



UKRI Loneliness & Social Isolation in Mental Health Research Network

Newsletter #2 - April 2019

What have we been up to?

- On a Thursday night in late March, **Dr James Kirkbride**, Reader in Epidemiology in the Division of Psychiatry, UCL, and Network co-investigator, gave a sold-out Café Scientifique at the Barbican Centre on the role that our social and built environments play in shaping our risk of mental health problems. He was joined on stage by Senior Curator at the Wellcome Collection, Emily Sargent, who recently curated Wellcome’s “Living with Buildings” exhibition. Focusing on James’ research on how being born, brought up or living in more urban, oppressive and potentially more socially isolated environments can lead to a greater risk of experiencing psychotic disorders, the event highlighted the history, paradoxes and opportunities in this research field, greatly enhanced by fantastic audience participation and engagement. To read more about James’ work, you can visit www.psyllife.eu or follow him on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/jameskirkbride).
- On 17th April Sonia, Alexandra, Mary and Ellie **met up with reps from the other UKRI-funded networks** to explore how we can work together to keep mental health on the national and international agenda, and Ellie and Mary have separately met with other network coordinators to start sharing ideas.
- We’ve had several meeting with our amazing **Lived Experience group**, who are involved in planning our events and in our ongoing consultation process. We’re in the process of recruiting 6 more members and will be making the selection in May.



From the illustrator, Tom Bailey, at the network event



- Our visiting student Louis Achterbergh (pictured) from the University of Amsterdam has been working hard on a review of qualitative data on the experience of loneliness in young people with depression.
- A team from the network has been scoping the literature on psychological models of loneliness, and Mary and Ellie are working on an umbrella review of pathways to loneliness in individuals with mental illnesses.

What are our plans?

- On 30th April network member Rebecca Nowland will speak at the **All-Party Parliamentary Group on Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention**, and on 14th May Ellie Pearce will attend **the APPG on Mindfulness in Older People and Ageing Well** to provide input on loneliness.
- Network members Timothy Matthews, Hannah Cocker and Molly Bird are writing a **Mental Elf blog** on a research paper on leisure-time sedentary behavior and loneliness among 148,045 adolescents aged 12-15 years from 52 low- and middle-income countries, which should be coming out soon.
- We're continuing to get to grips with the published and grey literature to **identify gaps in the current research** ahead of our **first round of grant calls in the Autumn**.
- **Consulting with people with lived experience** to help inform the focus of our funding calls and the themes of our events.
- We're updating **our website** – watch this space!

How can you get involved?

Come to events!

- **Calling all Early Career Researchers** – come along to our first hub event **14:00-16:00 on 22nd May** at the UCL Division of Psychiatry (seminar room wing A) to meet each other and discuss what the network can do for you, and vice versa. Please get in touch with ellie.pearce@ucl.ac.uk if you'd like to come!

Get online!

- **Planning our website – we want your blurbs!** We'd like to create a directory of individuals and organisations on our website so that getting in touch with potential collaborators is as easy as possible. If you want to be included please send us (1) a photo (2) your email address (3) a 100 word summary of your interests around loneliness/social isolation in mental health including target population, types of mental illness. You may also want to let us know what kinds of organisations/individuals you would like to be put in touch with. Here's our current website: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/psychiatry/research/epidemiology/Loneliness-and-Social-Isolation>.
- **Get involved on Twitter: @UCL_Loneliness**
- **Email** our network coordinators, **Ellie** (ellie.pearce@ucl.ac.uk) and **Mary** (m.birken@ucl.ac.uk)- don't let them get lonely!

Spread the word!

- **Please let us know if you have suggestions of community organisations and researchers who might be interested in the network.** Feel free to pass on our contact details: email ellie.pearce@ucl.ac.uk or m.birken@ucl.ac.uk.
- **Please tell us about any ongoing or planned research studies or evaluations** that you are conducting or know about. This will help us review the state of the art in order to identify research gaps. **Do let us know about published and unpublished work** – all are gratefully received to help complement our systematic searches: email ellie.pearce@ucl.ac.uk or m.birken@ucl.ac.uk.

Community spotlight on:

The Archway Foundation



Founded in 1982 and based in the Oxford area, The Archway Foundation is a charity that connects people with others via a diverse group of empathetic volunteers, many of whom have experienced loneliness themselves. Archway provides both evening and daytime social clubs offering a varied programme of entertainment, and volunteer befrienders who visit those who cannot get out to their social events one-on-one.

Archway has recently launched a new social evening, "Social Space": a warm and friendly place for people aged between 18 and 30 to meet new

people and build friendships, at the Handle Bar in Oxford. The project has been made possible due to new funding from the National Lottery Building Connections Fund to extend Archway's social groups for young adults experiencing loneliness. Archway already has an afternoon group for young adults, "The Social Hub", which runs on a Tuesday afternoon and the funding has enabled this project to be extended too. *"We chose a café venue for our evening meet up Social Space and have plans for comedy and gig nights as well as quieter craft and board games nights to be part of the programme of events for the evening, which will run twice monthly on a Tuesday evening. We're really excited to see how this develops and plan to be led by the people who attend."* says Archway's CEO Sheila Furlong. Lynne Wiggington, who previously volunteered for the Social Hub, is leading the project, running both the Social Hub and Social Space. She is the point of contact for anyone interested in either group. You can reach her at lynne@archwayfoundation.org.uk.

