

Southwark
Council

Loneliness Strategy

2020/21 – 2023/4

1. What is loneliness?

Loneliness and social isolation are not the same. Not everyone who is socially isolated feels lonely; and those who are not socially isolated may experience a sense of loneliness.

Loneliness is a feeling of lack or loss of companionship. It happens when we have a **mismatch between** the quantity and quality of social **relationships that we have, and those that we want.**

Social isolation refers to the **number of relationship and social interactions** someone has, and can be measured.

Why is loneliness important to tackle?

Being often or always lonely or socially isolated may have a long-lasting and negative impact on physical and mental health and wellbeing. On the other hand, social relationships and networks can promote health and wellbeing for people at any age

Figure 1: Impact on loneliness and isolation on health and wellbeing

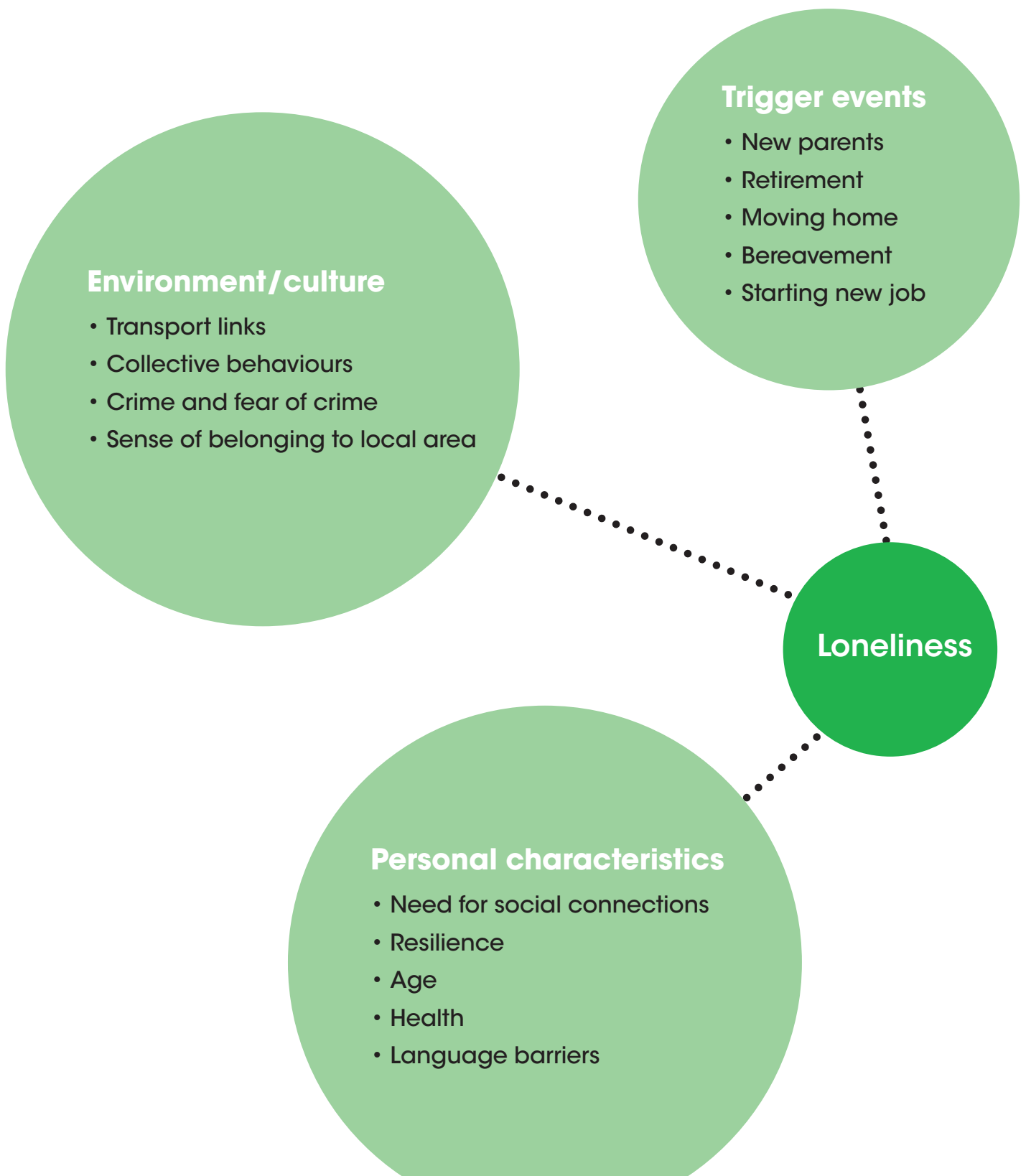


Being persistently lonely has a negative impact on both physical and mental health

Causes of loneliness

Loneliness and isolation are an individual experience; however a combination of personal circumstances, environmental factors and life events may contribute.

