brought to the table.

We believe that once the current crisis is over this report and the recommendations it proposes will be as relevant and important as before the crisis began. At the time of writing, thousands of new cases are being reported daily and much remains unknown about what restrictions will be in place after lockdown is eased and what a new normal might look like. There may be a need to revisit this report and the resulting recommendations in the future when we can fully appreciate the impact and ensure that all the lessons are learnt. In the interim, we hope that this report offers useful insights and can be used to help inform MHCLG's strategy for addressing the needs of these increasingly vulnerable population groups.

1.
Introduction

This report sets out the findings from a scoping exercise in support of the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) commitment to developing its departmental strategy to address social isolation and loneliness. In particular, MHCLG were seeking to develop an approach for local authority planning and infrastructure staff that will assist them to make Prosocial places a reality.

The term 'prosocial' refers to behaviours that benefit others or society as a whole, for example helping others, volunteering, altruism. It has recently been used on the context of loneliness in urban environments and concerns that modern urban living can add to alienation and social isolation amongst residents (Corcoran and Marshall, 2019).

Social isolation and loneliness are not the same thing: social isolation refers to the quantity of social connections, while loneliness, which can arise from social isolation but is not dependent on it, is the subjective experience of being alone.

The most commonly used definition of loneliness, which is the one used by the Jo Cox Commission and the ONS is the one first suggested by Perlman and Peplau (1981):

"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."

People, both young and old, can become cut off from social networks due to factors such as the loss of mobility, unemployment or health issues. Isolation can involve staying at home for lengthy periods of time, having no access to services or community involvement, and little or no communication with friends, family and acquaintances.

There are many reasons that people can find it difficult or be prevented from leaving the house and having contact with other people in their communities, including long-term illness, disabilities, transport issues, unemployment and economic problems. Some individuals may be physically able to go out and meet people but are inhibited from doing so due to issues such as depression, being a carer or bereavement. These issues can become barriers to forming and maintaining social networks and can lead to loneliness and isolation.

Research has linked social isolation and loneliness to higher risks for a number of physical and mental health conditions, including high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity and anxiety. However, people who engage in meaningful, productive activities with others tend to live longer, boost their mood, and have a sense of purpose.

The environment where people live including the type and density of housing, amount of green spaces and infrastructure such as accessible transport links can all influence the degree to which people can feel isolated and lonely. Urban design can actually cause isolation and loneliness due to factors such as 'dead places', which are

areas that have no cultural or distinctive place making features and there is increasing recognition of the importance of the interrelationship between design of space and sociability (Imrie, 2018).

Rural areas can also be blighted by lack of transport that can increase social isolation and loneliness and the decline of coastal towns with consequent loss of employment and local community resources can also act against the experience of a place as being Prosocial.

The Government's 2018 strategy for tackling loneliness (HM Government, 2018), extended the portfolios of Ministers at key government departments to include loneliness as part of its commitment to a cross government approach to the issues. MHCLG commissioned Breaking Barriers Innovations (BBI), which was already working with Health Education England and local health and social care partners in Portsmouth on social isolation and loneliness, to scope the development of an effective approach to creating prosocial places.

The additional work undertaken by BBI as part of the scoping exercise has included:

- Desktop research

- 8 one-to-one interviews with expert stakeholders

- A Roundtable discussion with thirty national and local stakeholders from across local authority planning, NHS health, social care and the community and voluntary sector.

In addition, BBI have reviewed the existing work programme in Portsmouth to identify common themes and structures concerning the built environment, in particular how learning from the Portsmouth work programme can be transferred to the local authority planning context and for new settlements. The Roundtable brought together representatives from Government, local authorities, the NHS, the third sector and the private sector to explore what is required in the design of healthy places and to consider areas of best practice (See Appendix A for a list of the Roundtable attendees). The three areas below were the key themes discussed at the Roundtable:

- **Defining: what are prosocial places** - what are the current barriers to the delivery of prosocial places and what

evidence is there an existing practice in the delivery of the built environment that does not consider the social impacts on local populations.

- **Designing: what interventions could promote social integration in new settlements** – focus on examples of best practice and innovative thinking on how places can be designed to promote social integration. The aim was not to limit this to just physical infrastructure but also on the application of digital tools and prevalence of employment opportunities. New settlements are likely to exist for hundreds of years, so design is crucial in fostering positive social relationships, and it is helpful to understand what universal aspects of design can be applied in all instances of planning for new settlements as this is far easier than trying to retrofit these elements once settlements have been built. These universal design aspects could be cited in the guidance as a starting point for all places to consider in the creation of new settlements.

- **Delivering: how can these interventions be delivered at an affordable cost to the system** - presenting affordable examples of how prosocial places have been delivered. An important consideration is around the evaluation of interventions to measure how successful they have been in preventing the onset/prevalence of social isolation in communities. These examples could be used to inform locations where MHCLG could conduct deep dives as part of a wider needs analysis.

1.1 The Portsmouth programme to address social isolation and loneliness

BBI and Health Education England (HEE) are leading a series of pilot projects on place and the social determinants of health across England. The pilots seek to provide a facilitated and comprehensive approach to the place-based development and delivery of health and social care services that can address the social determinants of health and wellbeing.

BBI have been working with NHS Solent Trust and Portsmouth City Council as one of the pilot areas with a focus on social isolation and loneliness. The overall aim is to support workforce development and planning across health and social care, so that frontline practitioners, managers, and commissioners are confident and skilled in understanding the relationship between social isolation and loneliness and the health and wellbeing of local residents. In particular, it is focused on a family first approach to preventing harms associated with social isolation and loneliness.

A small steering group has overseen the programme comprising representation from NHS Solent Trust, Portsmouth City Council (Adults and Children and Young People), Public Health and Health Education England. A total of 28 interviews have been completed including frontline practitioners in health and social care (adults, families and children), managers and lead officers and volunteers from within community and voluntary organisations. In addition, approximately 15 local residents from community associations, day centres and faith organisations have contributed their views through interviews and a focus group.

The report and action plan from this work (Connecting People and Place: An action plan for addressing social isolation and loneliness in north Portsmouth) is currently being reviewed by the Steering Group, with a view to embedding the action plan in current local strategies for improving health and wellbeing. The report and action plan are also being used, alongside learning from the other Playbook programmes to inform the approach to place and workforce development that Health Education England is seeking to include in the NHS People Plan. Some of the main findings from the report include:

- Despite renewed emphasis on loneliness as a result of the government's strategy, local area approaches are not uniform and can sit at the periphery of strategies to improve health and social care.

- There are many projects that provide examples of best practice, but these are largely focused on the elderly and there is much less attention to social isolation and loneliness amongst younger people.

- The needs of vulnerable groups, such as BAME communities, care leavers, people with serious mental illness and the disabled, who are at greater risk of social isolation and loneliness, should be addressed more explicitly as part of a local strategy to address social isolation and loneliness.

- While there is awareness amongst frontline health and social care workers, this is largely driven by experience and there are limited opportunities for formal training on social isolation and loneliness, in particular effective interventions.

- Barriers to addressing social isolation and loneliness include:

- Identifying people at risk – there is inconsistent use of metrics and local data and intelligence to support this

- Access to local resources – the impact of austerity has a profound impact on local, community-based resources and many have either been withdrawn or have been relocated to the city centre, which has produced unforeseen problems with access and transport.

- Early help and prevention – people tend to reach crisis or have developed chronic health problems that are either caused by or made worse by being socially isolated and lonely.

- Competencies and capacities – the health and care workforce lack specific competencies in addressing social isolation and loneliness and capacity can be restricted for interventions that are designed to support greater social connectedness.

- Working with communities – local residents and service users can feel at the edge of decisions that impact on the social connectedness of places and the voluntary and community sector are struggling to maintain the levels of local services that they once provided.

- Care pathways – a lot of services are providing sign posting but there is less attention to the need to provide longer-term case coordination and management for people who are socially isolated and lonely. For example, people may have developed multiple problems and have a variety of needs but the care pathways are not integrated to address these holistically.

The report concludes that there are two main ways in which social isolation and loneliness are addressed: functional interventions, which seek to provide a service for people and structural interventions that are designed to support the degree to which people can develop social connectedness naturally. The evidence base is that the latter is more effective in addressing social isolation and loneliness but there is less attention to these kinds of interventions. Structural interventions are needed that include greater support for local community organisations and a stronger focus on the quality, design and stewardship of local places.

1.2 Aims and objectives of the MHCLG scoping exercise

The MHCLG scoping exercise was designed to build on the work from Portsmouth, including engagement with local authority planners and officers responsible for urban design and infrastructure. This was intended to be preparatory work to assist MHCLG in determining their approach to encouraging a prosocial design and planning by local authorities. The ambition for this toolkit was to assist local planners, designers, commissioners and service providers in ensuring that both the physical environment and community structures can help to foster connections and empowerment, and so reduce social isolation and loneliness. The specific aims of the scoping exercise were:

- Promoting urban design and placemaking, including the delivery of effective social infrastructure

- Encouraging Government policy on creating healthy places to be realised

- Embedding evidence in professional practice

The objectives, which have been used to structure this report include:

1. Setting out the strategic and planning context for addressing loneliness and social isolation, including ways in which the national loneliness strategy is being implemented at departmental and local levels.

