

Prevention and Wellbeing Factsheet: Older People's Health - Social Isolation

Key messages

- Social isolation and loneliness have a detrimental effect on health and wellbeing, both physical and mental; and can increase the risk of premature death.
- Older people are particularly vulnerable to social isolation and loneliness owing to factors such as a loss of friends, family, mobility or income.

Why is it important?

- Studies show that being lonely or isolated can impact negatively on blood pressure, and is closely linked to depression.
- The impact of loneliness and social isolation on an individual's health and wellbeing has cost implications for health and social care services. Investment is needed to ensure that voluntary organisations can continue to help alleviate loneliness and improve the quality of life of older people, reducing dependence on more costly services.

The picture in Barnet

- In Barnet, social isolation is especially prominent in elderly women who live alone, especially in areas of higher affluence and lower population density.

Other important messages to consider

- It's important to remember loneliness can – and does – affect anyone, of any age. Finding ways of reaching out to others and maintaining relationships that have been formed are paramount.
- Helping older people to connect with others and feel useful and appreciated again is important.
- Joining social/hobby groups or sports, and becoming a member of a community (such as a church or advocacy group) are great ways to both feel connected to something and meet others. Skills-building courses (usually offered at adult education institutions) and volunteer opportunities can be very helpful, as well.

Signposting to local services and online support

Age UK Barnet Neighbourhood services

Age UK Barnet is a voluntary organisation that serves and promotes the interests of older Barnet residents. It provides a wide range of activities, services and information about issues of interest to older people through its centres and in the community.

- <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/barnet/neighbourhood-services/>
- info@ageukbarnet.org.uk
- 020 8203 5040

High Barnet Good Neighbour Scheme

The High Barnet Good Neighbour Scheme offers practical help, transport, advice and friendship to the elderly, sick or anyone finding it difficult to cope

- Church House, Wood Street, Barnet, EN5 4BW
- 020 8441 5678
- hbgn@greenbee.net
- <http://www.goodneighbourscheme.org/>

The Good Neighbour Scheme for Mill Hill and Burnt Oak

The Good Neighbour Scheme for Mill Hill and Burnt Oak operates a befriending service in the Mill Hill and Burnt Oak areas. Where people are lonely or housebound, they may be able to arrange a regular weekly or fortnightly visit from one of their volunteers. This could be for a game of scrabble, cards or chess, a short walk round the block, or even just for a cup of tea and a chat

- The Wilberforce Centre, The Ridgeway, Mill Hill, NW7 1QU
- 020 8906 3340
- good.neighbours@yahoo.co.uk
- <http://www.thegoodneighbourschememhbo.com/index.htm>

Volunteering Barnet

Service provided by the charity Groundwork on behalf of Barnet Council. Aims to 'inspire and support volunteering' across the borough. Open from 10-4pm Monday to Friday (excluding Bank Holidays)

- 0300 365 9960
- <http://www.volunteeringbarnet.org.uk/>

Five Ways to Wellbeing

A set of evidence-based actions which promote wellbeing. They are Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning and Give

- <http://www.fivewaystowellbeing.org/>

Barnet U3A

Offers fun and friendship to older people who are no longer in full time employment. People can take part in a wide range of activities and attend regular meetings. There is a small membership fee to join

- <http://barnetu3a.org.uk/>

Shopmobility Scheme

This scheme between Barnet Council and Brent Cross offers people with limited mobility, the use of wheelchairs and powered scooters free of charge. It is designed to give people the freedom to move around and does not require someone to be registered disabled in order to use it. It is available at Brent Cross Shopping Centre 7 days a week. It is recommended that you call in advance to book

- 020 8457 4070
- <https://www.brentcross.co.uk/visitor-info/facilities/shopmobility>

Travel Mentoring Service

Offers advice on planning a journey using an accessible route. Can provide a mentor to accompany people on their first few journeys to help them gain confidence and become an independent traveller

- 020 3054 4361
- travelmentor@tfl.gov.uk

Travel Support Card

Transport for London produce a travel support card to help people communicate any assistance or information requirements they have with staff. It can use it on any of our services. The card is for anyone who finds travelling difficult, experiences problems while travelling and/or has a hidden disability. There is space on the card to write down what assistance or information you need

- 0843 222 1234
- <https://tfl.gov.uk/transport-accessibility/help-from-staff>
- <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/using-a-travel-support-card.pdf>

Some people with a high level of need require support from a **health or social care professional**. They can be directed to their GP or Social Care Direct (020 8359 5000; socialcaredirect@barnet.gov.uk; 07506 693707 for text messages; 020 8359 2000 for urgent out of hours queries) as appropriate.

For anyone with **caring responsibilities** who lives or works in the borough, Barnet Carers Centre can offer advice, information, emotional and practical support. They can be contacted on the following numbers: 020 8343 9698 (Adult Carers Outreach & Support Service and Carers Hospital Discharge Coordinator); 020 8432 2092 (Barnet Young Carers and Siblings); 020 8432 2091 (Community Home & Support Services) or via email admin@barnetcarers.org.