

Sharing findings from a stakeholder event on

Tackling Loneliness and Social Isolation in Tower Hamlets

14th November 2017
At Southern Grove Community Centre

Hosted by: Tower Hamlets Council

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1. Background to loneliness

- Addressing loneliness was identified in the Tower Hamlets Mental Health Strategy 2013-19
 - As a result, 2 projects were commissioned by Public Health in 2015/16
- The Ageing Well Strategy 2017 includes reducing isolation and loneliness as one of 10 key themes; led by Integrated Commissioning team, LBTH
- Where we are now
 - The commissioned projects have finished and been evaluated
 - There is a need for a life-course approach to tackling loneliness
 - There needs to be a holistic joined up approach to tackling loneliness

2. Aims of the stakeholder event

- 1: To present findings from LBTH 12 month commissioned projects, concluded in October 2016:
 - ***Community Perspectives on Loneliness***: to develop greater understanding of loneliness, providing useful insights about the enablers and barriers in relation to loneliness
 - ***Action on Loneliness***: a successful intervention delivered in care homes which brought volunteers and older people together
- 2: To collectively plan the next phase of action through discussion groups which:
 - Focus on different aspects to tackling loneliness using the Campaign to End Loneliness framework (a holistic approach from understanding and detecting loneliness through to provision of services)
 - Review suggestions from the Community Perspectives on Loneliness project and the Ageing Well Strategy on what should happen locally to tackle loneliness, to get detailed insight and identify gaps

The event also included:

- Presentations from Chill & Chat (over 50s group) and effective interventions for tackling loneliness
- Poetry competition on loneliness: 10 poems submitted by people working or living in Tower Hamlets

Programme: Tackling Loneliness in Tower Hamlets - sharing findings to shape the next phase

Event Programme...

Tuesday 14th November 2017, 9 am to 12.30pm.
Southern Grove Community Centre, Southern Grove, Bow E3 4FX

Part 1

9.00 – 9.25am	Arrival: tea & coffee
9.25 – 9.30am	Welcome Susie Hay, ShortWork
9.30 – 9.35am	Opening remarks Cllr Denise Jones, Lead Member for Health and Adults Services
9.35-9.45am	Introductions Somen Banerjee, Director of Public Health, LBTH
9.45 -10.00am	Sharing findings from Community Perspectives on Loneliness Susie Hay, ShortWork
10.00-10.20am	Sharing findings from care homes project including vide Susan Langford, Magic Me, Marcia Forsythe Care Homes Manager
10.20-10.30am	Chill & Chat – over 50s group Jennifer Ullah, resident volunteer
10.30-10.40am	Effective ways to tackle loneliness Orenda OBrien-Davis, Interim Strategic Commissioning Manager, LBTH

Part 2

10.40-11.00am	Workshop 1: Themed discussion on loneliness and social isolation (20 mins)
11.00 – 11.10am	Break
11.10 – 11.35am	Workshop 2: Discussion on what is currently on offer in Tower Hamlets and what are the gaps (25 mins)
11.35 - 12.15pm	Feedback from workshops 5 mins per group
12.15-12.20pm	Closing remarks Chris Lovitt, Associate Director
12.20-12.30pm	Inspirations from audience Poetry wall
12.30pm	Evaluation – Exit poll

Councillor Denise Jones' introduction



3. Breakdown of those who attended by sector

Sector	Numbers attended
Community sector (Includes LinkAge Plus hubs, Carers Centre, Healthwatch, Geezers club, Account3, Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets, Mytime Active, Beside mental health, Bromley by Bow Centre, Uscreates, Salvation Army, REAL, Magic Me, ShortWork)	31
Tower Hamlets Council, Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group (Includes Adult Social Care; Idea Stores; Public Health, Integrated Commissioning and Cohesion teams)	27
Care homes / day centres	4
East London Foundation Trust (Includes District Nurse, Care Navigators)	4
Housing Providers (Tower Hamlets Homes, Poplar Harca)	3
Other (Individuals, university, East London Business Alliance)	5
Total	74