2. Identifying a conceptual framework for understanding the approach to loneliness and social isolation from the perspective of quality in place-based design and development, in particular how this can be used to influence areas of new build and regeneration.

3. Providing a framework for cross-disciplinary competency and skills that can be used to build an outline evaluation and/or development of guidance for frontline practitioners.

4. Making recommendations on how MHCLG can take this work forward.

1.3 What's in a name? Defining Prosocial places

The term 'prosocial' generally means behaviour that benefits others or society as a whole, for example helping others, volunteering, altruism. It has recently been used on the context of loneliness in urban environments and concerns that modern urban living can add to alienation and social isolation amongst residents (Corcoran and Marshall, 2019).

MHCLG colleagues stated that the focus of this work could be defined as "being able to contribute towards the creation of cohesive communities" and the term "prosocial" was currently the working phrase. MHCLG colleagues welcomed feedback on the term because establishing a shared language was vital. MHCLG were also keen to understand whether it would be helpful to develop guidance on best practice for local authorities and the wider sector.

Participants at the Roundtable and a few of stakeholder interviewees commented that the term "prosocial" was not a familiar term to them despite the fact that many had worked on social isolation issues for a number of years. In fact, there was a lack of understanding about what the term meant,

and concern that using it to describe a new approach and/or guidance could result in a focus on one size fits all model, rather than promoting a holistic strategy that is adaptable to a local area. Participants also thought that the terminology used to describe the core concepts should encourage collaborative approaches rather than single organisations working in isolation.

The lack of understanding around the term highlights the absence of a shared language around social isolation and place-making. Some participants questioned why the term "social" could not be used instead as this term would be easier for organisations and the general population to understand and identify with and would not create further barriers.

The term "toolkit" was also questioned by a stakeholder interviewee, with one calling it a "turnoff phrase" because of the prevalence of its use in the public sector. Instead, terms like "action plan" or "activation pathway" were suggested as being more suitable.

The importance of terminology can be seen in the example of "extra care" housing which has become associated with people needing nursing assistance in their homes. In fact, extra care housing promotes independence for frail and elderly people living in their own homes. While care services might be a part of extra care housing, the term refers to tailored accommodation to suit the needs of vulnerable people.

There was an overwhelming consensus that whatever term is used to describe the approach, it must be geared towards achieving long term cultural change that is based on evidence.

2.

The Strategic and Planning Context

The current strategic and planning context for addressing loneliness and social isolation comes from the cross governmental strategy for tackling loneliness, which itself is a response to the call for action from the work of the Jo Cox Commission. The increasing policy importance of this agenda is in recognition of the fact that social isolation and loneliness is the cause of significant health and social harms including major costs to the UK economy:

• Disconnected communities could be costing the UK economy £32 billion every year (Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness, 2017).

• Loneliness costs UK employers £2.5 billion per year (Jeffrey et al., 2017)

• Weak social connections are as harmful to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010).

• £1 invested in tackling loneliness can save society £1.26 (PHE and LSE, 2017)2.1 Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness

2.1 Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness

Before her untimely death on 16th June 2016, Jo Cox set the foundations for a commission to work with charities, businesses and the Government to increase the public's understanding about loneliness and improve policy responses (Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness, 2017). The Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness continued her work and brought national attention to the issue of social isolation and loneliness.

The Commission worked with charities and businesses and engaged with a number of different population groups vulnerable to loneliness, including men, older people, carers, refugees and asylum seekers, people with disabilities, children, young people and their parents. The Commission reported on the number of studies on the prevalence and impact of loneliness on the elderly but noted that there was a lack of literature and understanding of the effect of loneliness on other population groups.

The Commission called for action in the following three areas:

National leadership:

- A UK wide Strategy for Loneliness across all ages

- A nominated lead Minister

- A Family and Relationships Test for new policy

Measuring progress:

- A national indicator on loneliness across all ages

- Measures of loneliness included in major national studies

- Annual reporting on loneliness

- A programme to develop the evidence around 'what works' in tackling loneliness

- Easy-to-understand messages to help individuals connect with others and avoid loneliness

Catalysing action:

- An innovation and spread fund, to:

- Stimulate innovation

- Provide seed funding for communities

- Scale-up and spread promising approaches

2.2 A connected society: Government's strategy for tackling loneliness

Following the Commission's report, in 2018, the Government launched its first loneliness strategy and announced the addition of loneliness to several ministerial portfolios across government departments. The key strategic objectives included:

- Reducing stigma by building the national conversation on loneliness, so that people feel able to talk about loneliness and reach out for help.

- Ensuring relationships and loneliness are considered in Government policymaking.

- Improving the evidence base on loneliness, making a compelling case for action, and ensuring everyone has the information they need to make informed decisions on what to do to tackle loneliness.

The Government's strategy also set out the following commitments:

- Supporting all local health and care systems to implement social prescribing connector schemes across the country by 2023: encouraging health and social care professionals to refer patients to nearby support programmes that inspire friendships and reduce feelings of loneliness.

- Building a network of employers to take action on loneliness: an Employer Pledge promise from businesses and other organisations to provide help and support to lonely employees - 21 organisations have signed up, including Sainsbury's, Transport for London, British Red Cross and the National Grid.

- Increasing the number of spaces for community use: working with local groups to pilot ways to utilise space - including an additional £1.8m to test how community spaces can support social connections.

- Extending ministerial portfolios to include loneliness: e.g. Department for Transport, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and MHCLG - this builds on the Department for Health and Social Care and Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport portfolios, which already include loneliness. Departments are required to report on their work in their annual Single Departmental Plans from 2019/20.

- Working in partnership with Royal Mail to trial 'Safe and Connected': an innovative digital pilot, which enables postal workers in Liverpool, Whitby and New Malden in Kingston-upon-Thames to call in on lonely older people who live on their delivery rounds and agree to participate. These clients can be directed to friends, family, neighbours or local support services for further help.

- Development of a communications campaign: the strategy commits to a campaign to explore how best to drive awareness of the importance of social wellbeing and how to encourage people to take action through easy-to-understand messages and information.

A loneliness cross-Government team was also established, led by Baroness Barran MBE, Minister for Civil Society and DCMS.

2.2.1 Cross government strategy on loneliness annual report 2019

The government's first year annual report on its loneliness strategy was published in January 2020 (HM Government, 2020). The report sets out a wide range of achievements that have taken place over the last year including:

- Establishing a cross Ministerial working group for loneliness

- Progress in 60 strategy commitments including social prescribing, training of frontline staff and uptake of the national campaign on loneliness toolkit, 'Let's talk loneliness'

- A variety of pilot projects exploring different aspects of loneliness including at different life transition points

- A network for employers, which is due to publish best practice in 2020

- Statutory guidance for schools on the inclusion of loneliness in RSE

The report highlights the following issues going forward in 2020:

- The need for more information and communication about loneliness and the activities which are available to reduce it.

- The need for further policies targeted at tackling children and young people's loneliness – young people report struggling with loneliness more than any other group, but targeted interventions and policies are currently relatively sparse.

- The need to tackle loneliness through place – strengthening community infrastructure and assets, and growing people's sense of belonging.

Amongst the 60 strategy commitments, some are of particular relevance to this scoping exercise:

- Continuing evidence building – much of the focus on evidence has been on the attributable health harms from loneliness, there has been less attention paid to the evidence base regarding prosocial actions taken at the level of planning and infrastructure.

- Mobility Centre pilots - Seven of the thirteen Mobility Centres in England are trialling an extension to their services – known as Mobility Centre "Hubs" – where individuals who cannot or can no longer drive are given support to access public transport.

- Open Data pilots – the three pilots (Elmbridge District Council, Hull City Council and Blackburn with Darwen Council) are investigating ways of collecting information about what activities and services are locally available to address loneliness. This includes exploring how stakeholders

from a range of sectors can be motivated to capture this data and keep it up to date. It is unclear to what degree the pilots are addressing data and information needs amongst town and city planners and related infrastructure staff, but this is potentially an area that have direct relevance.

- Sharing Local Authority's good practice – The Reaching Out report (LGA and NALC, 2019) seeks to provide guidance on how local authorities can create the right structure and conditions to address loneliness. The guide contains a number of actions, but of most relevance are those related to transport, where there is a call for local commissioners to work closely with planning teams to develop and maintain an age-friendly approach to local transport including ways to make transport more accessible considering the full range of environmental factors that affect less-mobile people, for example parking bays being located close to buildings and increased drop-off and pick-up bays to improve accessibility.

- Community Spaces Funding - £1.8 million has been allocated to

community spaces projects to help improve community spaces where people can connect and co-operate.

- Businesses using their space for communities – publication on various case studies is due in 2020 but there is scope to consider the way in which business is engaged by planners in ways that will enhance social connectedness and use of business spaces in new developments for communities.

- ACRE targeting loneliness using Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs funding - The Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) network consists of 38 rural councils across England and is using the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs funding to address loneliness across its strategic priority areas; this is alongside £3 million of funding to renovate village halls.