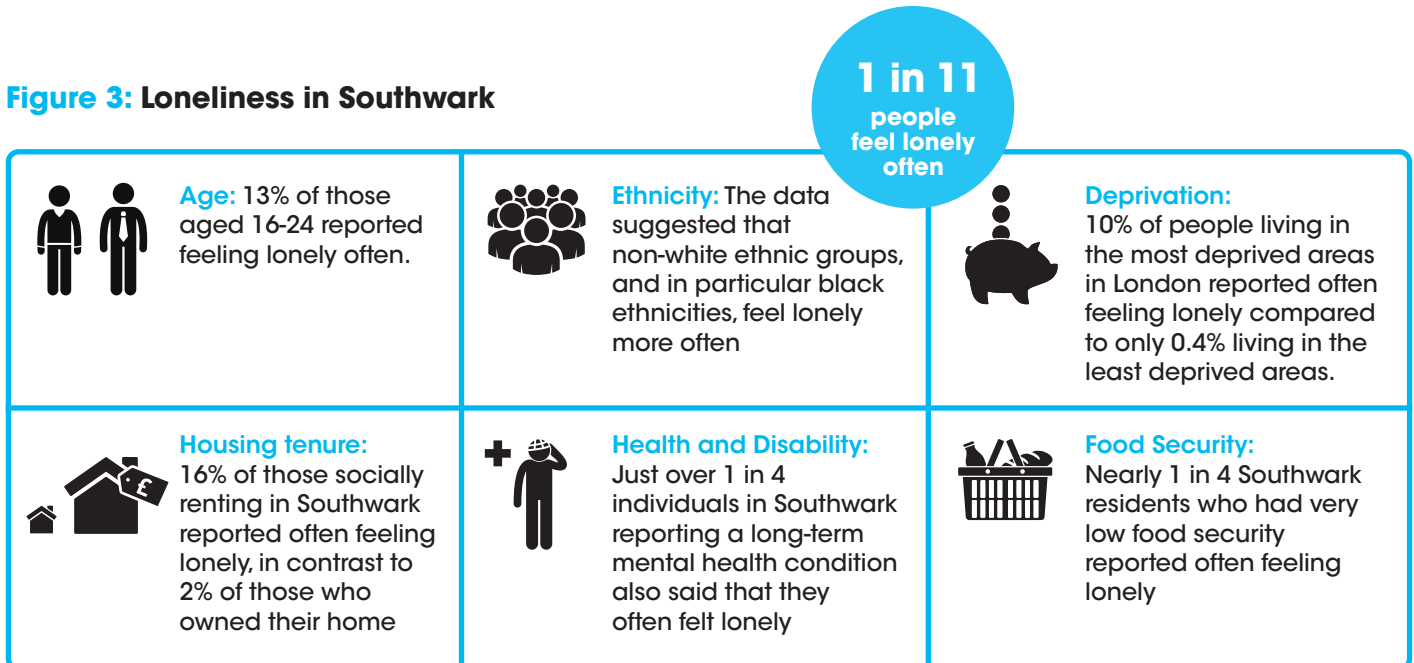
Figure 2: Causes of Loneliness



2. What does loneliness look like in Southwark?

The Survey of Londoners was conducted in 2019 and found that 8.8% of Southwark respondents reported feeling lonely often: comparable to findings in South East London and London as a whole.

Figure 3: Loneliness in Southwark



Research indicates that the following groups in Southwark are also at high risk of loneliness and social isolation:

- People in the LGBTQ community, particularly those from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The Armed Forces Community, particularly veterans¹.
- Carers, and especially unpaid carers
- Those with limited access to transport
- Parents of young children
- Those who experienced bereavement in the last two years

Let's Talk Loneliness public consultation

In Southwark, the Let's Talk Loneliness consultation was launched in November 2019 to start a conversation on loneliness. Overall, people in Southwark felt that loneliness was a big issue, and over 84% gave it a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5.



