

Bexley Wellbeing Partnership meeting - Let's Talk About Loneliness and Isolation

25th January 2024
2.00-4.00pm

Alison Baker

Age UK Bexley



Bexley Wellbeing
Partnership

Age UK Report – ‘No one should have no one’



A survey of 1,000 GP practices found that **nearly 90%** felt that some patients were coming to the practice because they were lonely.

No one should have no one

Working to end loneliness
amongst older people



Liz Tragheim

St John The Evangelist Church, Sidcup



Bexley Wellbeing
Partnership

Tackling Isolation in the Community

St John the Evangelist Sidcup.

Background

- ▶ St John's is situated in the centre of Sidcup with excellent public transport links.
- ▶ It is a very large church with good catering facilities.
- ▶ Sidcup is a mixture of affluence and deprivation within quite close proximity.
- ▶ The immediate area around the church has a very high level of individuals who are over 80 and often living on their own.
- ▶ There are a number of care homes and retirement communities within walking distance of the church.

Isolation Issues

We have identified a number of isolated groups in our area:

- ✓ Vulnerable adults (including the elderly). We are aware of the impact of isolation - both mentally and physically - on vulnerable adults of all ages.
- ✓ Individuals living with dementia. There are a disproportionate number of people living with dementia in the vicinity of our church reflecting the higher age of our demographics. Carers are typically very isolated and struggle to have any meaningful social interaction.
- ✓ Ukrainian Refugees. Owing to the affluent nature of parts of Sidcup, we have a significant number of sponsors who opened up their homes to Ukrainian refugees on the increased invasion of Ukraine in 2022. There is also a significant pre-existing Ukrainian population who took in relatives post the invasion.

Isolation Issues

- ▶ Parents and carers of new-born children. They are often isolated leading to avoidable mental health issues. The playgroups/activity groups that are available, can be very expensive to join.

Our response

- ▶ We have set up a range of community projects aimed at alleviating these different causes of isolation.
- ▶ You will see from our flyers for each group, they are all set up with a purpose that does not highlight loneliness or isolation but they are all aimed at addressing it. Our view is that no community engagement activity should highlight in its publicity tackling loneliness.
- ▶ The groups are aimed at engaging with all members of the local community. They are not faith-based groups. They are community groups open to all.
- ▶ All our activities are free.

The Place of Welcome

- ▶ The Place of Welcome (POW) was set up as soon as was legally possible post Covid. It is open every Wednesday 10-1pm.
- ▶ It provides free coffee, tea, hot chocolate, speciality teas, cakes and biscuits. We also provide free wi-fi and a children's corner.
- ▶ Its aim is to provide a warm, welcoming space for anyone of any age to come and find company.
- ▶ We have carers with preschool children and elderly adults and everyone in between.
- ▶ We ensure if you arrive on your own, one of our team of volunteers will greet you at the door. We will ensure when you sit down, someone will ask if its ok to sit with you or we place you at a table with others.
- ▶ We have seen many, many friendships created and even romance!
- ▶ We have also created links with local groups - in particular the Alzheimer's' Society and Bexley Deaf Centre who attend regularly and use POW for meetings.
- ▶ During the winter months we also open 10-12pm on a Saturday providing pancakes and waffles.

Singing for the Brain

- This is a singing group for those living with dementia and their carers.
- As is well known, many individuals living with dementia can continue to sing when their ability to communicate generally has become greatly impaired.
- It meets every Tuesday 2.30-3.30 pm.
- We provide a safe and understanding environment for those living with dementia and their carers to come for a break and to socially connect with others with similar challenges and to have fun.
- We sing for about 30 minutes, have refreshments and then sing again for about 15 minutes.
- The group has proved very popular and we are currently upgrading our resources so that we can care for bigger numbers.

English Lessons for Ukrainian Refugees

- ▶ As some here may know, we have run an Emergency Appeal for Humanitarian Aid to Ukraine since shortly after the increased invasion in 2022. This includes providing humanitarian aid which is taken to Ukraine every month and practical support to Ukrainian refugees in Sidcup.
- ▶ We also provide spiritual support through periodic services focussing on Ukraine and we will be holding a Vigil on 24th February (as we did last year) to allow local Ukrainians to remember those they have lost. We have a Book of Remembrance in the church for those who have lost loved ones to record their names as they will not be able to mourn them in the usual way.
- ▶ Our English group was created when refugees started coming here as there was initially no additional language support available
- ▶ The lessons are weekly on a Tuesday 9.30-11.30 covering beginner and more advanced level.
- ▶ The class has become a place for displaced Ukrainians to meet not just to learn English but to see each other. We have created a micro community. Indeed, our group sang at the Mayoral Carol Service in December.
- ▶ One lady said to me “St Johns is a “magic place”. I am Orthodox so it is not my denomination but I know that if I have a problem, I can walk through the door on Tuesday and someone will help me.”