- Rural roundtable - Lord Gardiner has held two roundtables to discuss how best to address loneliness in rural areas, this is an area of likely interest and difference for MHCLG in considering new developments in rural areas and the additional challenges that these can produce.

- Partnerships with transport providers - The government has been working in partnership with the transport sector to highlight the issue of loneliness and support the sector to take action, and bus companies have been trialling a range of initiatives over this year to support social interactions on local transport.

It is important local transport lead officers understand how to incorporate this into their plans and take advantage of learning from these initiatives.

- The Future of Urban Mobility Strategy – published in 2019, the strategy sets out a proactive approach to address disparities in access to travel and to ensure emerging innovative mobility services and technologies are made accessible and inclusive by design.

- Research into the impact of community-led housing and cohousing solutions – MHCLG allocated £125,000 funding for research into housing solutions to tackle loneliness and commenced a research pilot to: evaluate the value for money and impact of housing interventions on loneliness; understand the impact of community-led housing and co-housing

on reducing loneliness across all ages; and explore best practice in housing schemes that promote social cohesion. The final report was due to be delivered by July 2020, and it will be important to use learning from this in development of guidance to support socially connected places.

- Community cohesion as a measure of design quality is included in garden communities assessment and support. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is working with Homes England and NHS England on embedding health and wellbeing principles into the planning and delivery of new homes. Garden Communities bids were assessed using design criteria which included creating 'healthy places', modelled after NHS England's 'Putting Health into Place' guidance involving an approach to 'connect, involve, and empower people and communities'. The Department will work with successful applicants to ensure that the criteria set out in the prospectus are embedded in project delivery.

- Sport and physical activity for people over 55 - Sport England has formed a new partnership with Carers UK to better understand the needs, attitudes, motivations and barriers faced by lonely, unpaid carers around being active. £100,000 of funding will help them better understand how to use sport and physical activity to tackle loneliness. In addition, Sport England are scoping with the British Red Cross opportunities to support older, lonely, inactive people currently transitioning out of crisis. Planners need to understand how to assess this for new settlements and provide spaces that will support development of sport and physical activity for different age groups.

- Utilise the loneliness measure across relevant projects and programmes – local planners need to know how to use the loneliness measure and the implications for practice and standards.

2.3 New homes target

In 2017, the Government made a commitment to delivering 300,000 new homes a year in England by the mid-2020s and the data from MHCLG shows that 241,130 new homes were completed in 2018/19, which is more than at any other time since records began in 1991. However, the risk of meeting this target is that these new settlements are focused on the numbers of dwelling rather than the surrounding environment - this concern was raised by stakeholder interviewees in the scoping exercise.

In order to meet the target, there is a need to develop taller buildings that are packed more densely together but this can come at the detriment of social and neighbourhood spaces, including parks, green spaces, and cafes.

Portsmouth was cited by one stakeholder as an example of where the Local Authority Planning Team were trying to understand the unintended consequences of building a number of apartment blocks in the city without paying attention to the social spaces in the surrounding environment.

Local Authorities across the country are under pressure to meet targets but not enough consideration is being given to how social infrastructure fits in with new settlements. Roundtable participants reported that some local authorities find it difficult to quantify how much social infrastructure is required to support the number of settlements being built and how to fit this into an already densely populated built environment.

During one of the stakeholder interviews, it was suggested that if pressure existed for both private developers and local authorities on the delivery of social infrastructure in the same way it does for the delivery of settlements, results could be delivered without too much impact on profitability for the private sector.

In 2019, the Conservative Manifesto for the General Election made a commitment to involve local communities in the design of new developments:

"We will ask every community to decide on its own design standards for new developments, allowing residents a greater say on the style and design of developments in their area, with local councils encouraged to build more beautiful architecture."

This could be a significant step towards

actively engaging with local populations in the design of places. Alongside this, it will be important to create awareness among the general population about how certain design aspects can help to prevent the onset of social isolation and loneliness. There have been efforts to develop such programmes at a grassroots level and these are discussed below.

2.4 Garden villages and Health New Towns Programme

NHS England's Healthy New Towns programme was launched in 2015 and has worked in 10 demonstrator sites across the country at different stages of development and with diverse health needs to support healthy placemaking. The work from this programme has informed revisions of the National Planning Policy Framework and the National Planning Practice Guidance.

The 10 principles for health placemaking are as follows:

1. Plan ahead collectively

2. Assess local health and care needs and assets

3. Connect, involve and empower people and communities

4. Create compact neighbourhoods

5. Maximise active travel

6. Inspire and enable healthy eating

7. Foster health in homes and buildings

8. Enable healthy play and leisure

9. Develop health services that help people stay well

10. Create integrated health and wellbeing centres

There are currently 48 Garden Towns and Villages. These communities do not have a single template, but the main characteristics are as follows:

- a purpose built new settlement or large extension to an existing town

- a community with a clear identity and attractive environment

- a mix of homes, including affordable and self-build

- planned by local authorities or private sector in consultation with the local community

These communities are also aiming to develop job opportunities, attractive green spaces, transport infrastructure, including roads, buses and cycle routes, community infrastructure, schools, community and health centres, and a plan for long-term stewardship of community assets (Homes England, 2018).

Homes England's Garden Communities and NHS England's Healthy New Towns initiative are encouraging signs of the Government's commitment to create naturally healthier places.

2.5 NHS Long Term Plan

There is clear alignment between the wider Government strategy on loneliness and the priorities of the NHS Long Term Plan (NHS England, 2019), for example:

- More joined up and co-ordinated care – work to address and prevent social isolation and loneliness must be part of a fully integrated and co-ordinated approach that does not view each encounter with the health service as an unconnected, single episode of care.

- More proactive healthcare based on population health management and predictive prevention techniques – predicting and preventing health harms requires a more sophisticated means of identifying population groups at risk and being able to match this with effective and robust interventions.

- More choice and control – greater differentiation in the type of support and interventions offered and the ways in which people choose to enhance their own health and wellbeing, means recognising the different contexts and circumstances in which people live, including the absence or breakdown of social connections.

Supporting and enabling greater social interaction and cohesion will promote the aims of the NHS Long Term Plan by preventing health harms associated with social isolation and loneliness and help stem the rising tide of demand for services to treat ill health, for example:

- Support for people in crisis - those with less or no support are more likely to require a more intense level of service and/or hospital admission following a crisis.

- Supporting the NHS Comprehensive Model of Personal Care for people diagnosed with dementia – by considering the increased risks of cognitive decline for older people at risk of dementia associated with social isolation and loneliness.

- Reducing unnecessary lengths of stay in hospital - earlier recognition of the ways in which social isolation impacts on hospital discharge and how to plan for this at an earlier point in the care pathway.

2.6 Evaluating Preventative Investments in public health in England

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and Public Health England (PHE) published this report in May 2019 to help improve the evaluation of preventative investments by local authorities and wider public sector (CIPFA & PHE, 2019). This comes at a time when the move towards Integrated Care Systems across England is imminent and the case for prevention has been emphasised in the NHS Long Term Plan.

The report outlines some of the potential benefits of a clearer and more thorough evaluation of preventative investments being to:

- Support better decision-making on the use of resources by providing a consistent framework to evaluate the costs and benefits across different organisations;

- Bring longer-term costs and benefits to light, as these often lack visibility;

- Increase transparency and accountability for how resources are currently invested;

- Improve incentives to invest in prevention relative to acute interventions across local systems, including where costs and benefits fall on different agencies or sectors.

The report emphasizes the key role of finance to enable preventative investments becoming more of a reality. There are a number of existing tools and resources currently in the field that could be used to improve the evaluation of these investments including:

- The use of cost-benefit analysis (CBA) methodology to provide a balanced evaluation of the financial and economic costs and benefits of preventative investment,

- The Green Book/New Economy model is well-suited to judging the comparative merits of such investments and allows a whole-system view to facilitate decisions on a place-based basis,

- Using International Public Sector Accounting Standards Board (IPSASB) guidance and the principles of the Prudential Code would allow for consideration of the impact of such investment, particularly on long-term financial sustainability, and would enable comparative assessment of investment across time and place (CIPFA & PHE, 2019).

The report concludes with calling for pilot areas to help test the viability of using the proposed existing tools in practice to demonstrate the effectiveness and offer a case of best practice in preventative investment in the future.

2.7 The Care Act

The Care Act 2014 (DH, 2015 4) aims to improve people's quality of life, delay and reduce the need for care, ensure positive care experiences and safeguard adults from harm. Local Authorities are required to consider the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of the individual needing care, and to assess the needs of carers. They must also ensure the provision of preventative services and carry out their care and support functions with the aim of integrating services with those provided by the NHS or other health-related services. The Care Act calls for:

- A shared vision and culture of cooperation and coordination across health, public health, social care and Local Authority roles, e.g. housing.

- A whole systems- and outcomes-based approach to meeting the needs of individuals, their carers and family based on a robust understanding of their needs, now and in the future.

- Solutions to meet local needs based on evidence of 'what works'.

- Services that will address the wider determinants of health, e.g. housing and employment.