Those perceived to be at higher risk

- Older people and pensioners
- People with a mental or physical disability
- People with one or more long-term condition
- People who are unemployed
- Migrants
- New parents

Those perceived to be at lower risk

- Young people
- People from BAME backgrounds

This indicates that work needs to be done to raise awareness of loneliness in young people and people from BAME backgrounds.

3. Tackling loneliness in Southwark: Our vision

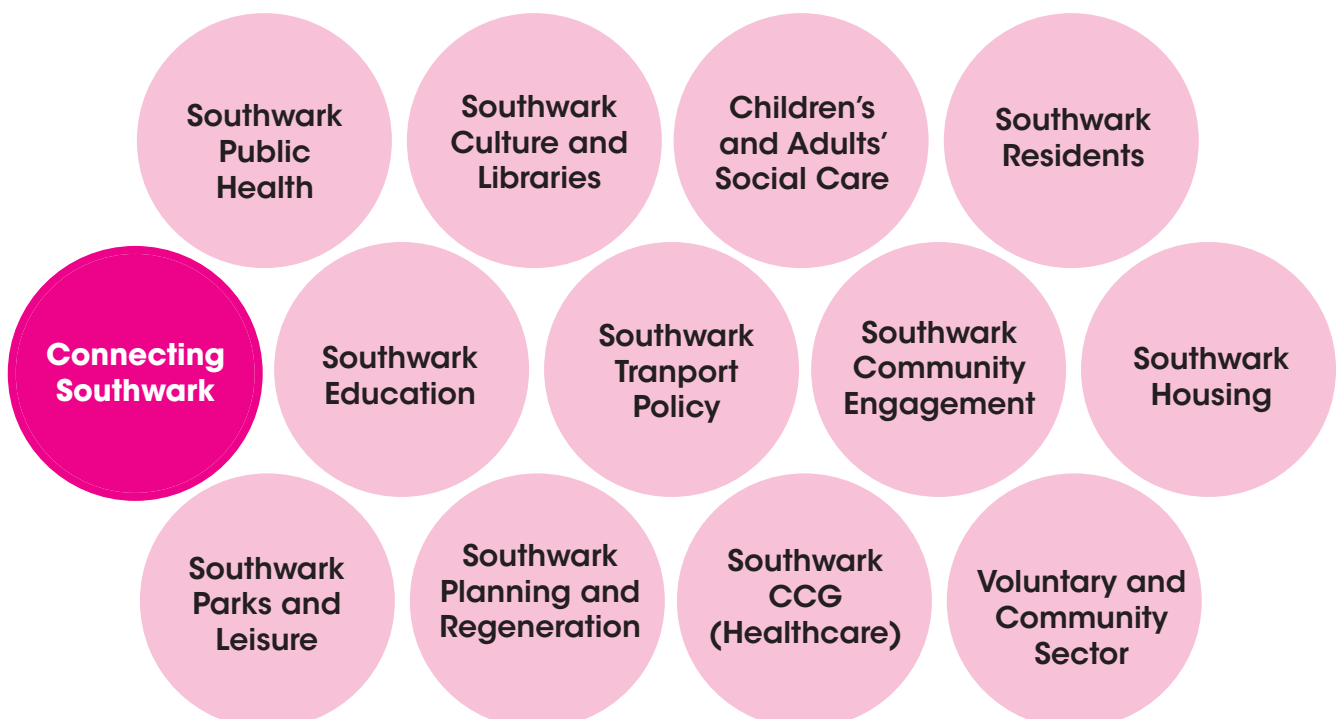
Southwark Council and its partners have developed an ambitious vision:

“Southwark is a place where everyone feels safe, welcomed, connected, included and valued, and where loneliness is tackled as early as possible. In Southwark, everyone is empowered to make all the social connections that they would like to have within their community”

Rather than focusing on a specific age group, this strategy will take a “life-course” approach, which means we will aim to tackle loneliness as early as possible, and throughout people’s lives, because loneliness can affect anyone, regardless of their age.