Busy Bees

- ▶ Busy Bees is our toddler group which meets on Fridays at 10.30-12pm.
- ▶ It provides preschoolers with free activities and access to a range of toys. There is also story-telling and refreshments.
- ▶ It provides an opportunity for parents and carers to meet each other and share their experiences of parenthood.

Larder

- ▶ We have a community larder which is open whenever the church is open.
- ▶ Our moto is “take what you need and give what you can”. Local people can and do regularly contribute to the larder.
- ▶ We provide tinned meat and vegetables, soup, cereals, fresh fruit and vegetables, pasta and sauces, hygiene products and biscuits.
- ▶ This is aimed at providing limited support to anyone who needs just a little more food/ toiletries to get through the week.
- ▶ If we notice anyone in need of a large amount of food, we are able to provide a voucher for a food bank.
- ▶ It is ,sadly, constantly used and has become a very important community resource.

Sarah Batten

The Exchange, Erith



Bexley Wellbeing
Partnership

Sarah Batten

The Exchange, Erith



Bexley Wellbeing
Partnership

Joss Duncan

BVSC



Bexley Wellbeing
Partnership

Volunteer Centre Bexley

Lets Talk About: Isolation & Lonliness



Volunteer *Centre*
Bexley

Volunteer Centre Bexley Team



Joss Duncan
Volunteer Centre
Manager



Marion Murphy
Volunteer
Development Officer



Gilles Andries
Health & Wellbeing
Volunteer Officer



Brett Pietersma
Digital Inclusion
Officer



Vicky Kelly
Volunteer Coordinator,
Community
Champions

“ —

Volunteer Centre Bexley supports,
promotes and develops
volunteering across the borough.

— ”

Support for Volunteers



- Volunteer Plus – a database which has all of the local volunteer opportunities advertised – 148 active currently. Volunteers can register and apply directly to the roles that interest them.
- Signposting service – more in depth support. This is either over the phone or face to face, to support people to find their ideal volunteer role.
- Free training courses for Volunteers – such as Introduction to Volunteering.
- Bi-monthly Volunteer newsletter – news, events.

Search for volunteering roles across Bexley

Postcode

Keyword (optional)

Search

Support for Volunteers

- We celebrate and empower volunteers as much as we can! Every year we hold a volunteer recognition event as part of Volunteer Week.
- Last June we had the Bexley VEA's – an awards event to highlight the incredible volunteer efforts happening across the borough.
- We run outreach sessions across the borough – in JCP, libraries, supermarkets, and other organisations
- We run 3–4 Volunteer Fairs a year – an opportunity for the general public to come along and find out more about the brilliant local volunteering opportunities on offer

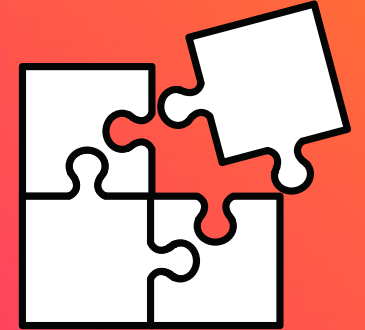


Bexley VEAs



Support for Organisations

Our focus is not just on the quantity of volunteering in Bexley – we want to increase the quality too. We support organisations with:



- Sharing information sheets and other guidance – these cover key topics such as how to create a volunteer role, volunteer recruitment and how to deal with problems.
 - Valuing Volunteers – a quality standard that recognises organisations who manage volunteers well and provides a positive, high-quality experience.
 - Free training – for people who manage volunteers. Sessions range from Developing Roles and Recruiting Volunteers to How to Demonstrate Impact as a Volunteer Manager.
-

Support for Organisations



- One-to-one guidance and support – ranging from advice on specific volunteer related issues to help writing or revising volunteering policies.
 - Quarterly Volunteer Managers Networks – for anyone who manages, supports or works with volunteers in Bexley. The networks are a space to discuss volunteering issues, and share updates and learn from each other.
 - 3-4 Volunteer Fairs a year – an opportunity for organisations with active volunteer roles to have a stall and recruit new volunteers.
-

Some stats from Sep 22 - Sep 23



1106

Volunteers Registered



89

New Organisations



1538

Volunteer Enquiries

Volunteering: Combatting Isolation & Loneliness

- Recent national survey on volunteer experience - roughly two-thirds agreed that their volunteering had helped them feel less isolated - particularly those aged 18 to 34.
 - Connection with people, places and your community.
 - Broadening your social skillset – interacting with new people or people you wouldn't normally interact with, can help to strengthen your social skills.
 - Structure & routine – helpful for lowering stress levels, forming good daily habits, taking better care of your health and feeling more productive.
 - Mutually beneficial for all parties involved – doing good makes you feel good!
-

Volunteer Opportunities in Bexley

Roles supporting residents that may be lonely or isolated

Greenwich & Bexley
Community Hospice



Irish Community Services
in Greenwich, Bexley & Lewisham



deafblinduk



& many more!

