

By: Gaetano Romagnuolo, Research Officer (Overview and Scrutiny)

To: Social Isolation Select Committee – 23 July 2018

Subject: Social Isolation Select Committee Topic Review

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: To discuss and agree proposed Terms of Reference, Scope and general approach for the Review

1 Introduction

There is growing recognition that loneliness and social isolation are a serious issue with far reaching consequences for individuals and for wider communities.

While loneliness can affect anybody, its mental and physical effects can be particularly detrimental for older people, as the health risks associated with it increase as people age. It has been estimated that about 10% of those aged 65+, that is about 30,000 people in Kent alone, suffer from acute loneliness.

Loneliness and social isolation are a matter of concern for local authorities. Apart from the general duty to promote the wellbeing of their residents, loneliness can increase the pressure on a wide range of public and health services. It has been estimated that the condition can increase the risk of premature death by 30%, and that it can be more harmful to health than smoking 15 cigarettes a day. With an ageing population, and a difficult financial climate, loneliness can become an even more challenging issue.

Tackling this highly personal and complex problem is not easy. Yet, Kent County Council can and should play a central role by taking up the challenge and ensuring that adequate services and support are in place to alleviate suffering and improve the lives of its older residents.

2 Committee Membership

The Select Committee consists of nine elected Members of Kent County Council:

Mr Matthew Balfour (Conservative)

Mr David Brazier (Conservative)

Ms Karen Constantine (Labour)

Mrs Liz Hurst (Conservative)

Mrs Lesley Game (Conservative)

Mrs Clair Bell (Conservative)

Ms Ida Linfield (Liberal Democrat)

Mr Ken Pugh (Conservative)

Mr Bryan Sweetland (Conservative)

3 Draft Terms of Reference

1. To contextualise social isolation and loneliness, and to identify the groups of people who are particularly affected by social isolation and loneliness in Kent.
2. To investigate the impact of social isolation and loneliness on Kent's older residents.
3. To investigate the extent to which KCC's current service provision and partnership working is effective in dealing with social isolation and loneliness amongst older people in Kent.
4. To recommend initiatives and strategies to reduce the impact of social isolation and loneliness on Kent's older residents.

4 Proposed Exclusions

The remit of the review will exclude an investigation of the effectiveness of mental and physical health services' provision in Kent.

5 Draft Scope

The complexity of this topic and the tight timeframe of the review require a clear and focused approach. The key themes and aspects which will be covered by the review are detailed below:

1. To contextualise social isolation and loneliness, and to identify the groups of people who are particularly affected by social isolation and loneliness in Kent.
 - a. To define and contextualise social isolation and loneliness.
 - b. To identify the key groups of people who are affected by social isolation and loneliness in Kent.
2. To investigate the impact of social isolation and loneliness on Kent's older residents.
 - a. To explore the main causes leading to social isolation and loneliness amongst adults aged 65 and over in Kent.
 - b. To assess the impact of social isolation and loneliness on this group of residents.
3. To investigate the extent to which KCC's current service provision and partnership working is effective in dealing with social isolation and loneliness amongst older people in Kent.
 - a. To explore KCC's current service provision and partnership working aimed at reducing social isolation and loneliness amongst adults aged 65 and over in Kent.
 - b. To examine the extent to which this service provision and collaboration is effective in dealing with social isolation and loneliness amongst this group of people.
4. To recommend initiatives and strategies to reduce the impact of social isolation and loneliness on Kent's older residents.

6 Proposed Timetable (summary)

7 June 2018	Informal cross-party discussion to develop the Terms of Reference of the review
23 July 2018	First meeting of Select Committee, to appoint the Chairman and to discuss and agree the Terms of Reference of the review
Early September – Mid October 2018	Hearings and possible visits
Mid October 2018	Committee meets to identify key issues and to make recommendations
November – Mid December 2018	Report writing, production of first draft
Mid January 2019	Committee discusses the first draft of the report and suggests amendments. Amendments carried out accordingly
End January 2019	Informal meeting for Select Committee to share the draft report with Cabinet Member(s) and Corporate Director(s)
Mid February 2019	Select Committee to agree the final report
Mid February 2019	Report shared with relevant boards (by email)
25 February 2019	Despatch for Cabinet Members' Meeting
4 March 2019	Report presented to Cabinet Members' Meeting
13 March 2019	Despatch for County Council
21 March 2019	Report presented to County Council

7 General Approach

The review is proposed to include a short period of desk-based research. Written evidence will be obtained during the course of the review and will be provided to Members as soon as it is received.

8 Evidence Gathering – Hearings

It is proposed that about 18 hearing sessions of 45 minutes each will take place between early September and mid October 2018. Hearings will normally be open to the public unless there is a specific requirement to hold a closed session.

It is proposed that Members remain for about 20 minutes after each set of interviews (normally 3 in each set) to ensure that all views, key points and emerging recommendations are captured.

Details of suggested witnesses/organisations to invite to hearings are outlined below. Others may be suggested as the review progresses (written evidence may be requested from those who are unable to attend or cannot be included in the timetable).

- KCC Cabinet Members for Strategic Commissioning and Public Health, for Community and Regulatory Services, and for Adult Social Care
- Senior KCC officers representing KCC areas such as Commissioning, Adult Social Care, Public Health and Community services.
- Representatives of key national organisations dealing with social isolation and loneliness
- Representatives of key local organisations dealing with social isolation and loneliness
- The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Sport and Civil Society
- Representatives of other local authorities that developed best practice interventions to reduce loneliness and social isolation
- Academics, professionals, other witnesses who can make relevant contributions.

9 Site Visits

There is an opportunity for Members of the Committee to visit local organisations supporting people who suffer from social isolation and loneliness, and to meet with people suffering from social isolation and loneliness.

10 Project Risks

The tight timescale necessitates a focused approach.

Recommendations:

1. To agree the Terms of Reference and general approach to the review of Social Isolation and Loneliness.

Contacts:

Gaetano Romagnuolo
Research Officer – Overview & Scrutiny
Tel: 03000 416624
Email: gaetano.romagnuolo@kent.gov.uk

Kay Goldsmith
Research Officer – Overview & Scrutiny
Tel: 03000 416512
Email: kay.goldsmith@kent.gov.uk

Denise Fitch
Democratic Services Manager
Tel: 03000 416090
Email: denise.fitch@kent.gov.uk