Ageing Better National Learning

Ageing Better is a 7-year test and learn programme. We are collecting information and insights from across 14 partnerships to identify learning that will be useful for other programmes and organisations delivering activities aimed at reducing social isolation in people aged 50+. To date our partnerships have worked with over 134,000 people.

Ageing Better national learning can be segmented into three clearly defined areas: **context**, **connections** and **ecosystem**. These three interconnected segments build a picture of the macro and micro factors, services and support systems, that help us to better understand loneliness and social isolation in people aged over 50.

Context

There are a range of risk factors that can occur, often in combination which lead to people finding themselves becoming socially isolated. These include mental health issues, lack of confidence or self-esteem, as well as transition points (e.g. retirement, illness, bereavement) and environmental and physical factors that act as a barrier to someone being able to connect with their community and support systems.

Connections

Understanding someone's unique situation is key to engaging with them as individuals and identifying the barriers they face in making connections. The people who are most socially isolated (where isolation is entrenched and embedded) will need some level of one-to-one support to help address their isolation. This support is person-centred and holistic and involves taking the time to develop a relationship with the individual and at their pace to build trust.

Ecosystem

The Ecosystem is fundamental to addressing social isolation as it is the space where individuals connect with the community. It works preventatively to keep people socially connected and steps in when social isolation occurs. It includes interventions that people 'need' as well as the activities and groups people 'want' to engage with; opportunities and provision for people to set up their own groups and community development, that includes age friendly activity.

This Ecosystem will vary from place to place and recognises the importance of people working together as no one organisation can "fix" social isolation and loneliness. It also recognises that as important as specific interventions are, they need to be part of something wider.

Tenets of Ageing Better

Reflecting on our learning we have identified a series of common principles that recur and run throughout the Programme. The learning from Ageing Better suggests

it is these principles that underpin successful approaches to tackling social isolation in people aged 50+.

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Further information

More information on the Ageing Better Programme including insights from across the programme are available at Ageing Better