Be Social, Be Well in the Harrogate District

This strategic framework sets out how organisations across the Harrogate district, from small voluntary organisations through to large statutory bodies, can consider what actions we can individually and collectively take to eliminate loneliness across all age groups in the places where we live, work and volunteer over the next decade. It offers a vision, ambitions, questions to consider, and links to toolkits and resources to support action planning and practical delivery. It aligns with **'Be Social, Be Well: A Strategic Framework for Tackling Loneliness in North Yorkshire'**, and the national strategy **'A Connected Society: a strategy for tackling isolation and loneliness'**. To realise these ambitions and actions, we need strategic and community leaders across our system to help more people to **be social and be well** through their organisations and groups**.**

Taken from 'A Connected Society: a strategy for tackling isolation and loneliness' and reproduced with permission from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. Artist: Zuhura Plummer.

Our 5 strategic ambitions:

- **Eliminate stigma across our communities and system;**
- **Make social connections easier;**
- **Promote kindness in communities**
- **Develop and nurture meaningful relationships**
- **Co-design and build enlightened services**

> **Our Vision**
> **For everyone in the Harrogate district to be able to have strong social relationships; with families, friends and with communities supporting each other, especially at vulnerable times in our lives; and where loneliness is recognised and tackled without stigma.**

1. **To eliminate stigma across our communities and system**

   Our strategy work began in 2019, and with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 onwards we are already seeing a shift in how loneliness is perceived and the prevalence in our communities. Where we had previously identified 'trigger points' such as family breakdown and retirement, there are now many more people in our district facing the impact of loneliness, whether temporarily or more permanently.   Our work on identifying risk factors and mitigation will inevitably shift, with more open conversations about loneliness being more easily possible and acceptable. However, through our paid and voluntary work we can all take the opportunity to start those conversations, discover what matters to people and help people **to be social and be well.** Here are four key questions for all citizens, employees and volunteers to consider as part of the collective effort of eliminating the stigma around loneliness.

   > **Key questions for partners to reflect on in their practice**
   > - What do we know about loneliness, its causes, its risk factors and consequences across the communities we live and work in?
   > - What conversations do we need to start and how?
   > - What steps can we take to eliminate the stigma of loneliness and reduce the risks?
   > - How can we ensure the stories of good practice are celebrated across our communities and system?

2. **To make social connections easier; through the development and use of community infrastructure to support and enable people to be social and be well**

   As a district we have good community infrastructure and assets, established over many years of community action. This includes physical resources such as buildings and transport, as well as information systems and a skilled and experienced paid and volunteer workforce. We have asset mapping data available to support us and to help us understand what we have and where there are gaps in provision. The pandemic has seen the rapid development of new and existing local groups to meet needs, changes in the ways in which statutory and voluntary services operate, and relationships between organisations across our system expanded and re-shaped at speed. We can capitalise on this by ensuring this new infrastructure is resourced to continue to engage and support our communities as part of any recovery plan at district and county levels.

> **Key questions for partners to reflect on**
> - What do we know about the current support available to our communities?
> - What steps can we take to underpin that support?
> - How can we recognise the symptoms of loneliness and equip people to take appropriate action?
> - How can we ensure tackling loneliness is part of any recovery plan and future planning?

3. To promote kindness in communities; building a culture that encourages and supports connected communities

Volunteering has been an inherent strength in our district for many years. The pandemic has highlighted this, with impromptu voluntary acts being mobilised and organised at very local level, larger volunteer recruitment campaigns being filled at speed, and furloughed staff having opportunities to volunteer in a way not previously possible. We can now harness this power within and across our communities to ensure this culture of kindness remains, supporting it with co-ordination, encouragement and good practice.

> **Key questions for partners to reflect on**
> - What do we know about volunteering in our organisation?
> - What more could we do to enable the volume and quality of volunteering?
> - How does our culture promote kindness in our communities?
> - How do we promote and celebrate volunteering in our communities and organisations?

4. To develop and nurture meaningful relationships

We can use our collective strengths and resources to enable people's relationships. We know that the environment and relationships people experience when interacting with services, groups and other individuals determines how comfortable people feel about expressing their loneliness. Building these trusted relationships can enable conversations about loneliness and isolation to take place and help people connect with local support. Across our system we can ensure our workforce makes every action count and are able to make appropriate referrals to local support in the community.

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> **Key questions for partners to reflect on**
> - What measures do we have in place to enable meaningful relationships?
> - How do we build trust and understanding of people's needs?
> - How can we develop our workforce to ensure every action counts and people can connect with local support in their communities?

5. **To co-design and build enlightened services; using local evidence and insights to identify barriers and solutions to participation, such as transport and access to information and digital technology**

   We know our district well; we will learn from the pandemic and what the changes we have made to our combined response tell us. We can use this system learning to co-design new solutions and look to proactively invest in early intervention and prevention. We have demonstrated we can develop and deliver 'what works' at pace. We can build on this as we reshape and commission services to ensure people are able to easily access early intervention and prevention services in their communities.

> **Key questions for partners to reflect on**
> - How are the services we commission or provide based on the best available evidence and insights?
> - What are the barriers and enablers to developing social participation?
> - What more do we need to know before we commission or deliver services?

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Measures to be reported on an annual basis to Harrogate District Public Services Leadership Board (PSLB) against a set of 2020/21 baselines each May as part of Mental Health Awareness Week (first baseline report due in May 2021). Community First Yorkshire will compile the Annual Progress Report as part of its three year strategic grant investment from Harrogate Borough Council (HBC).

	Strategic Ambition	Harrogate District Success Measures
1	Eliminate stigma across our communities and system	a) Number of system organisations leading by example within their own organisations and in local media b) Improved citizen feedback to questions regarding loneliness stigma posed in existing HBC, North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) and Healthwatch surveys
2	Make social connections easier	c) Annual system investment in initiatives to tackle loneliness d) External investment secured to help tackle loneliness through collaborative working and bidding
3	Promote kindness in communities	e) Number of partners participating in an annual system-wide campaign to promote neighbourliness, kindness and volunteering f) Improved citizen feedback to questions posed in existing HBC, NYCC and Healthwatch surveys regarding neighbourliness, kindness and volunteering
4	Develop and nurture meaningful relationships	g) Development of an inclusive system workforce development programme to equip staff and volunteers to tackle loneliness leading to improved mental health and wellbeing. For example partners could open up their motivational interviewing, health coaching, mental health first aid and Make Every Action Count etc. to other sectors h) Produce a set of annual case studies to promote good practice in tackling loneliness and to inspire others
5	Co-design and build enlightened services	i) Number of new co-designed solutions co-funded by system partners and external funding or reshaped or improved services informed by people with lived experience j) Number of collaborative partnership approaches to tackle loneliness and the wider social determinants of health inequalities e.g. housing, community safety

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Links to resources

- Mitigating the wider health effects of Covid-19 pandemic response www.bmj.com/content/369/bmj.m1557
- communityfirstyorkshire.org.uk/projects/tlc-north-yorkshire ***
- www.harrogate.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/4391/od27_harrogate_local_authority_health_profile_2018.pdf
- https://communitysupportny.org.uk
- https://hadca.org.uk/WheretoTurn and https://northyorkshireconnect.org.uk
- www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-society-strategy-building-a-future-that-works-for-everyone

*** Includes the full Harrogate Loneliness Strategy and Community Asset Mapping documents produced by HADCA with funding from Harnessing the Power of Communities.

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