- Integrated health, social care and housing solutions to make the best use of the budgets across the NHS, local authorities and their partners to achieve improved outcomes for less, e.g. drawing on the Better Care Fund to support service transformation.

Eligibility thresholds under the Care Act for adults with social care needs and carers include consideration of developing and maintaining family or other personal relationship. In particular, assessments should address whether the adult is lonely or isolated and do their needs prevent them from maintaining or developing relationships with family and friends.

3.

The Conceptual Framework for Quality

The conceptual framework for equality has been designed from feedback by stakeholders and participants in the scoping exercise and consideration of the learning from Portsmouth. The framework identifies core areas of focus that are believed to be significant for quality. These are based on the factors that enable natural social integration:

- Evidence and data

- Promoting grassroots programmes

- Transport links

- Neighbours and the importance of social interactions

- Cohousing and intergenerational living

- Micro-funding and community assets

- Measuring social value and ensuring sustainability

- A sustainable whole system approach

- Building resilience and pride

- Technological interventions

- Education and employment opportunities

- Evaluating programmes

3.1 Enabling natural social integration

Participants and interviewees were asked to consider what promotes social integration by drawing on their experiences. It was acknowledged that while some design elements that work in one locality may not work in another, the aim was to explore what aspects of design were universal. They were also asked to consider what innovations they would like to see in the design of new settlements that does not currently feature in the thinking of Local Authority planners and architects.

In addition, BBI was interested in understanding how digital innovations and good education and employment opportunities in a local area could improve social integration and reduce loneliness and how these relate to urban design and planning.

Participants and interviewees agreed that new homes should be designed with the aim of making them "naturally socially integrated". For example, in Portsmouth, there are a number of services that act as a buffer against the negative impacts of social isolation and loneliness, including social prescribing and befriending groups. Participants commented that these are necessary to combat instances where social isolation has taken "root" in a local area, for example, breakfast clubs, faith groups, sports and recreation, employment opportunities, volunteering opportunities, civic participation and accessibility to green spaces.

One stakeholder interviewee noted that making healthy places naturally, requires input from local residents to shape their surrounding environments. For example, the existence of a green space in a neighbourhood may signal to a Local Authority that this space will promote natural social interactions as young people might engage in recreational activities or adults may be able to walk their dogs together. However, if this space is frequented by gangs and drug dealers, then it may have the opposite effect of keeping people in their own homes. This example emphasises the importance of involving local residents in shaping their surrounding environments and feeding back observations to local authorities.

Roundtable participants agreed that it would be helpful to understand what happened naturally in healthy communities in the past in order to understand what is missing now.

3.2.1 Evidence and data

Research on social isolation and loneliness is not a new area and it is closely related to other bodies of work on social capital, social network theory and wellbeing. However, literature is patchy, with some areas better evidenced than others. Much research to date has focused on older people, and although there are ideas about what causes social isolation and loneliness and what might help to reduce it, there is less information on how these combine and play out over time (HM Government, 2018).

The lack of evidence, particularly at a local level, can create difficulties for local authorities, but there may be scope within the Joint Strategic Needs Assessments to evaluate levels of social interactions.

Some localities have used health infrastructure assessments as the first step towards gathering relevant data for understanding social isolation on a local level. This revealed potential tensions between market-driven infrastructure (transport routes, access to the high street and other amenities) and community-use infrastructure (playgrounds and green spaces). However, it can be difficult for planning teams in local authorities to gather the right evidence to support the building of Prosocial places, as there are few metrics to measure the monetary cost or savings to be made on recreational and social spaces as healthy place-makers.

It was suggested that the lack of frameworks for evaluating social isolation on a local level was not a problem for local authorities, but the real issue was the lack of funding to act on the existing evidence base. Whilst the Government strategy had resulted in some funding becoming available, participants did not consider it to be enough to offset previous funding cuts. For example, voluntary and community services have been key in preventing and buffering against the negative impacts of social isolation and loneliness, but austerity measures over the last decade had seen these services recede.

One interviewee felt that better evidence, with agreed and uniform metrics, gathered by local authorities would be beneficial. It was also suggested that more could be learnt from what works well. For example, with improved use of comparative datasets, as well as a shared language, local authorities could work more collaboratively to assess areas at the least risk of social isolation and identify the positive characteristics of these places.

3.2.2 Promoting grassroots programmes

Participants at the Roundtable and stakeholder interviewees identified some of the encouraging work being done at a grassroots level. However, more work needs to be done by local authorities to better understand the impact of community projects on local populations and efforts must be made to increase support for these vital projects. There was some concern that local authorities can create barriers to community voices being heard.

For example, it is perceived to be important to establish processes that enable grassroots programmes to grow rather than potentially raising local resident objections that may create barriers to their development and funding. One stakeholder interviewee thought that some public planning consultations tend to be conducted on a limited basis, with completed design plans being presented to local residents so they have little opportunity to influence these.

A better approach is thought to be one that effectively includes local communities in a co-design process for new services to prevent the community voice being lost. The integration of communities into the planning of services and even the design of new settlements can have a positive impact on their wellbeing and help to reduce social isolation and loneliness.

One participant commented that the Building Connections Fund (around £11.5m), which is funding grassroot programmes across England, is seeking to tackle loneliness. This is the first time that national funding has been made available to tackle loneliness and a range of services are being supported, including:

- Providing new community transport links to support those most at risk of social isolation.

- Implementing innovative digital solutions that enable elderly people and young care leavers to connect with their peers.

- Making one to one support accessible for LGBT+ people suffering from loneliness.

Around £2m has been dedicated to 22 projects to support young people in the most deprived (30%) areas of England or young people who are carers, unemployed or precariously employed, experiencing bereavement, have a disability or long-term health condition and/or have been in the care system (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2018). Roundtable participants viewed this as a positive effort to empower grassroots programmes and believe that the Government should focus on pro-social places and programmes that are grassroots led.

3.2.3 Transport links

Participants at the Roundtable and stakeholder interviewees highlighted the importance of transport, as well as the impact of good planning and settlement design. People need access to places where they can get together and they need transport that enables them to get to places where they can connect with others. Therefore, good transport infrastructure is vital for maintaining social relationships, including looking after families, seeing friends and going to work or school. But for some people, the lack of suitable transport links and infrastructure can act as a barrier to making and maintaining social connections.

One stakeholder interviewee commented that housing and transport teams at a Local Authority level often operate in silos, and in designing new settlements, transport links and infrastructure can be an afterthought.

Moreover, in some areas, car-based transport has been prioritised over public transport routes, but there is a cost of creating such a system in a local area as the number of roads and car parks can impede on places for social interactions. Therefore, it is crucial to consider and integrate sustainable transport infrastructure and planning for settlements at an early stage.

3.2.4 Neighbours and the importance of social interactions

While designing and planning new settlements is essential, roundtable participants also identified building social relationships as being vital to combatting social isolation and loneliness, particularly taking the time to know your neighbours. But one stakeholder interviewee commented that the design of some streets and buildings prevent this kind of connection e.g. large estates can prevent opportunities for incidental connections between neighbours.

The "Look out for your neighbours" campaign delivered by West Yorkshire Harrogate Health and Care Partnership was cited as a positive work programme. The initial piloting of the campaign from March 2019 to June 2019 resulted in:

- 46,000 acts of kindness in neighbourhoods across Bradford district and Craven; Calderdale, Harrogate, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield.

- 75% of people engaged in new activities to look out for their neighbours as a result of the campaign content and the widely distributed neighbourhood pack tailored to each neighbourhood.

- 72% of people believe that the campaign made a positive difference to the wellbeing of their neighbours.

(West Yorkshire Harrogate Health and Care Partnership, 2018)

3.2.5 Cohousing and intergenerational living

Cohousing was identified as being a way to promote natural social interactions. Cohousing communities are intentional communities, created and run by their residents where each household has a self-contained, private home as well as shared community space (UK Cohousing Network, 2019). These shared community spaces give residents a chance to cook, read, and eat together. Increasingly this concept is being included in local authorities' plans and the Government's Community Housing Fund has also made £163m available to support the delivery of homes by the community-led housing sector (Homes England, 2018).

Several roundtable participants commented that there are a number of perceptions and fears about cohousing amongst the general public and local authorities, with schemes being labelled as "communes" or "cults", including concerns about an increase in vandalism, littering, noise, disturbances, loitering and drug use. In reality, these fears are unfounded as these communities are created and run by residents who have a vested interest in ensuring their success and once people understand what cohousing is, there is support for it.

Despite the benefits of cohousing, the delivery of these schemes can be a challenge. There is a need to have enough space for cohousing schemes and the trend of building higher apartment blocks closer together in an already dense built environment is a more profitable investment. One stakeholder interviewee noted that it would be difficult to measure the benefit of a socially vibrant community when conducting a cost-benefit analysis of the viability of a cohousing scheme.

Intergenerational living refers to a blend of age ranges living together in a single household or collection of households in a community. Intergenerational living is a positive approach as it promotes interacting with and relating to people of different ages and backgrounds.

As with cohousing there are misconceptions about intergenerational living. The most common of these is that intergenerational living refers to babies and young children sharing the same space as those aged 65+ or for school children to visit care homes to learn more about the older generation.

