

Committee(s)	Dated:
Community and Children's Services – For Decision Health and Wellbeing Board – For Decision	11 May 2017 16 June 2017
Subject: Social Wellbeing Strategy	Public
Report of: Director of Community and Children's Services	For Decision
Report author: Adam Johnstone, Strategy Officer	

Summary

This report presents a proposed Social Wellbeing Strategy for the City of London Corporation.

Tackling social isolation and loneliness has been identified as a priority in the DCCS Business Plan, in the City Corporation's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Mental Health Strategy and by the Adult Advisory Group.

The Strategy recommends that the City Corporation should take a number of actions to reduce loneliness and improve social wellbeing. These are based on community research carried out by Dr Roger Green of Goldsmiths, University of London and recommendations made by the Social Wellbeing Panel.

Recommendation

Members are asked to approve the proposed Social Wellbeing Strategy.

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 and 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 a person 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 those 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 Sport & Fitness Centre, the 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 and Mental Health Strategy and by the Adult Advisory Group.
5. The City Corporation commissioned Dr Roger Green of Goldsmiths, University of London to investigate the extent and causes of 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 the development of the Social Wellbeing Strategy.
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 Panel heard from experts on social isolation among several different groups and made recommendations that form the basis of the Social Wellbeing Strategy.

Social Wellbeing Strategy

7. The Social Wellbeing Strategy is presented in Appendix A. This looks at the evidence for the extent and effects of loneliness, explores what interventions have been most successful elsewhere and recommends a number of actions the City Corporation should take to reduce loneliness. These are presented below in four themes.
8. A month-long public consultation was carried out, with face-to-face events, a consultation website and leaflets in libraries and other public venues. In total, 55 people responded, and 80 per cent agreed or strongly agreed with the Social Wellbeing Strategy. A summary of the consultation is provided in Appendix B.

Theme One: Asset-Based Community Development

9. 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.
10. 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 lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT)

people and older black and minority ethnic (BAME) women.

Theme Two: Shared Spaces

11. Shared spaces are essential if relationships are to develop naturally and if community building is to take place. Spaces should be welcoming and informal and host activities with a wide appeal, while services should seek to engage with people in the places where they naturally go.
12. The actions proposed under this theme include exploring the feasibility of capital works at 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 GP surgeries.

Theme Three: Early Intervention

13. Providing timely support can limit the effects of loneliness. Support can be provided by offering light-touch interventions in relaxed settings, which encourages people to open up and seek help for more serious issues, and by having sustained and consistent communication reiterating that help is available.
14. 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 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

15. Increasing the ways in which residents can communicate, by helping them to either improve their language skills or get online, means they can enjoy social opportunities that were previously unavailable to them. Encouraging people to develop interpersonal skills can also help them form and maintain relationships.
16. The actions proposed under this theme include providing additional English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes for residents and IT training to enable more people to get online and connect with friends and family or those who share their interests.

Next Steps

17. If the Social Wellbeing Strategy is approved, officers will develop an action plan detailing how each of the proposed actions will be progressed. The action plan will include an assessment of the likely cost of each action.
18. It is proposed that a bid is submitted to use funds from the Community Infrastructure Levy for capital works in the Barbican Library.

19. At this stage, officers believe the actions in the Social Wellbeing Strategy would not require significant additional funding and could be resourced from within existing budgets such as the Better Care Fund.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

20. 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 in and satisfaction with the community where they live. Reducing social isolation and loneliness supports this objective.

Financial Implications

21. The financial implications are as set out in the report.

Legal Implications

22. Section 1 of the Care Act 2014 requires local authorities to promote individual wellbeing, and this strategy is in accordance with the City of London's statutory duty.

Equalities Implications

23. An Equalities Test of Relevance exercise has been carried out for the Social Wellbeing Strategy, attached as Appendix C. As this found that the strategy would have either a positive or neutral impact on all protected characteristic groups, a full Equality Impact Assessment has not been carried out.

Conclusion

24. The proposed Social Wellbeing Strategy would enhance the City Corporation's efforts to reduce social isolation and loneliness. This is an important way to improve the health and wellbeing of City residents. Socially connected individuals have better physical and mental health, develop support needs later in life and are at less risk of abuse.

Appendices

- Appendix A – Social Wellbeing Strategy
- Appendix B – Public consultation summary
- Appendix C – Equalities Test of Relevance

Adam Johnstone

Strategy Officer – Housing and Adult Social Care

T: 020 7332 3453

E: adam.johnstone@cityoflondon.gov.uk