

<b>Committee(s)</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee	08 May 2017
<b>Subject:</b> Social Wellbeing Panel Update	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Community and Children's Services	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Adam Johnstone, Strategy Officer	

### Summary

This report presents an update on the work of the City of London Corporation's Social Wellbeing Panel.

The Social Wellbeing Panel was formed to learn more about how to reduce loneliness in the City of London and to hear about successful interventions implemented elsewhere. A report has been produced detailing the Panel's findings and recommendations.

These have been used to develop a proposed Social Wellbeing Strategy, which will be presented for approval at the Community and Children's Services Grand Committee on 11 May 2017 and the Health and Wellbeing Board on 16 June 2017.

The report has also been sent to The Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness, a partnership between Members of Parliament, policy makers and the voluntary sector, aiming raise the profile of loneliness as a national public health issue.

### Recommendation

Members are asked to note the report.

### Main Report

#### Background

1. A recent report from Age UK found that one in three people aged 65 or over are lonely. This is an important public health issue. Loneliness leads directly to lower personal wellbeing, it has a significant impact on physical and mental health, which in turn leads to earlier than expected health and social care needs. It can also mean that someone is more at risk of abuse or neglect.
2. The City Corporation already provides a number of services to tackle social isolation, including the Reach Out Network of groups for older people, carers and people with a diagnosis of dementia; a befriending service commissioned from Age Concern and a range of classes, groups and events delivered through the libraries, Golden Lane Leisure Centre, Adult Skills and Education Service, Spice Time Credits and the Neighbourhood Development Team.

3. However, there are still reasons to believe that City of London residents may be at risk of loneliness. In 2014, the City Corporation, together with Healthwatch, held a series of Aging Well in the City events. Residents consistently raised tackling social isolation and loneliness as a priority. The City's older population and the prevalence of single person households also make loneliness statistically more likely.
4. Doing more to tackle social isolation has subsequently been identified as a priority in the DCCS Business Plan, in the City Corporation's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, in the Mental Health Strategy and by the Adult Advisory Group.
5. The City Corporation commissioned Dr Roger Green from Goldsmiths, University of London, to investigate the extent, causes and possible solutions to loneliness for older people in the City of London. His research was presented to the Community and Children's Services Grand Committee in July 2016 and has underpinned our work on this issue.
6. In September 2016, the Community and Children's Services Grand Committee approved the formation of a Social Wellbeing Panel to learn more about how to reduce loneliness in the City of London and to hear about successful interventions implemented elsewhere.

### **The Social Wellbeing Panel**

7. The panel heard from experts on social isolation amongst new parents, Black and Minority Ethnic older people, dispersed communities and people with physical and mental health issues. These groups were chosen based on Dr Green's research and after analysing feedback from a public consultation.
8. Despite these groups having different circumstances, shared themes emerged from each evidence session. The Panel agreed that these themes should be the building blocks of any intervention to reduce loneliness.
9. Based on this evidence, the Social Wellbeing Panel recommended a number of ideas for further investigation and possible inclusion in the City Corporation's Social Wellbeing Strategy.
10. Brief summaries of each theme, along with their accompanying recommendations, are provided below. The full report of the Social Wellbeing Panel, *Improving Social Wellbeing in the City of London*, is provided as Appendix A.

### **Theme One: Asset Based Community Development**

11. An asset based approach makes the most of the skills and talents already present in the community. This recognises that local people know what is best for their community, that peer support is the most effective way of helping people through difficulties and that volunteering is a way to wellbeing in its own right.

12. The actions proposed under this theme include a Community Connector service to link up individuals based on communities of interest; continued neighbourhood development work to grow communities of place and targeted interventions for three groups of City residents at greater risk of experiencing loneliness; expectant and new parents, older LGBT people and older BAME women.

### **Theme Two: Shared Spaces**

13. Shared spaces are essential if relationships are to develop naturally and if community building is to take place. Spaces should be welcoming, informal and host activities with a wide appeal, while services should seek to engage with people in the places where they naturally go.
14. The actions proposed under this theme include exploring the feasibility of capital works in Barbican library to create a new community space, proposals to enhance current community spaces at Golden Lane and Mansell Street and working with other community spaces such as supermarkets, places of worship and the GP's surgery.

### **Theme Three: Early Intervention**

15. Providing timely support can limit the effects of loneliness. This can be done by offering light-touch interventions in relaxed settings, which can encourage people to open up and seek help for more serious issues, and by having sustained and consistent communication reiterating that help that is available.
16. The actions proposed under this theme include increasing awareness of social activity with a one-stop website and a City 'Over 50s' guide, including social wellbeing outreach work in the work of leisure services and building partnerships between City Corporation services and the Clinical Commissioning Group's pilot Social Prescribing Service.

### **Theme Four: Building Skills**

17. Increasing the ways in which people can communicate, either through improving language skills or by getting online, means there is a greater chance to enjoy social opportunities that were not available to them before. Developing interpersonal skills can also help people form and maintain relationships.
18. The actions proposed under this theme include providing additional ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes for those residents who need them and providing IT training to enable more people to get online and connect with friends and family or with those who share their interests.

### **Current Position**

19. The Chairman of Community and Children's Services has sent the report of the Social Wellbeing Panel to The Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness, a partnership

between Members of Parliament, policy makers and the voluntary sector, aiming to highlight the growing crisis of loneliness and to find ways to overcome it.

20. The work of the Social Wellbeing Panel and the actions it recommends have been used to develop the Social Wellbeing Strategy. This is provided as Appendix B and will be presented for approval at the Community and Children's Services Grand Committee for approval on 11 May 2017 and the Health and Wellbeing Board on 16 June 2017.
21. A month long public consultation has been carried out on the Social Wellbeing Strategy, with face to face events, a consultation website and leaflets in libraries and other public venues. Fifty-five people responded and 80 per cent agreed or strongly agreed with the Social Wellbeing Strategy.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

22. The second priority in the Community and Children's Services Business Plan 2015–17 is to promote wellbeing so that people in the City feel safe, are socially connected and supported, and feel a sense of pride and satisfaction where they live in their community. Reducing social isolation and loneliness supports this objective.

### **Conclusion**

23. The Social Wellbeing Panel has heard from a range of expert witnesses on how social isolation and loneliness can be reduced. It has made a number of recommendations, which are presented in its report. These will be shared with The Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness and have also informed the development of the proposed Social Wellbeing Strategy.

### **Appendices**

- Appendix A - Improving Social Wellbeing in the City of London
- Appendix B – Social Wellbeing Strategy 2017

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