In fact, increasingly, intergenerational living is occurring out of necessity as young adults cannot afford to move out of their parents' homes. A report published by Civitas revealed that the proportion of people aged 20 to 34 who live with their parents has risen from 19.48% in 1997 to 25.91% in 2017 (Bentley and McCallum, 2019).

3.2.6 Micro-funding and community assets

Both roundtable participants and stakeholder interviewees highlighted the impact of micro-funding and importance of community assets. One participant mentioned that funding ranging from £1,000 to £10,000 could unlock all kinds of potential for community projects. If these funds were available, it would provide an incentive to initiate a range of local projects and to scale up those that were already having positive impacts. For example, the Government have been seeking to develop community assets through the Pocket Parks programme - £1.35m has been made available to create new pocket parks or renovate run-down existing ones.

Pocket parks are small (often 0.02 hectares but up to 0.4 hectares), green public spaces that provide communities a place to relax or engage in recreational activities. This programme aims to "put communities and their partners in control of the management of green spaces of value" (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2019).

The 2018 programme awarded funding to 198 communities to create new pocket parks or refurbish existing parks. The programme makes available £15,000 for the development of new parks and £25,000 for the renewing of existing parks. These are relatively small pots of money but can have a positive social benefit for local communities. This is an example of how small pots of money can help to revitalise community assets and there was a desire to see more of these types of funding programmes going forward.

An example of a community asset at a local level that has an impact on social isolation is the food bank in Portsmouth. The food bank was not just frequented by those in need of a food parcel, but also by members of the community who would drop by to chat, play board games, and partake in refreshments together. Some of these residents highlighted that coming to the food bank was the highlight of their week as it gave them something to look forward to. This is an important community asset in the neighbourhood that helps to prevent the onset of social isolation by providing a space for people to come together for a couple of hours a week to see their friends and meet new people.

However, the food bank had to close for four months over the summer because of a lack of funding and staffing capacity. This comes at a social cost as the people who use the space at the food bank as the chief source of their social interactions are in danger of becoming socially isolated during this period.

An application for micro-funding could help to meet the capacity requirements to keep the food bank open during the summer months and keep this community asset strong for the local community.

3.2.7 Measuring social value and ensuring sustainability

Measure social value is an important question because there is a lot more that the private, public and third sectors can be doing to create more value from public funds. However, there is no doubt that measuring social value is challenging, but key areas to consider include:

- Being clear about impact – all projects/ programmes should be clear from the start about exactly what impact they are looking to create and by figuring out where they want to end up. This will help considerably with determining what needs to be measured.

- One size does not fit all and don't reinvent the wheel - the Social Value Taskforce has developed a set of Themes, Measures and Outcomes (TOMs) for measuring social value as a minimum reporting standard, but these can also be tailored to report on a specific area, sector or business. Minimum requirements are crucial of course, not least for comparison purposes, but bespoke tools can create new possibilities for measuring impact (The Social Value Portal, 2019).

3.2.8 A sustainable whole system approach

Roundtable participants and stakeholder interviewees were asked about examples of best practice delivery they had come across in their respective localities as well as effective ways of evaluating interventions enabling savings to be made to the system. Effective collaboration and joint working between Local Authority services – town planning, transport, housing, social care, etc – were identified as being crucial to designing healthy and sociable places.

A broad approach would ensure a wide range of thinking is applied and limit the risk of siloed approaches developing. Participants also suggested that collaborative funding championed by the Local Authority could ensure that different strands of expertise contribute to the design of new settlements. However, one interviewee commented that while many local authorities are well-intentioned in talking about place-making and trying to work more closely with colleagues both internally and externally, in reality collaboration and joint working has been difficult to instigate and sustain.

Several participants also commented that there needs to be long-term thinking about how the generations of tomorrow will live and move. However, the allocation of road space is still a major theme for planning teams and little attention is given to future modes of travel.

3.2.9 Building resilience and pride

A resilient community consists of the population within it and the wider structures and systems that the community is part of i.e. human (social) assets (e.g. a cohesive and connected population), and structural assets (e.g. the natural and physical environment). Therefore, building community resilience must be considered alongside individual resilience, as the two are mutually dependent. The wider economic and environmental system also plays a vital role in determining the supportive conditions for growth and resilience, for any community.

Connections between community members, both formal and informal is essential to enhance a community's ability to identify and draw on collective assets. This can enhance the sense of ownership and self-sufficiency within a community to embed and sustain change. This can be achieved through taking part in activities that enable social interaction and meaningful participation, for example, volunteering in the local community can contribute to enhancing health and wellbeing, reducing social isolation and loneliness.

Volunteering and community-based physical activity e.g. health walks and regular access to green and blue spaces, have been shown to enhance physical, social, as well as environmental outcomes across all population groups and, as such, also contribute to strengthening resilience and increasing pride in communities. Having opportunities to volunteer is widely acknowledged as being a powerful way to combat social isolation.

A study of the experiences of people who volunteer found that over three-quarters (77%) of 18-24 year olds said volunteering made them feel less socially isolated (McGarvey et al., 2019). While it is important to enable individuals to strengthen their resilience skills, resources and capabilities, it is also necessary to recognise that this alone will not eliminate the effects of poverty or other inequalities, which are often determined by structural conditions.

Therefore, it is essential that resilience strengthening approaches work alongside existing strategies addressing underlying determinants of health. Building resilience in vulnerable or at risk adult populations also necessitates more targeted approaches to address specific needs, and recognising that those with lower resilience resources may be more likely to miss out on opportunities to participate in universally provided programmes. Approaches towards strengthening resilience need to ensure that universal resilience building programmes do not widen existing health inequalities. Increasing personal capacities, alongside addressing wider socio-economic determinants of health and creating conditions supportive of resilience is essential (Davis et al., 2019).

Methods such as asset-based community development, asset-mapping exercises and participatory-based approaches, underpinned by partnership-based working and the principles of coproduction represent useful tools for building community capacities to enhance community resilience.

3.2.10 Technological interventions

There is an important role for technology to play in enabling grassroots programmes to fight social isolation and loneliness. An example of a digitally focused intervention is the Tribe project, which is currently being piloted in rural areas of Shropshire and Dorset. This can be accessed through a mobile application and works as follows:

- Individuals in need of support can use the app to search for and select people in the community who can help them. Alternatively, individuals can create a post for a specific need not currently listed.

- Those wishing to support people:

  - Get a DBS check done through the app to become an approved, paid support provider and engage in training programmes through the app to provide them with the necessary skills to help those in need of support.

  - Can volunteer their time and skills on the app for people to search for. They can also select opportunities to help those who have created posts.

- Project leads for grassroots community service programmes can post about what their programmes offer to create awareness in the local community.

- Councils can create posts with opportunities for volunteers and care professionals while also building awareness about grassroots programmes offered in the local community that service users can use.

The Tribe project has multiple benefits in helping to tackle social isolation and loneliness. Creating social interactions between volunteers and those in need of support provides both parties with company and adds to their network.

When the app is used by the elderly, it can promote independence in the home, which builds resilience and confidence - important characteristics to help prevent loneliness. The app also empowers and creates awareness for grassroots community projects in a local area, which can provide incentives for groups to start an initiative in the knowledge that people in the local community can be informed about it.

There are a number of similar apps on the market and these innovations can help to enable natural social integration.

Participants and interviewees also expressed interest in exploring the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and predictive technologies in feeding into the design of new settlements. At present, there is little/no evidence that local authorities are using artificial intelligence at the planning stage to predict the varying degree of risk of social isolation with a number of designs for new settlements. A new digitally enabled tool, using data from existing locations could:

- Rank the risk of social isolation based on structure and design of the built and natural environment in existing similar settlements across the country by appraising:

  1. the style of design for housing/apartment blocks

  2. ease of access to local schools, hospitals, transport services, and green spaces on foot or by public transport

  3. the demographics of the people impact the risk of social isolation:

     - if a high percentage of the population in the new settlement is over the age of 65, will the risk of social isolation be lower if there are extra care units in the new settlement

     - if there is a large ethnic minority community, would an interfaith meeting space decrease the risk of social isolation

- Predict the effectiveness of adding structural elements to the design of a neighbourhood that may promote social inclusion by assessing whether:

  - the building of a café/football pitch/communal green space in between neighbouring estates impact the risk of social isolation. In some cases, it may promote the building of relationships between two communities, but there is also a danger of it descending into an area used for anti-social behaviour if not maintained.

3.2.11 Education and employment opportunities

An important part of creating belonging in a community is for an individual or family to feel confident in their long-term future in a given locality. Two key areas are suitable schools and education institutions for children and young people, and opportunities for employment for both young people and adults – as one participant noted, the sustainability of prosocial places is dependent on young people being able to envision their future in the places that they grow up in and for them to want to engage with their community.

There are a number of programmes focused on building a supportive school environment for children promoting positive health and wellbeing. School based health promotion approaches have been shown to enhance social and emotional development, cognitive skills, mental wellbeing and reducing depression and anxiety symptoms – potentially setting foundations for healthy behaviours, and healthy social and emotional development in later life.