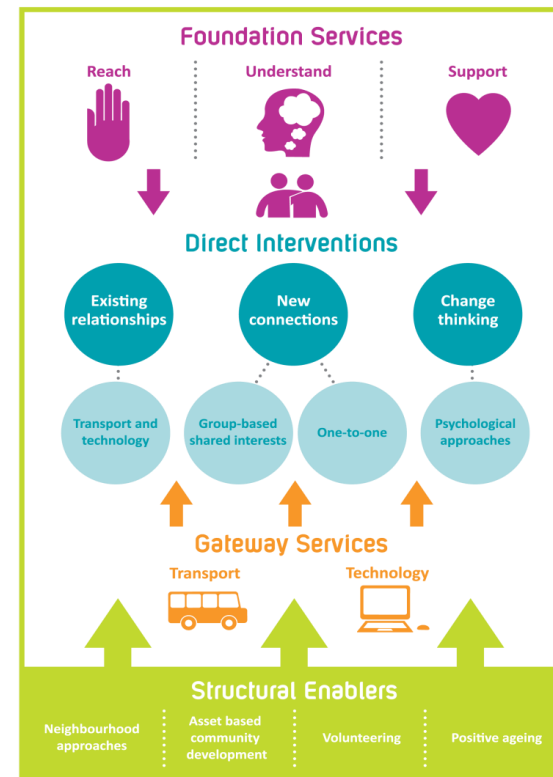
4. Summary of discussions

Discussion groups

- Strategic approaches to tackling loneliness
- Detecting and measuring loneliness
- Reaching lonely and isolated people
- Supporting lonely people through neighbourhood approaches
- Tackling loneliness – the role of information and advice
- Tackling stigma related to loneliness
- Awareness raising
- Insight and understanding
- Enabling activities
- Enabling environment

Summary of the discussions are presented in slides 9-11.

Framework used for discussions



<https://campaigntoendloneliness.org/guidance/>

Themes	Comments & suggestions made
1. Strategic approaches to tackling loneliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a strategy • Strategy based on wide membership including decision makers • Wider partners to work with: Schools, LBTH sports, relevant community and voluntary groups, national organisations (Campaign to End Loneliness), community leaders, peer researchers • Strategy to cover people from all age groups • Undertake mapping of provisions and recipients of services • Strategy to include metric on measuring success • Priority and progress to be monitored through LBTH directorate leads reporting to Mayor / CEO quarterly • Strategy to include awareness raising
2. Detecting & measuring loneliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitively approach conversation on loneliness (don't use the word loneliness), built on established and trusted relationships • Ask clients about their social networks • Record social networks on social work assessment • Carers are a risk group • Paid home care workers could potentially have a role to play in combatting loneliness • Could loneliness be incorporated in other measures? • Campaign to End Loneliness survey is preferred because it is positively worded. People support using a tool to measure loneliness but it has to be embedded in a process of assessment & referral • In identifying loneliness, we need resources/confidence to signpost/support people
3. Reaching lonely & isolated people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to have a targeted approach including people 'behind the doors' and 'invisible communities' • Need to employ wide range of communication channels including radio, cinemas, pubs, cafes, schools, post office, support 'motivated individuals', work with people who have access to people on the edge – caretakers, concierge, resident warden • Key people who can access lonely people: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Estate level: Resident warden, concierge, housing associations ○ Community level: post office, pubs, betting shops, Idea stores, faith groups, cafes, local retailers ○ Health: GP, bereavement services, district nurses, health visitors ○ Social care: Social workers, home care staff, care workers, Meals on Wheels ○ Others: Samaritans, Fire & Rescue
4. Supporting lonely people through neighbourhood approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood approaches principles should be: enabling and supporting • Neighbourhood approaches to adopt: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Word of mouth approach, door knocking (popular) ○ Identifying existing informal networks within the community ○ Holding street parties – get to know your neighbours and celebrate