Follow us on socials to
stay up to date!



@vcbexley



@volunteercentrebexley



@vcbexley

Thank you for listening!



Joss@bvsc.co.uk



01322 524 682



Volunteer Centre
Bexley

Rachel Carder Peabody



Bexley Wellbeing
Partnership

Connecting Thamesmead

Rachel Carder, Connecting Thamesmead Programme Manager



Impact of loneliness

We can all feel lonely sometimes.

Prolonged and/or intense experiences of loneliness can have negative impacts on our lives such as:

- An **increase the risk of early mortality** by 26%
- Put people at greater **risk of poorer mental health**, including depression
- 62% of lonely young people say that 'feeling lonely makes them **lose confidence in themselves**' (Campaign to End Loneliness)

Loneliness
is a comparable
health risk as
smoking
15 cigarettes
a day



**CONNECTING
THAMESMEAD**

Connecting communities for
better health and wellbeing

Connecting Thamesmead

Broad overview of programme

Journey travelled

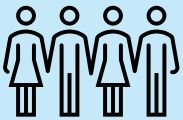
Involving you



What is Connecting Thamesmead?

Partnership between Peabody, the London Borough of Bexley and the Royal Borough of Greenwich

Increase connectedness - bring people together to improve mental well-being.



**CONNECTING
THAMESMEAD**

Connecting communities for
better health and wellbeing

Why Thamesmead?

HEALTH INEQUALITIES

DISCONNECTION

LACK OF AMENITIES

POCKETS OF CRIME



DIFFICULT TO NAVIGATE



**CONNECTING
THAMESMEAD**

Connecting communities for
better health and wellbeing

Early Activity (Shaping Healthier Places)

- Steering Group
- Mapping
- Engagement
- Community research
- Action planning
- Funding proposal



Community research insights

Risk Factors

- Lack of effective communication
- Impacts of COVID19 on mental health
- A 'segregated' Thamesmead
- Gaps in mental health provision

SHAPING PLACES: WELLBEING & CONNECTION IN THAMESMEAD

Bukola Joel, Joseph Griffiths, May 2021

TSIP



Protective Factors

- Environment
- Organic community cohesion

Thamesmead as a place and community

*Making the most of what
already exists is key*

*Some people don't have
the finances for wifi*

*Thamesmead can be very
disconnected from things
sometimes.*

*I rely heavily on
my neighbours*

*people need to feel that they
are involved in their area*

*That one and a half hours
is to connect to people*

*Not everyone is
technologically inclined*

*I feel at the moment that
people aren't feeling connected*

*People need motivating
... to feel connected*

Proposed interventions



Objectives

- Thamesmead residents are better connected
- Isolation and loneliness are less prevalent
- Consistent access to services and activities
- Formal services are better co-ordinated
- Informal community activity is better supported and sustained
- Residents are engaged and motivated to take ownership of their area
- The full value of Thamesmead's assets are realised



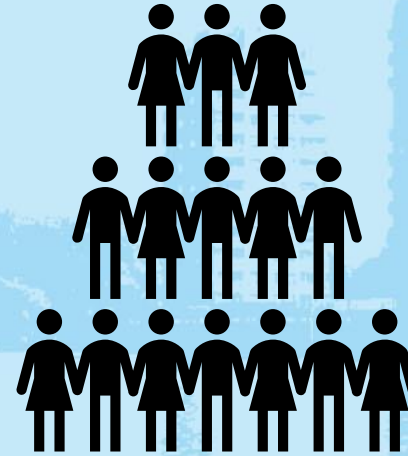
Programme Activity- Jan 2023 to date

- Delivery Group
- Mapping of opportunities
- Further consultation
- Resident led groups
- Thamesmead Community Fund
- Evaluation
- Thamesmead Connectors

How can I get involved?

TWO CURRENT OPPORTUNITIES:

- Oversight group
- Thamesmead Connectors group
- Contact Rachel at Rachel.Carder@Peabody.org.uk



Questions for speakers?