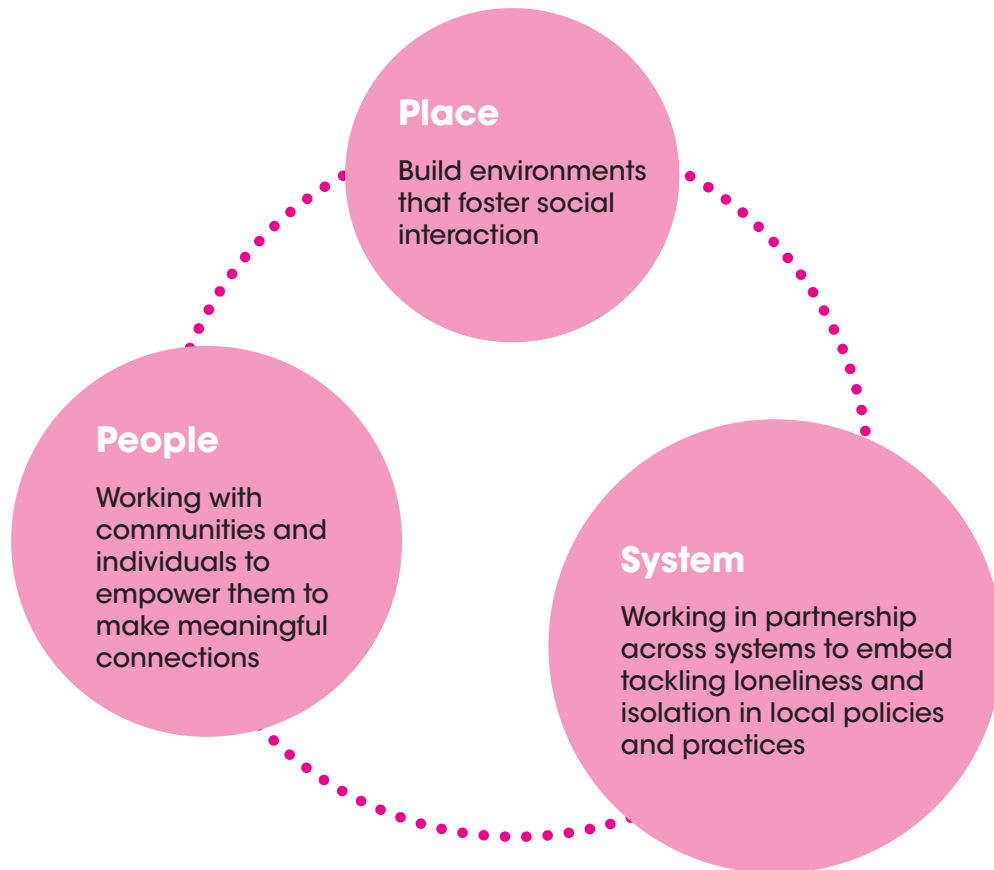
Loneliness and social isolation are very complex issues. They are linked with inequalities and have numerous health and social implications. As such, these issues cannot and should not be tackled in isolation. The diagram below summarises the key parties involved:

Figure 4: Partners involved in developing the loneliness and social isolation strategy



Addressing loneliness and social isolation: a framework

Taking into account the evidence on the causes of loneliness, the existing frameworks for tackling it and local residents' ideas and suggestions, this strategy aims to achieve its vision through three workstreams:



People Workstream

Theme 1: Facilitating new connections

We will work with local partners to ensure that we have a vibrant offer available to local people, to help them try something new and make new connections, through encouraging volunteering, helping people to keep active, and supporting intergenerational activities and identity-based groups such as faith communities, BME communities and LGBTQ+.

Theme 2: Interrupting the triggers

We will step up our support to local residents who are moving from one life phase to another, including supporting those recently bereaved, and those who have become carers, as well as welcoming new residents to the borough.

Theme 3: Finding new and innovative ways to tackle loneliness

We will look for new ways to engage with our residents and help them build local connections and a sense of belonging, harnessing new technology where appropriate. We will use behavioural insight to target those groups who are most at risk.

Place Workstream

Theme 1: Maximising use of our community assets

We currently have a wide range of community assets that are under-utilised, because people don't know about them, or are unable to access them. We will improve accessibility, as well as increasing access to transport for those who need it. We will collate a local directory of services that will allow local people to see what opportunities are available to them.

Theme 2: Fostering a positive culture in the borough

We will build upon existing work, to try to build a local sense of social cohesion. We will also map intergenerational social opportunities and foster more "eat together" projects to bring local people together over food. We will work with local employers to highlight the issue of workplace loneliness, and ask for loneliness to be recognised in the Good Work Standard.