Themes	Comments & suggestions made
5. Tackling loneliness – the role of information & advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicise information in: Idea Stores, community centres, schools, Local Link, LinkAge Plus & other outreach workers, community catalogue
6. Tackling stigma related to loneliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledge stigma exists: people fear being judged Convey a positive message that it's ok to be lonely Help people to refocus on new sense of purpose (in old age/retirement) Recognise & link interdependency between depression and loneliness Embed loneliness in Making Every Contact Count (MECC) Understand loneliness in different contexts for e.g. in different cultures
7. Awareness raising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness among frontline staff via MECC Raise awareness of loneliness among other frontline workers e.g. staff in pubs, barbers, shops Raise awareness of loneliness among housing officers and that having can pets can combat this Raising awareness (and stigma reduction) needs to happen at different levels: individual, public, high risk groups: carers, bereaved, retired, homeless Loneliness awareness days can be held by different teams/organisations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directly by LinkAge plus Indirectly by embedding in physical activity sessions, Parks 50+ tea dances & walks Work with housing associations to increase neighbourliness?
8. Insight & understanding People were asked about whether surveys should be conducted to assess older people's needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore feasibility of creating loneliness index by obtaining anonymous post-code data from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Register of deaths (to establish bereaved partners) Work with large organisations such as Cruse, Silverline, Age UK to identify postcode of callers? Link with Refer to Help What about under 50s? There is support for a survey however others oppose it. A possible survey should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on neighbourhood solutions Be based on people's expressed needs (what they want) Qualitative, participatory Capture the views of minority groups
9. Enabling environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand provision of walking groups, gardening groups in TH to ascertain if more is needed Provision for more toilets in the borough including in parks for older, disabled people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on this to be distributed to vulnerable people via district nurses, GPs There needs to be peer support system for people with incontinence

Themes	Comments & suggestions made
10. Enabling Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools & care homes to work together: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Celebrate older peoples day ○ Lunch club for older people in schools ○ Walk a mile with older people ○ Integration of 'adopt a gran/grandad' with school-based internet classes • Adopt a granny (though need to be careful with language, not all older people are grannies) • Friendship <u>benches</u> on strategic sites • Sharing food with neighbours at celebration times; 'know your neighbour' day • Provision for weekend activities • Lack of awareness of local services among housebound people • Internet access is a significant barrier • Work with multi-media giants in London to bring to their attention how digital tools can improve older/disabled people's lives • Better understand the type of online services that older people will use or are interested in before delivering IT sessions (feedback for Idea stores?) • Explore digital ways to connect lonely people through Skyping, WhatsApp • Review and develop digital inclusion for housebound people by loaning laptops/tablet • Publicise Workpath programme among older people? • Explore ways to encourage older people to volunteer their skills & time

5. Next steps

Report to the Health Overview & Scrutiny Subcommittee in January 2018 to:

- Highlight the importance of loneliness as a significant health issue
- Present a summary of the findings from local Tower Hamlets participatory research on loneliness
- Update and share findings from the local stakeholder's event and workshops on tackling loneliness. These will inform the next phase.

6. Evaluation of event – Exit Poll

Of the 74 people who signed-in at the event, 50 people responded
(Response rate: 67%)

The evaluation consisted of 3 statements which were asked at the end of the event:

1. This was valuable use of my time:

47 responses

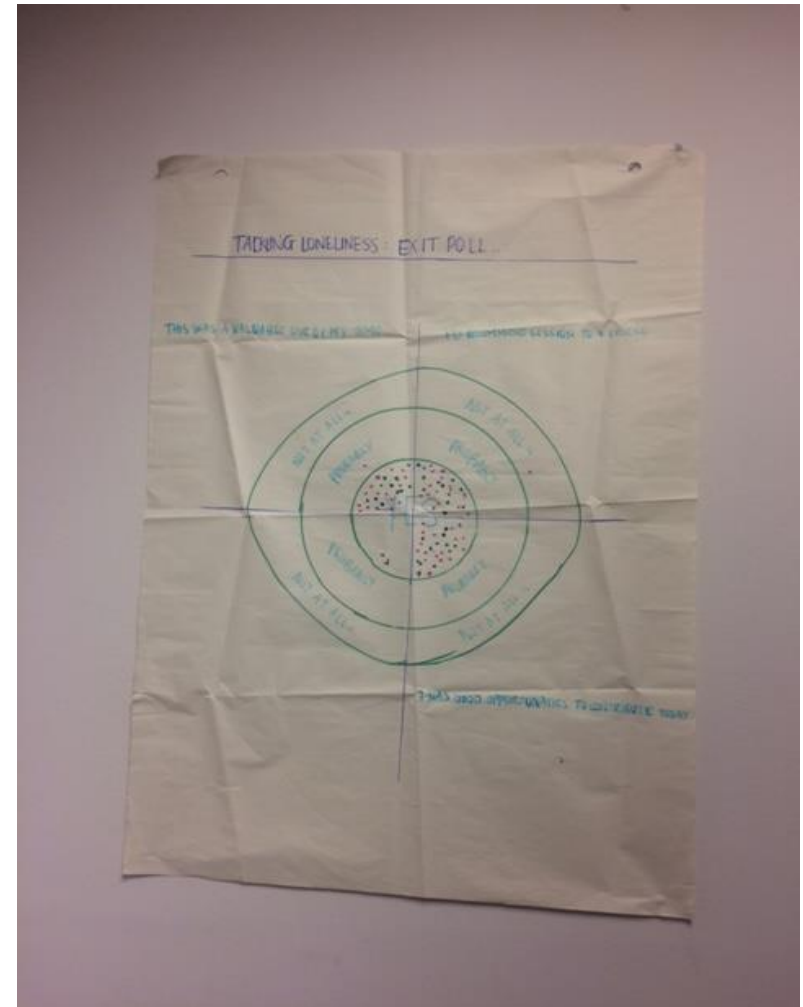
2. I would recommend this session:

50 responses

3. I had good opportunities to contribute today:

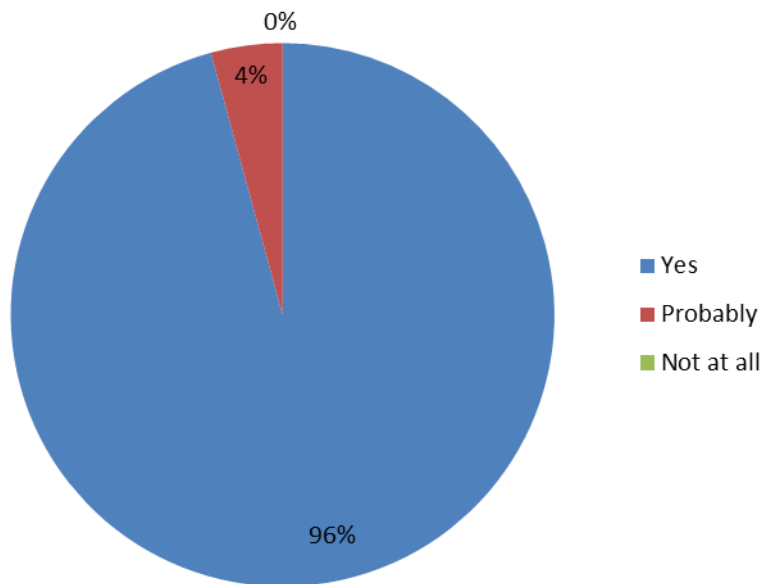
49 responses

5 responses were not included due to errors

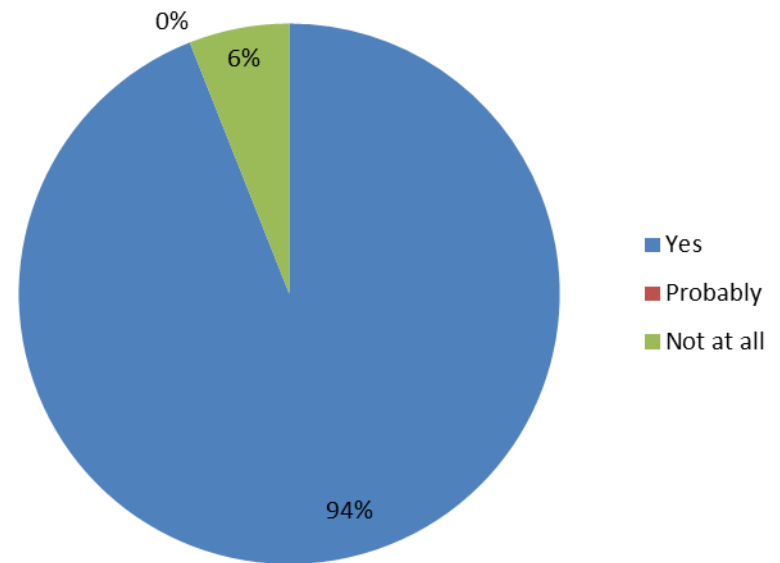


Exit Poll results

1. “This was valuable use of my time”

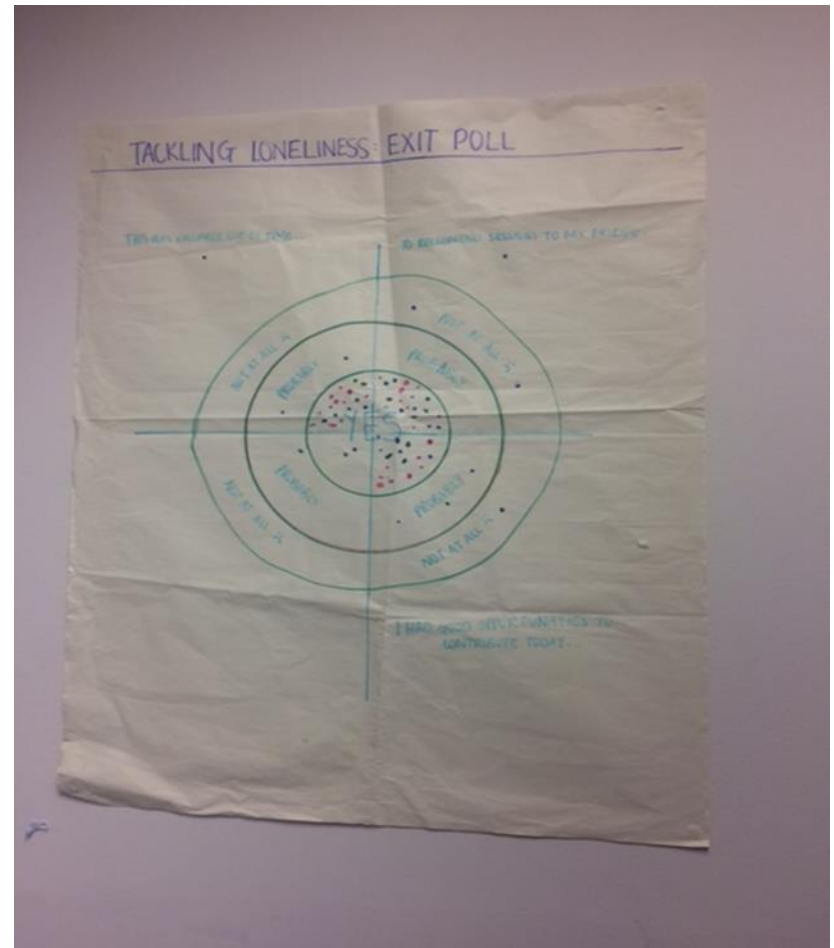
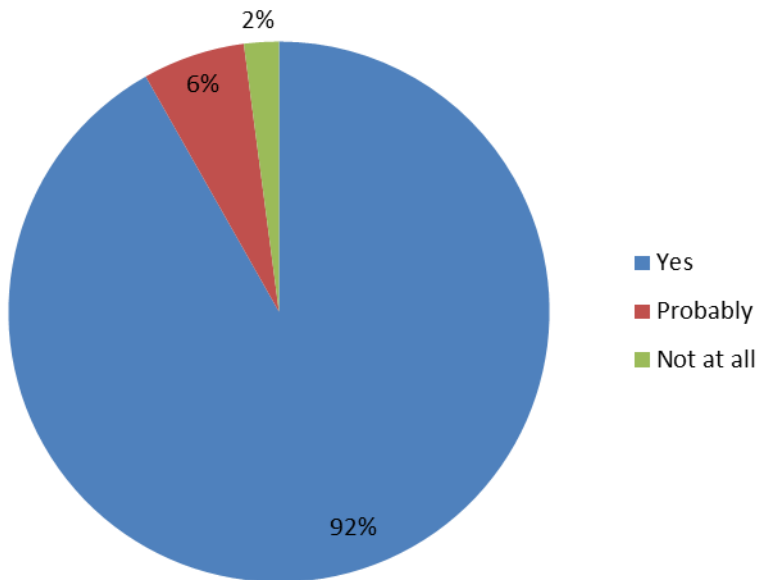