Embedding whole-system approaches across schools, families, services, and local communities has been shown to reinforce skills in children beneficial for resilience (e.g. problem solving, communication and relationships skills), and may be of specific benefit to children who require more support.

In addition, providing community-based activities (e.g. sport, art, music, dance), offers the opportunity to participate and can build wider social networks, provide a sense of belonging, and benefit social capital.

Interventions need to be targeted to a child's appropriate developmental needs. For example, for an adolescent facing adversity, a joined-up resilience approach can be central to change, as it helps emphasise resources and assets available. Supporting the development of positive relationships with others, e.g. through peer relationships, positive mentors and role models, have also been shown to support building resilience in childhood. Employment opportunities for the working-age population is also important to retain people in a place and set down roots.

For many people, workplaces represent key settings for opportunities to enhance their wellbeing and resilience. Building capacities and coping strategies to better adapt to and manage stress and emotion, enhancing psychological adaptability, as well as approaches focusing on protecting health, strengthening wellbeing and social capital - are key. Improvements in personal capacities can have a wider positive impact on wellbeing, and physical outcomes for adults, as well as productivity and absenteeism in the workplace (Davis et al., 2019).

3.2.12 Evaluating programmes

The importance of evaluating programmes aimed at tackling social isolation and loneliness cannot be understated but participants stated that there is currently a lack of clear evaluation metrics to measure the impact of interventions in tackling loneliness. They acknowledged it can be difficult to quantify answers to key questions such as:

- Do people feel more in control of their lives?

- Do people have an increased sense of belonging within a neighbourhood?

A key area highlighted by participants was around measuring the effectiveness of social prescribing in tackling social isolation. It is important to evidence where GPs and nurses have more time and resources because of social prescribing. It is estimated that those who are socially isolated and lonely are 80% more likely to visit their GP but is vital to measure the impact of social prescribing interventions on GP attendance figures (Social Finance, 2015).

4.

The Framework for Cross-Disciplinary Competency and Skills

In designing the framework for cross-disciplinary competency and skills, we have chosen to focus on the relevant sections of the National Policy Planning Framework (2018) and the National Design Guide (2019). This is because the Framework and associated guidance is of high relevance to local authority planners and those responsible for urban design and infrastructure. The Framework encompasses specific actions that are intended to support health and wellbeing and strengthen communities. However, it does not explicitly cover social isolation and loneliness and therefore, the framework seeks to identify those aspects that are pertinent to this and could be potentially used more effectively to support the development of Prosocial places. The more recent National Design Guide does reference the importance of well-designed public spaces being social spaces with a widespread appeal. These spaces ought to accommodate people with different needs so that they may help to combat social isolation and loneliness.

4.1 National Planning Policy Framework

The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in 2018. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced. The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, which as three core objectives:

- an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure (2:8a);

- a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being (2:8b); and

- an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy (2:8c).

Each of the above objectives are relevant to the context of social isolation and loneliness, though this is not something that is made explicit in the framework. For example:

- social isolation and loneliness have significant impacts on the local economy, but it is not always understood how this relates to identifying and providing the right kind of infrastructure to support prosocial places.

- Supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities requires understanding about the ways in which the built environment and spatial planning impacts on the degree to which local residents can create and sustain natural social integration and cohesion.

- Community led and run assets are part of an effective approach to addressing social isolation and loneliness, but this is not always recognised as an environment objective as it more usually falls to social care and/or health systems to support community asset building.

4.1.1 The local development plan

The local development plan is the statutory basis for the start of decision making and the presumption in favour of sustainable development should follow from this (2:12). Local plans or spatial development strategies should contain strategic policies, the delivery of which can be supported though neighbourhood plans (2:13). The local plan should provide a positive vision for the future including a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social and environmental priorities; and a platform for local people to shape their surroundings (3:15).

The application of the presumption of sustainable development has implications for the way in which local communities are engaged in neighbourhood planning. For example, being positive means reflecting the aspirations of local communities, but the plan also needs to be achievable (2:16b).

Plans should be shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement between plan-makers and communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and operators and statutory consultees (3;16c).

It is a legal requirement of local planning authorities exercising their plan-making functions that the development plan must include strategic policies to address each local planning authority's priorities for the development and use of land in its area (2:17). There are four areas listed in the NPPF that have direct relevance for strategic policies and workforce competence in addressing social isolation and loneliness:

- housing (including affordable housing) and also employment, retail, leisure and other commercial development (3;20a);

- infrastructure - for example, transport, telecommunications and security, each of which can impact on social isolation and loneliness (3;20b)

- community facilities (such as health, education and cultural infrastructure) – these are not often thought of in the specific context of social isolation and loneliness, but they are significant assets in creating and sustaining pro social places (3;20c)

- conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment - including landscapes and green infrastructure (3;20d).

Something that is not addressed in the NPPF is whether social isolation and loneliness would constitute a strategic policy and how this might be determined. This an important consideration for development plans, as the inclusion of social isolation and loneliness as a strategic policy would very likely enhance the importance that the issue receives and the way in which the development plan seeks to address the issues. This does not mean that social isolation and loneliness could not be included in development plans as a non-strategic policy, but this may imply that solutions should come more from the neighbourhood plans, rather than the development plan and this could have implications for resources and also training and development of staff and the degree of priority that the issues receive.

IIn deciding what is a strategic policy, development plans should:

- be limited to those necessary to address the strategic priorities of the area (and any relevant cross-boundary issues);

- provide a clear starting point for any non-strategic policies that are needed;

- not extend to detailed matters that are more appropriately dealt with through neighbourhood plans or other non-strategic policies (3:21);

- look ahead over a minimum 15-year period from adoption, to anticipate and respond to long-term requirements and opportunities, such as those arising from major improvements in infrastructure (3:22).

Recognising the relevance and necessity of social isolation and loneliness as a strategic priority for an area is something that traditional planners may not immediately appreciate. Even if it is not thought to be a necessity, it would still be important for local planners to understand the most effective ways in which to make the development plan a clear starting point for considering social isolation and loneliness as a non-strategic policy.

The objective assessment of needs that underpin development plans, tend to be restricted to the built environment including land use, housing allocations, transport and other physical infrastructure needs. It is less common for the assessment of needs to be approached from a people perspective that might increase recognition of the strategic importance of social isolation and loneliness.

For example, the economic and health harms that are associated with failing to create and sustain pro-social places.

4.1.2 Neighbourhood planning

It may be challenging for local authorities to make social isolation and loneliness a strategic policy within the development plan, given that there may be other competing priorities and that the issues encompassed within social isolation and loneliness are not contained to the built environment or physical infrastructure.

It is more likely that planning authorities will view social isolation and loneliness as belonging to the sphere of neighbourhood planning. This is likely because, detailed policies for specific areas, neighbourhoods or types of development include allocating sites, the provision of infrastructure and community facilities at a local level, establishing design principles, conserving and enhancing the natural and historic environment and setting out other development management policies (3:28).

Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can also shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan (3:29).

There is some evidence to support this view from the current Portsmouth programme on social isolation and loneliness. For example, residents identify with place at very local, neighbourhood levels and service responses including steps to increase and sustain community asset development need to be very local in delivery and operations.

4.1.3 Engagement with developers and applicants

Early engagement with developers is encouraged to support good decision making. Developers should also be encouraged to engage themselves with local communities at the pre application stage (4:40). This is generally thought to be within the context of statutory requirements, for example environmental impact assessments, which do not usually consider the implications of a development plan for social isolation and loneliness. However, planning authorities could encourage this and actively seek to promote consideration if these impacts as part of the material information that matters in the application (4:44).

Voluntary planning performance agreements are recommended for developments that are particularly large or complex. These could take account of measures for social isolation and loneliness and feature more in early engagement discussions (4:45).

4.1.4 Tailoring planning controls to local circumstances

The NPPF places a renewed emphasis on encouraging the use of Local Development Orders (LDOs) to help set the planning framework for an area and bring forward development (4.51). LDOs have traditionally been used for commercial developments, for example within Enterprise Zones, but there is increasing use of LDOs in new-build residential schemes, mixed-use development and smaller scale householder developments.

Technical advice on LDOs includes the requirement to consult with Clinical Commissioning Groups, voluntary bodies and bodies which represent people who share a protected characteristic. While it might be expected that these bodies would take responsibility to raise issues concerning people affected by social isolation and loneliness, local authorities need to be prepared to consider this. Tailoring planning controls to local circumstances could include greater consideration of demographic changes and vulnerable groups affected by social isolation and loneliness,

in particular where this would promote economic, social or environmental gains for the area (Planning Advisory Service 2015).

These are important areas to consider in the development of workforce training and equipping staff with the skills to negotiate these cross-sector relationships.

