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Social isolation and loneliness in people aged 55 and over in Milton Keynes: developing an action plan

Conference or Workshop Item

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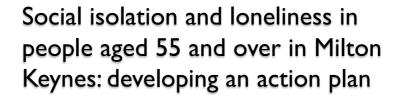
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Jane Palmer, CEO, Age UK Milton Keynes

27 April 2016

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Our research themes related to older people

- social isolation and loneliness
- online social interactions
- digital skills in people aged over 55 years
- digital health wearables

Social isolation and loneliness — in Milton Keynes

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Milton Keynes in 2026

- Milton Keynes has experienced high population growth and this is forecast to continue into the future
- 12.1% of the Milton Keynes population are aged over 65 compared to 17.3% in England (2013)
- 17.8% will be over 65 years closer to England figure of 20.5% (2026)
- population of over 65 is projected to increase by 21,800 (+71.8%) (2026)

Risk factors in Milton Keynes

- diverse and growing population of BAME groups
- English is not the first language
- pace of development in Milton Keynes
- redundancies, retirement without a preparation
- not being able to drive
- neighbourhood changes commuter town, short-term occupancy
- Irrespective of location:
 - disability or impairment hearing, vision, mobility, cognitive
 - being a carer; after a cared person passes away

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Services that 'work'

- One-to-one interventions
 - visits by community home visitors
 - regular phone conversations
 - walking 'partner' e.g. after the bereavement of a pet
- Group interventions
 - lunch clubs, coffee mornings
 - Men in sheds, knitting club (use of their skills/interests)
 - inter-generational initiatives e.g. learning to be online, crotchet, photography
 - walking groups, local history society
- Wider community interventions
 - capturing sporting memories (reminiscing)

Talking about sporting events and cultures of the time helps to give people their identity back and reconnect them to the people and generations around them.

Designing services

- paying attention to events in the lives of older people
- variety of services for different age groups, life stages and health (55+, 65+, 75+, 85+, ...)
- inter-generational initiatives
- being gender-aware
- focussing on the quality rather than the quantity
- recognising that families play a key role

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Factors for 'successful' services

- developing services that are co-designed and led by older people
- council-provided framework for delivery of the services (e.g. 'neighbourhood watch' in West Bletchley)
- developing volunteering capacity within communities
- training for the volunteers (e.g. by Age UK MK)

Impact of the service

- to know the social impact of the service
- economic impact of the service
- evaluation should be integral when the service is being designed and delivered
- need for a 'simple' and low cost evaluation toolkit: e.g. well-being questionnaire, workshops, reach of the service
- evaluation feeds into the improvement of the service and possibly more funding

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Three key messages

- co-designing services that match with their requirements
- evaluation should be integral when the service is being designed and delivered
- digital skills local government, interests, leisure, health, social interactions

Resources

- Minocha, Shailey; Holland, Caroline; McNulty, Catherine; Banks, Duncan and Palmer, Jane (2015).
 Social isolation and loneliness in people aged 55 and over in Milton Keynes. The Open University, Milton Keynes, UK. http://oro.open.ac.uk/43925/
- Minocha, Shailey; McNulty, Catherine and Evans, Shirley (2015). Imparting digital skills to people aged 55 years and over in the UK. The Open University, Milton Keynes, UK. http://oro.open.ac.uk/44009/

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