

Ageing Better: Understanding Context



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 context?

- A person's gender, ethnicity, sexuality, finances, work, family, health, cultural and social situation all contribute to the context for that person.
- There are a range of risk factors that can occur, often in combination which lead to people finding themselves socially isolated. These include mental health issues, lack of confidence or self-esteem, 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.

Why is understanding context important?

- It is key to engaging with people as individuals and identifying the barriers they face in making connections. Understanding context can help identify a person's need for essential practical assistance as well as their social and emotional support and importantly their individual strengths. All are key interventions to consider when reducing loneliness and social isolation.
- Understanding a person's context provides the foundations when taking a person-centred approach to service design and delivery. It ensures practitioners and funders work at the pace, frequency and style that suits an individual.

Summary of key learning from 14 partnership areas

- Understand that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution for people.
- Take a holistic, person-centred approach to understand a participant's specific situation and tailor support accordingly.
- Co-produce and co-research with communities. This is fundamental to understanding the particular challenges faced by each community and individual you are working with. To truly understand people you need to work with them.

Applying learning in your area

Consider 'context' when funding, designing, and delivering services. Build an accurate picture of your area by piecing together the context, connections and ecosystem locally.

- When communicating about or promoting services, use language that is relevant to a person's situation.
- Design services and groups that take account of a person's gender, geographic, social, cultural and economic situation.
- Consider and apply the findings from all Ageing Better Learning Reports through the context of your own communities.