Theme 3: Creating new spaces for connection

We will include loneliness as a key consideration when developing new neighbourhoods. We will work with developers to ensure that community hubs and spaces are thoughtfully delivered, as well as working with our existing estates to develop and activate community spaces, including spaces for growing food.

System workstream

Theme 1: Changing the narrative around loneliness

We want to raise awareness of loneliness and social isolation in our borough and tackle the stigma surrounding it. We will continue our local conversation about loneliness, and try to find new ways to enable people to ask for help without feeling awkward or embarrassed.

Theme 2: Improving system navigation

We will work with health, care, and Voluntary and Community Sector partners to develop a more coordinated model for social prescribing across the borough via the Southwark Social Prescribing Network. We will also develop and roll out training on loneliness and isolation to professionals in the borough, to ensure that opportunities to intervene are not lost.

Theme 3: Taking a whole-council approach

We, as a council, will embed this strategy within our processes, to consider loneliness and social isolation in our everyday work. We will routinely consider these issues as part of new council plans and policies, and consider loneliness and social isolation measures as outcomes for new initiatives.

4. Action plan

Principle	Theme	Action	Owner	Other stakeholders	Deadline	
<p>People: Working with communities and individuals to empower them to make meaningful connections</p>	Facilitating new connections	1.1 Work with Voluntary and Community Organisations to create a directory of local volunteering opportunities, or help them advertise their vacancies on websites such as https://do-it.org/	Southwark Consultation and Involvement Team	Community Southwark	January 2021	
		1.2 Keep abreast of any progress with the development of the Sport and Physical Activity Action Plan to ensure all opportunities for integration are exploited	Sport and Leisure Team	Southwark Public Health	Work started and ongoing	
		1.3 Increase support for faith, BME and LGBTQ+ communities activities and community projects: working at micro-level to reach those who are isolated and migrant communities	As per the Faith Strategy Action Plan, the working group for this is to be established; working with LGBTQ+ network		TBC	
	Interrupting the triggers	1.4 Pilot a project to connect a local primary/secondary school with a local Care Homes or Sheltered Housing Unit	Education / Housing			September 2020
		1.5 Further promote "Southwark Presents" with regular tweets and leaflets at key locations, such as local shops, public spaces and GP's waiting rooms	Southwark Events Team	Southwark Comms Team		March 2021
		1.6 Explore the possibility to develop a 'Welcome pack' for all new Southwark residents to be included with the first council tax statement. This should include information on local services such as leisure centres, libraries and local TRA organisations	Southwark Public Health	Housing, Benefits and Revenue Department (Council Tax)		March 2021
		1.7 When registering a death with the Council, information is offered on local support groups (or Wellbeing Hub)	Southwark Registry Service	Wellbeing Hub?		September 2020
		1.8 All new mothers giving birth at Southwark hospitals to be provided with information on local children centres and parents groups, either before being discharged or at first home visit	Local Hospitals, Health Visitors	Southwark Public Health		January 2021
		1.9 Ensure that the upcoming re-development of the Dementia care pathway takes into account loneliness and Social Isolation	Older People Services Commissioning Team	Southwark Public Health		Work started and ongoing
		1.10 Re-design the current Carer Pathway	Adult Social Care	Modernise Team		Work started and ongoing
		1.11 As part of the Digital Public Health work programme, explore the use of new technologies to help alleviate loneliness and isolation	Southwark Public Health			Work started and ongoing

