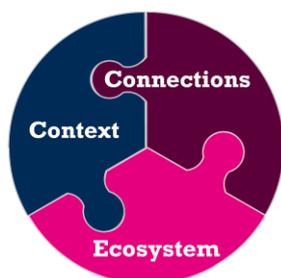# Ageing Better: Understanding Ecosystem

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.

What do we mean by ecosystem?

- The ecosystem is the space where individuals connect with their community. It's the services, routes, responses, people and touchpoints that help prevent social isolation. It can work preventatively to keep people connected and provides the route back when social isolation occurs.
- Mapping an ecosystem (identifying services, organisations, connections and community strengths which exist in a locality) is essential when designing and managing services that will help reduce loneliness and social isolation.
- A well-connected ecosystem delivers a community-wide response.

Why is understanding your local ecosystem important?

This is about understanding your local area – levels of deprivation, current level of community development, network of agencies, strengths and needs. Ecosystem mapping reduces duplication whilst identifying gaps and specific strengths that can be built upon by harnessing the value of private, public and third sector organisations and groups working in partnership.

Summary of key learning from 14 partnership areas

- An effective ecosystem delivers essential person-centred interventions which include mental health support, income maximisation and activities that help solve specific challenges, as well as effective referral networks.
- One organisation alone will not solve the problems of social isolation and loneliness. There is a need for partnership, collaboration involving a network of people/organisations helping to identify, refer and support socially isolated older people.
- Community and neighbourhood development with businesses, community groups and service deliverers are key components of a well-functioning ecosystem, as is the funding support required to resource them.

Applying learning in your area

Understand your local area, its strengths, opportunities and gaps, when funding, designing, and delivering services to prevent social isolation and loneliness. Consider and apply the findings from all Ageing Better Learning Reports.