4.1.5 Delivering a sufficient supply of homes

Delivering a sufficient supply of homes is not solely a matter of quantity, it also concerns quality and the needs of groups with specific housing requirements (5:59). The NPPF sets out some criteria that is relevant to thinking about social isolation and loneliness including:

- local housing need assessments are conducted using the standard method in national planning guidance – unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach which also reflects current and future demographic trends and market signals (5:60);

- the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies including,

but not limited to, those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people, students, people with disabilities, service families, travellers - all of which are known to experience problems with social isolation and loneliness (5:61);

- new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns should be well located and designed, and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities including working with the support of their communities, and with other authorities where this can help to meet identified needs in a sustainable way (5:72)

In considering sustainability is important to consider:

- ensuring that the size and location of new settlements will support a sustainable community, with sufficient access to services and employment opportunities within the development itself (5:72b)

- set clear expectations for the quality of the development and how this can be maintained (such as by following Garden City principles), and ensure that a variety of homes to meet the needs of different groups in the community will be provided (5:72c);

- to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities and planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside (5:78).

Planners need to be able to work though the implications of this for new settlements in terms of social isolation and loneliness. This needs to be incorporated in core skills and competencies.

4.1.6 Building a strong, competitive economy

The economic harms related to social isolation and loneliness are well established and it is clear that building a strong, competitive economy requires communities that are connected socially. The NPPF requires an approach to be taken to planning that allows each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future (6:80). In particular planning policies should:

- set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth, having regard to Local Industrial Strategies and other local policies for economic development and regeneration – for example, the Grand Challenge on Ageing and addressing loneliness in older people (6:81a);

- set criteria, or identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period – for example planning for the supply of co-housing options and other forms of mutually supporting living (6:81b);

- seek to address potential barriers to investment, such as inadequate infrastructure, services or housing, or a poor environment – for example, planning for sufficient community amenities and open spaces where people can meet and socialise (6:81c);

- be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices (such as live-work accommodation), and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances – for example, supporting older people and those with mental health problems or learning disabilities to gain and sustain employment in the local area (6:81d).

In rural communities planning policies and decisions should address the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship (6:83d).

Also, planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport.

In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable, for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport (6:84).

The workforce needs to understand the economic impacts of social isolation and loneliness and how this can be better addressed in planning.

4.1.7 Ensuring the vitality of town centres

Planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation (7:85). This should require an approach to vitality in town centres that includes pro social amenities, infrastructure and access. A pro social planning policy would:

- promote long-term vitality and viability by allowing growth and diversity in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allow a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and reflect the distinctive character of the local area (7:85a)

- make clear the range of uses permitted in such locations, as part of a positive

strategy for the future – for example, restricting the growth of gambling outlets that act against social connectedness (7:85b)

- allocate appropriate edge of centre sites that are well connected to the town centre. If sufficient edge of centre sites cannot be identified, policies should explain how identified needs can be met in other accessible locations that are well connected to the town centre – for example, having appropriate public transport access (7:85e)

- recognise that residential development often plays an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and encourage residential development on appropriate sites – for example, having a mixture of housing for different population groups in a way that support social connectedness ((7:85f)

4.1.8 Promoting healthy and safe communities

Arguably, this is the most important section of the NPPF with respect to social isolation and loneliness, given the profound implications for health and wellbeing. The NPPF requires planning policies and

decisions that should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which specifically promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other – for example through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres, street layouts that allow for easy pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods, and active street frontages (8:91a).

In addition, the NPPF requires policies and decisions that:

- are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion – for example through the use of clear and legible pedestrian routes, and high quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas (8:91b); and

- enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling (8:91c).

Providing the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs requires planning decisions that:

- plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments – this includes local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship, but learning from the Portsmouth programme shows that this requires more than physical assets, for example support for local residents to manage and lead community amenities (8:92a).

- takes into account and supports the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community – it is important that local planning officers contribute to the development of local action plans for social isolation and loneliness as part of the overarching health and wellbeing strategy and delivery plans (8:92b).

- guards against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs – this requires pro-active work in supporting local communities to sustain engagement in and co-production of a variety of pro social support services (8:92c);

- ensures that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise, and are retained for the benefit of the community (8:92d) – this requires thought about the kinds of shops, facilities and services that support pro social behaviours and social connectedness (8:92d)

- ensures an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services - this is particularly important when community facilities and services are being withdrawn from outlying areas and concentrated in town or city centres, where they may not have the same degree of accessibility for people (8:92e)

Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities.

Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision (8:96). This is particularly important from the perspective of social isolation and loneliness and there needs to be a clear focus on this in the assessment of need.

4.1.9 Promoting sustainable transport

Transport is one of the most significant infrastructure issues for addressing social isolation and loneliness. The NPPF requires transport issues to be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals (9:102). This should include specific account of social isolation and loneliness in:

- the potential impacts of development on transport networks (9:102a);

- how opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure, and changing transport technology and usage, are realised (9:102b);

- opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use (9:102c);

- how the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed and taken into account (9:102d)

- patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations and how these contribute to making high quality places (9:102e)

Other factors relevant to social isolation and transport that should be considered in planning decisions include:

- minimising the number and length of journeys needed for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities (9:104a)

- aligning strategies and investments for supporting sustainable transport (9:104b)

- widening transport choice and realise opportunities for large scale development (9:104c)

- providing for high quality walking and cycling networks and supporting facilities such as cycle parking, drawing on Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (9:104d).

- giving priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements (9:110a)

- addressing the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in relation to all modes of transport (9:110b)

- minimising the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, avoid unnecessary street clutter, and respond to local character and design standards (9:110c)

4.1.10 Supporting high quality communications

Social connectedness is increasingly realised through digital connectedness and the importance of digital access and high quality digital infrastructure as a means to address social isolation and loneliness is being recognised and responded to.

The NPPF requires planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G) and full fibre broadband connections. In addition, policies should set out how high quality digital infrastructure, providing access to services from a range of providers, is expected to be delivered and upgraded over time; and should prioritise full fibre connections to existing and new developments (10:112).

4.1.11 Land use and achieving appropriate densities

Land use and ensuring appropriate densities in residential provision involves a number of considerations from the perspective of social isolation and loneliness, for example:

- the need for different types of housing and other forms of development, and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it (11:122a)

- local market conditions and viability (11:122b);

- the availability and capacity of infrastructure and services – both existing and proposed – as well as their potential for further improvement and the scope to promote sustainable travel modes that limit future car use (11:122c);

- the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens), or of promoting regeneration and change (11:122c); and

- the importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy places (11:122d).

4.1.12 Achieving well-designed places

Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process (12:124). It is important to consider design quality through the lens of social isolation and loneliness. For example, design policies should:

- be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics (12:125) – defining characteristics may be those that local residents have identified as essential to maintaining the degree to which they can sustain natural social connectedness.

- function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development (12:127a) – social isolation and loneliness occur over people's life times and can be particularly acute at significant transition points, for example for care leavers, following loss of employment, after bereavement and these are factors that need to be considered over the long-=term for the life and wellbeing of communities;

- are sympathetic to local character and history (12:127c) – loss of social connectedness can increase when people lose connection and identity with their local area and the shared community heritage and history;

- establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit (12:127d) – in addition to the physical consideration of place and local design, there needs to be support for community asset management;

- optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks (12:127e)

- create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users46; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience (12:127f)

Local planning authorities should ensure that they have access to, and make appropriate use of, tools and processes for assessing and improving the design of development. These include workshops to engage the local community, design advice and review arrangements, and assessment frameworks (12:129). This should include specific assessment of the design implication arising from consideration of social isolation and loneliness.

4.2 Summary

From the perspective of social isolation and loneliness there are a large number of areas within the current policy framework for planning and urban design that are relevant. However, these are rarely viewed through the lens of social isolation and loneliness and there is an opportunity through MHCLG's plans for further guidance and support.

The previous analysis of the NPPF is a stating point for further discussion and assessment. In particular, what might be feasible and realistic to expect in terms of a dedicated approach to competency and skills that explicitly makes social isolation and loneliness, and the idea of Prosocial places a core element.

5.

Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

There was agreement amongst respondents that an emphasis was needed on the promotion of natural social connectedness in communities through an integrated process of designing new settlements. This integrated design process should include a number of diverse teams at local authorities, while also ensuring local populations play an active role in the design process from the start. A number of examples of best practice were also outlined around the use of innovative design like cohousing schemes, micro funding grassroots programmes, and the use of technology.

Participants and interviewees stated that the final output from this piece of work should avoid the term "prosocial" as the lack of understanding about the term and the implied meaning of a one-size-fits-all approach, made it unattractive. Instead, a term like 'action planning to support social connectedness' was suggested instead. It is essential to have a shared language that is

easily understood by all stakeholders. This is particularly important in terms of developing and gathering evidence and data through any new metrics to measure social connectedness and how good design positively impacts on the risks of social isolation.

The commitment in the Conservative Manifesto to involving local communities in the design of new developments was particularly welcomed by participants who emphasised the need for planning teams and other teams within local authorities to work more collaboratively in regard to new settlement designs.

Several positive examples of best practice were outlined by both roundtable participants and stakeholder interviewees, including Homes England's Garden Communities and NHS England's Healthy New Towns, both of which demonstrated the principles of healthy placemaking.

The Government has also empowered grassroots programmes through its Building Connections and Pocket Parks Funds. These programmes can foster resilience and pride in communities, which is vital to prevent the onset of social isolation. Positive examples in regard to digital technology include the Tribe project where technology is being used to match those in need of care and support with volunteers or care professionals, thus enabling natural social interactions.