2. “I would recommend this session to a friend”



Exit Poll results

3. *"I had good opportunities to contribute today"*



7. Poems on loneliness

People living or working in Tower Hamlets were asked to submit poems on loneliness ahead of the event.

These poems are presented here to share with you.

Little Old Flo

She sits and she waits...for what she does not know
Because it is not for her company, these people that come and go
They may pause for a moment and almost catch her eye
As they turn down the bed and hang out the sheets to dry
As they wash her down
And sterilise her teeth
Always someone new, busy, unaware of her grief

They do not know you see, that once she was like they
Full of life and in a rush to get through the day
Full of responsibly of people to care
Now they are gone and all that is left is her despair

You see, nothing is lonelier than having loved and lost
There is no greater pain, and no greater cost
As the emptiness that follows swallows you whole
Once you were someone
Now your just little old Flo

No time to stop sorry, goodbye Flo, time to go

Nicola Donnelly, Public Health

FROM "THE CHILL AND CHAT."

WHAT IS IT TO BE LONELY?

NOBODY SEES ME, WHO AM I.

I SMILE AT PEOPLE BUT THEY IGNORE ME
I'M LONELY.

IVE FOUND A PLACE, ITS LIKE A SAFE PLACE,
IVE FOUND LONELY PEOPLE INSIDE OF IT.

WE TALK, WE SMILE, I FEEL WARM - BUT WHY,

IVE FOUND A LITTLE CHURCH, NO QUESTIONS ASKED WHY
THEY WANT NOTHING FROM ME, YET I FEEL SAFE AND WARM

TO BE LONELY ISNT NICE, IVE NO FRIENDS OR FAMILY,

YET I FEEL GOOD TODAY, I FEEL WANTED, WHY WAS I SO

LONELY FOR SO LONG. THANK GOD I FEEL WANTED AFTER SO LONG.

Life is like a mountain railroad
Especially when one is disabled
I am so lonely and need
Lots of encouragement
This is what Chill and Chat is good for, it breaks
up the periods of loneliness
If one sits alone in doors it's no good for the
mind
So come chill and chat
Have a cup of tea and make new friends

Beryle, 86
Chill and Chat member

Adam and Eve's Friendship

Adam had the world at his *feet*
But his heart never skipped a *beat*.
An aching heart seeking for honest *companionship*
Suffocating day and night without real *friendship*.
Oh, how he wished upon a million stars for true *kinship*.
For the warmth of another beating heart to walk beside him under the
radiant starship, of kingship.
His echoes of loneliness and *hardship*
Were felt across the heavens,
As he toiled with his internal *battleship*.
Eve was his eternal *lightship*,
Guiding his soul under the united-ship of *companionship*.
Two souls united together under the greatest 'ship' of
friendship.

By Sumaiya Yasmin

Loneliness Lioness

The roar comes out of my mouth
But does it?

