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

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

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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

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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)

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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, crochet, 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.

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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)

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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

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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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