In addition, cohousing and intergenerational living schemes were put forward as innovative ways of living that promote social connectedness within a neighbourhood.

5.2 Recommendations

MHCLG's intention was to follow up this scoping phase with further consideration of evidence at a national level of the impact of placemaking on loneliness. This was considered necessary due to the lack of evidence about the creation and impact of new settlements supporting social interaction between residents. MHCLG were keen to understand the challenges and opportunities in specific localities to creating places that are socially sustainable and promote community wellbeing. The aspiration is to use this to inform an effective approach to supporting local authorities and the wider sector in the creation of new homes and places which promote social connectedness. For example, the idea of using tools to support development was tested with roundtable attendees.

Following the stakeholder interviews and roundtable discussion, it was suggested that there is a need for an action plan that can support an integrated approach to designing and planning new settlements.

Recommendation 1: Need for national strategic alignment and identify opportunity for MHCLG Guidance to be a cross Government action plan

This is based on the fact that national policy guidance on social isolation and loneliness is driven across half a dozen separate government departments and agencies. Although specific expertise for supporting this agenda is welcome, developing an MHCLG guidance without properly understanding how local authorities must navigate competing demands and guidance on the ground could potentially add to confusion among frontline practitioners. This could also be magnified if other government departments produce similar pieces of work on social isolation and loneliness.

Recommendation 2: Local Authority scenario planning with a broad range of decision-makers

There was an overwhelming emphasis through this piece of work on the importance and need for relevant local authority teams to work closer together to improve the design of new settlements and to provide the foundations for natural social integration. While local authority planning teams are well-intentioned in seeking to engage with others in the design of new

settlements, there is no roadmap to do this at present.

An integrated approach including, but not limited, to the Planning, Housing, Transport, Adults and Children's Services, Economic Development, Neighbourhoods, Finance, and Public Health teams would bring together a broad range of thoughts and ideas on creating new settlements. In some local areas, these teams are already within the same directorate within the Local Authority, for example, in Cornwall, transport and infrastructure as well as planning and sustainable development both sit within the economic growth and development directorate. However, it continues to be rare for teams to collaborate around delivering healthy place-making, in part due to the lack of a blueprint for working together.

As a next step, MHCLG could work with 1-2 Local Authority partners and establish a working group with representatives from Planning, Housing, Transport, Adults and Children's Services, Economic Development, Neighbourhoods, Finance, and Public Health to:

- Review existing local authority strategies across all these teams

- Select a number of future projects that may have a positive or negative impact on social isolation and loneliness

- Establish a range of interventions, applications, and actions that may impact or support social isolation and loneliness. These could be informed by existing national guidance but will also be aided by the wide range of representatives on the working group

- Test project interventions around wider set of local authority criteria i.e.: income, economic development, housing targets

- Establish:

  - Areas of contradiction in applying existing national planning guidance for social isolation and loneliness in Local Authority environments

  - Key areas where an action plan could support work through of balanced decision making in real-life decision-making environments

  - What evidence, interventions and actions are consistent required to support the action plan led decision-making process

  - What decision makers should be involved beyond the local authority

It will be important for planning teams at local authorities to understand why this change in approach is necessary in order to deliver healthier places. As highlighted in the roundtable discussion and stakeholder interviews, culture change will be a difficult but crucial barrier to overcome. Additionally, it will be important to share data and metrics between the different Local Authority teams to understanding potential barriers and challenges. Unitary authorities' public health intelligence teams often head Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs), which are important tools to assess the current landscape of health and wellbeing in their area. It is unclear at present how much of this data is used by planning teams to inform the shaping of new settlements.

Part of this action plan could be recommending the use of data already tracked around mental health, substance misuse, and deprivation and combining it with new metrics that may not be currently be used for data gathering for JSNAs. For example, risk factors for loneliness that could be tracked by local authorities include accessibility to public transport, local population turnover, and fear of crime (Campaign to end Loneliness, 2019).

Portsmouth City Council and the London Borough of Waltham Forest Council attended the roundtable discussion and could be engaged as potential pathfinder partners for this activity- particularly given they both have major neighbourhood renewal and housing programmes in the pipeline. There may also be an opportunity to partner with CIPFA and PHE to test the viability of their framework for evaluating preventative investments in these pathfinder areas.

Recommendation 3: Establish a Steering Group to inform the development and design of the MHCLG action plan

MHCLG would establish a steering group including representatives from industry, RICS, NGOs, and other parts of government to use the learning from the working group and examples of best practice to design the action plan.

6.

References

Bentley D and McCallum, A (2019) Rise and Fall: The shift in household growth rates since the 1990s. Civitas.

Campaign to End Loneliness (2019) About loneliness. https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/about-loneliness/

CIPFA & PHE (2019) Evaluating Preventative Investments in public health in England. CIPFA & PHE.

Davies, A R; Grey, C; Homolova, L and Bellis M (2019) Resilience. Understanding the interdependence between individuals and communities. Cardiff: Public Health Wales

Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (2018) £11.5 million fund to tackle loneliness across England. London: Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport.

Department of Health (2014) Care and Support Statutory Guidance Issued under the Care Act 2014. London: Department of Health.

Holt-Lunstad J, Smith TB, Layton JB (2010) Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-analytic Review. PLoS Med 7(7): e1000316. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1000316

Homes England (2018) Community Housing Fund. https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/community-housing-fund

Homes England (2019) Garden communities prospectus. Homes England.

Imrie, Rob (2018) 'The lonely city' Urban infrastructure and the problem of loneliness IN Narratives of Loneliness Multidisciplinary Perspectives from the 21st Century Edited by Sagan, O and Miller D (2018). London: Routledge.

Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness (2017) Combating loneliness one conversation at a time. London: Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness

Jeffrey, K; Abdallah, S and Michaelson J (2017) The cost of loneliness to UK employers. London: New Economics Foundation

LGA (2018) Local Development Orders Case study research and analysis. London: LGA

HM Government (2018) A connected society. A strategy for tackling loneliness – laying the foundations for change. London: HM Government

McGarvey, A; Jochum, V; Davies, J; Dobbs, J and Hornung, L (2019) TIME WELL SPENT: A National Survey on the Volunteer Experience. NCVO.

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2019) Pocket Parks: helping communities transform unloved, neglected or derelict areas into new green spaces. Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.

NHS England (2019) The NHS Long Term Plan. London: NHS England.

Ogen, Yaron (2020). Assessing nitrogen dioxide (NO2) levels as a contributing factor to coronavirus (COVID-19) fatality. In Science of The Total Environment

Volume 726.

Perlman, D., & Peplau, L. A. (1981). Toward a Social Psychology of Loneliness. In R. Gilmour, & S. Duck (Eds.), Personal Relationships: 3. Relationships in Disorder (pp. 31-56). London: Academic Press.

Planning Advisory Service (2015) Local Development Orders: Technical Advice on preparing an LDO. London: PAS

Social Finance (2015) Investing to tackle loneliness: A discussion paper. London: Social Finance

The Social Value Portal (2019) National TOMS Framework 2019 For Social Value Measurement. Available at: http://socialvalueportal.com/national-toms

UK Cohousing Network (2019) About Cohousing. https://cohousing.org.uk/about/about-cohousing

West Yorkshire Harrogate Health and Care Partnership (2019) Looking out for our neighbours.

7.

Appendix A: Roundtable Attendees

Sarah Austin:	Solent NHS Trust
Dr Jon Bashford:	Breaking Barriers Innovations
Jo Bennett:	Portsmouth City Council
Charles Campion:	JTP
Laura Caton:	Local Government Association
Dominic Corfield:	Breaking Barriers Innovations
Jane Custance:	London Borough of Waltham Forest
Rahim Daya:	Breaking Barriers Innovations
Sophia de Sousa:	The Glass-House Community Led Design
Patrick Devlin:	Pollard Thomas Edwards
Jane Farrington:	Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government
Olivia Field:	British Red Cross
Emily Georghiou:	Centre for Ageing Better
Claire Haigh:	Greener Journeys
Bethan Harris:	Collectively
Ben Harris:	Department for Transport
Julie Hawkins:	HIVE Portsmouth
Cathy Hawley:	Architect
Robin Hewings:	Campaign to End Loneliness
Sarah Martin:	MELA Associates
Simon Meats:	Department for Transport

Janani Paramsothy: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Tim Philpott: Breaking Barriers Innovations

Henry Primarolo: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Alastair Sayles: Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport

Bev Taylor: NHS England

Jennifer Thomas: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Rachel Toms: Public Health England

Kieran Toms: Design South East

Andrew Tubb: National Association of Local Councils

Pam Turton: Portsmouth City Council

Andy von Bradsky: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Erin Walsh: Connected Places Catapult

Nicholas Werran: Breaking Barriers Innovations

Helena Zaum: Microsoft

Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

BREAKING
BARRIERS
INNOVATIONS

For further information please visit our website at www.bbi.uk.com or contact:

Rahim Daya

Senior Programme Manager, Breaking Barriers Innovations

rahim.daya@bbi.uk.com