I react As if the echo of the sound
Still hangs in the air

Was it this air here
Or was it another air
Somewhere else
A room that now only exists
In my mind
Of a time
Some time ago

More than just my roar
Filled the room

Footsteps made the floorboards shake
Slamming doors made the jamb jump out

Window panes rattled raucously
The crumbs gathered in clusters
Becoming bigger than their minute selves

Now the crumbs have been cleared up
The floors rarely creak
The doors stay open
There is no one to keep out
Nothing to keep

The double glazing seals out the cold
Seals out the noise

Silence hangs in the air

Did the roar come from my mouth?
I look around

There is no one to hear
Here

Silvana Maimone, Living History
Performer/Facilitator at the All Hallows By
The Tower of London

The Queen of Loneliness

I am the queen of loneliness
The one with just her only-ness
It's been my lifetime fate

A childhood filled with sadness
A family life with badness
Has made me wear this crown

I yearned for far more helpfulness
And comfort in my guiltiness
But these were not there then

Hard to deal with remorsefulness
Worse with constant tearfulness
You need someone with time

It's only now the emptiness
Is filling up with friendliness
Crown jewels are finally mine

Anonymous person

The inside out mate

Tick tock, tick tock, watch the clock time won't stop
Clip clop, people rush by, you just sat
By the window. Drip drip drop
When will the rain stop?
How many more days must be endured
How many more days just being ignored?
How can so many people be all around
Without a single friend, lover... or confident to be found?
It is hard you see when you have been on 'the inside'
To emerge, intact, with a friend at your side
You see, you are a social pariah, a one that is no good
Someone despised and misunderstood
So no wonder you sit there all alone,
No one to call, no one to phone
All the world has left you behind
The one on the 'inside' is now inside out
Everything hurts, no energy to shout
So I just sit here and watch the rain
Watch those people rush by .. late for the train
Clip clop, tick tock, you stay put, whilst the world don't stop.

LONELINESS AFTER LOSS

Do we ever timely overcome a loss of a loved one?

The complexity of grief knows no bounds

To ponder, to reflect the residue of thoughts associated with the individual

The intensity of pain and deep sadness associated with grief

The word grief revolves around the very soul of human tide

Structured by no earthly command

Then to dream, to drift in the futility of it all

It does matter to have these feelings

Without them we are not human

The healing is a slow process

Wretchedly slow in most cases

But it has to be gently overcome.

When you lose someone dear

You lose the connection with that person

You also lose the history associated with them.

There is no right or wrong way

To grieve, no book has ever been written to tell you how to cope

As time is very much an individualist thing.

Failing to do so can bring on unforeseen consequences

Loneliness

Laurie, user of Idea Store

Sitting at my desk
I feel the panic rising
Lack of warmth and welcoming
From people is surprising,
I have to find within myself
Courage to say hello
Or else I sit here alone
Feeling unsure and lonely, although
I understand that from within
We have to find our own peace,
Find the strength to love ourselves
So that within the puzzle we can piece
Together the answers so on no one we rely,
Then the loneliness will dissipate
When people say goodbye

Anonymous person

Loneliness

Everybody is lonely.
Even in a crowd.
Perhaps less when alone,
and able to make contact with oneself.

If you don't want to be alone,
then go spend time with others.
Or invite people to your home;
offer something or give of yourself.

What do you have to share?
What have you learnt from life?
What have you accumulated that you no longer
need?
What can you give away?

How do you encounter the world?
Are you here to take or contribute?
Have you even been able to receive yourself?
To connect with your own needs?
Do you have a sense of having something to do?
Is there something missing from your life?

Find the motivation to encounter that purpose
in the world,
and you'll be one of those connected & satisfied,
With inner meaning and a direction to go in.
For it is when you connect with yourself,
that you're no longer lonely.

Selma Piro October 2017

Thanks to everyone who participated in the event.

If you have a query related to loneliness and social isolation
please contact afia.khatun@towerhamlets.gov.uk