Principle	Theme	Action	Owner	Other stakeholders	Deadline
Place: Building environments that foster social interactions	Maximising use of our community assets	2.1 Improve accessibility for all residents and visitors by improving access to public toilets facilities	Southwark Highways Team		Ongoing – end TBC
		2.2 Help to publicise TFL accessible travel schemes such as Dial-a-ride or Travel Mentoring through council channels like Southwark Life and our digital communications	Southwark Communication Team	Transport Policy, Highways Team	June 2020
		2.3 Make key professionals such as social workers, housing officers, GPs and Job Centres staff aware of TFL accessible transport schemes	Transport Planning Policy	Public Health, Highways Team	September 2020
	Fostering a positive culture in the borough	2.4 Understand and explore opportunities for Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) by mapping existing community assets and develop a service directory of activities available in the Borough	Partnership Southwark ?	Community Southwark, Wellbeing Hub	TBC
		2.5 Continue to support the "Elephant Says Hi" Project with information and contacts. This project is not directly managed by the Council	Various Council department as needed	LendLease	Work started and ongoing
		2.6 Explore what the current offer is around social eating for older and isolated people in the borough including intergenerational opportunities	Southwark Public Health ?	Southwark Public Health	Work started and ongoing
		2.7 Develop an 'eat together' philosophy at the neighbourhood level which supports better social cohesion and integration. Map the kitchen, café spaces that could be used on estates and in housing associations to run community cafes, cooking groups and shared spaces for batch cooking.	SFAA, Community Southwark, SGTO, TRAs	Local Economy Team	June 2021
		2.8 Research best practice for tackling loneliness in the workplace and lobby for reference to loneliness to be included in Mayor's Good Work Standard	Southwark Public Health	Public Health	June 2021
	Creating new spaces for connection	2.9 Ensure that all the upcoming Regeneration Charters include an outcome measure relative to social isolation and/or loneliness	Southwark Regeneration Team	Public Health	Work started and ongoing
		2.10 Continue to support and activate the Old Kent Road Community Hub, as part of the Mayor's Social Integration Hub	Southwark Regeneration Team, Southwark Consultation and Involvement Team	Southwark Public Health	Work started and ongoing
		2.11 Deliver two Community Hubs for Older People and Carers and People with Disabilities and Carers	Adult Social Care and NHS Southwark		December 2020
		2.12 Support sustainable food growing projects and healthy cooking skills classes, particularly on housing estates, with at-risk communities and in areas where there is currently little provision. Identify community assets such as allotments and community gardens that can support estate and neighbourhood activity.	SFAA, Community Southwark, SGTO, TRAs Housing	Southwark Consultation and Involvement Team	TBC
		2.13 Explore opportunities for promoting social connections through the Great Estates programme			TBC

Principle	Theme	Action	Owner	Other stakeholders	Deadline
<p>System: Working in partnership across systems to embed tackling loneliness and isolation in local policies and practices</p>	Changing the narrative around loneliness	3.1 Build upon the "Let's Talk Loneliness" campaign to continue a community conversation on loneliness and isolation and inform the Loneliness Strategy action plan	Southwark Public Health	Southwark Consultation and Involvement Team	First campaign Nov-Dec 2019 repeated every 2 years
		3.2 Develop a "Resource pack" on loneliness and social isolation and make it available to all organisations in Southwark, so that they can run their own workshops on this topic	Southwark Public Health	Community Southwark, Wellbeing Hub, Age UK	July 2020
	Improving system navigation	3.3 Develop online training available to all Council Staff to help them identify signs of loneliness and social isolation	Southwark Public Health	Southwark Organisational Development team	September 2020
		3.4 Bid to include a presentation on loneliness and social isolation at one of the GP Protected Learning Time session in 2020-21	Southwark CCG	Southwark Public Health	March 2021
	Taking a whole-council approach	3.5 Rolling out a strength-based approach across the social care workforce	Adult Social Care		December 2020
		3.6 Work in partnership with the Healthcare sector, the Council and Community and Voluntary Organisations to develop a model of social prescribing that helps to connect local residents to relevant services that can tackle loneliness and social isolation	Partnership Southwark	Southwark Public Health	Work started and ongoing
		3.7 Train all Resident Services and Income officers in recognising signs of loneliness and isolation, and enabled them to refer residents to community organisations such as Southwark Wellbeing Hub (i.e. direct referrals forms)	Housing, Wellbeing Hub		December 2020
		3.8 Change template of all Gateways reports to include the impact that a new service or proposed changes to existing services may have on loneliness and social isolation as a key issue for consideration	Southwark Commissioning and Procurement?		March 2021
			Adult Social Care Commissioning?		March 2021
		3.10 Considering adding another criteria for the awarding of the Neighbourhood funds (and/or other funding for communities) to encourage proposals that also aim at tackling loneliness and isolation	Southwark Consultation and Involvement Team		Sept 2020 for Neighbourhood Fund 2021-22
		3.11 Timely advertise new funding opportunities for tackling loneliness and isolation to local Voluntary and Community organisations	Community Southwark		Ongoing