If you are interested in learning more, please look at Archway's website (<https://archwayfoundation.org.uk/>), email office@archwayfoundation.org.uk or call 01865 790552.

Adapted from material provided by Archway.

Making connections:

- **Full-time opportunity for a student wishing to obtain a Research Masters:** Network member Luke Burns, at the University of Leeds, has a Masters by Research project in loneliness/social isolation and how this can be measured (plus also links to mental/physical health): <https://environment.leeds.ac.uk/geography-masters/doc/measuring-loneliness-corresponding-effects-among-ageing-populations/page/1>. The project will be supervised by Luke and another colleague at Leeds plus colleagues at Independent Age. Some fees funding is also available!
- The multidisciplinary **Solitudes Past and Present research network** is based at Queen Mary's University, London, and explores the history of solitude and concerns about the health risks of social isolation and loneliness: <https://solitudes.qmul.ac.uk/>
- The Academy of Fab provides a portal for Health Trusts to share social care projects: <https://fabnhsstuff.net/>

Events:

- **Network events:**
 - **22nd May 2019 14:00-16:00:** Early Career Researcher Hub Event at the UCL Division of Psychiatry (seminar room wing A) to meet each other and discuss what the network can do for you, and vice versa. Please get in touch with ellie.pearce@ucl.ac.uk if you'd like to come!
 - **4th July 2019 16:25-17:40** symposium on loneliness at the Royal College of Psychiatrists conference: <https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/events/congress/programme>
- **Other events of interest:**
 - **29th April 2019 12:30-15:00** Launch event: Older Men at the Margins: a study of older men's experiences of seeking social engagement and combating loneliness in later life. <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/launch-event-older-men-at-the-margins-a-study-of-older-mens-experiences-of-seeking-social-tickets-56326700678?aff=eac2>
 - **12th June 2019 10:30 – 16:00** Thinking and Measuring Loneliness Across the Lifecourse workshop at MMU: <http://www.lonelinessconnectsus.org/2019/04/03/thinking-and-measuring-loneliness-across-the-life-course/>
 - **13th-19th May 2019 Mental Health Awareness Week:** <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/mental-health-awareness-week>
 - **8th June 2019 10:20-17:00** 'Solitude and Modernity' Colloquium co-sponsored by Pathologies of Solitude (QMUL) and Diseases of Modern Life (Oxford). Please contact c.whitehead@qmul.ac.uk for details and booking.
 - **17th June 2019 10:00-17:00** British Society of Gerontology: What works well for loneliness? <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/what-works-well-for-loneliness-tickets-60576427726?aff=erellivmt>

Hot off the press:

- A new research study reports that **lonely young people perceive their neighbourhoods as less cohesive:** <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/ioppn/news/records/2019/april/no-such-thing-as-friendly-neighbourhoods-for-lonely-young-people>
- The Office of National Statistics reports on the **costs of living alone:** https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/articles/thecostoflivingalone/2019-04-04?utm_source=govdelivery&utm_medium=email
- Public Health England released a report on **Interventions for productive healthy ageing**, which includes interventions based around social isolation and loneliness: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/productive-healthy-ageing-interventions-for-quality-of-life>
- Office of National Statistics released a report on **exploring loneliness in children:** <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/exploringlonelinessinchildrengreatbritain/2018>
- **Vodafone launched a new report on technology and loneliness:** <https://mediacentre.vodafone.co.uk/news/harnessing-technology-to-tackle-loneliness/>
- The theme for this year's **World Happiness Report** was how people communicate and interact with each other and their governments: https://whatworkswellbeing.org/blog/world-happiness-report/?mc_cid=28f321dd2b&mc_eid=9114fdf785.

- The office for National Statistics has released a new report '**Personal and economic well-being in the UK: April 2019**':
https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/personalandeconomicwellbeingintheukapril2019?utm_source=govdelivery&utm_medium=email
- The Co-op announced a new **Community Wellbeing Index**:
<https://communitywellbeing.coop.co.uk/>
- Article on **social prescribing** in the British Medical Journal:
<https://www.bmj.com/content/364/bmj.l1285.abstract>

Funding opportunities:

- [SMaRteN plus funds](#) £100,000 available for research investigating student mental health
Deadline: 9th May
- [British Academy/Wolfson Fellowships](#) up to £130,000 over 3 years for early career researchers for admin/teaching buy-out, public engagement and travel
Deadline: 15th May
- [Mental Health Research UK and Schizophrenia Research Fund PhD Studentships](#)
Deadline: 31st May
- [NIHR Public Health Practice Evaluation Scheme](#) £50,000-250,000 per project evaluating innovative local projects or policies focused on improving population health or health inequalities
Deadline: 3rd June
- [Global Challenges Research Fund](#) to address challenges in developing countries including wellbeing.
Deadline: various calls – check website
- [ESRC-Alan Turing Institute Joint Fellowship Scheme](#) for two fellowships for up to 36 months, focusing on (i) public policy and government innovation and (ii) urban analytics.
Deadline: 6th June
- [ESRC & AHRC & What Works Wellbeing](#) one grant of up to £550,000 looking approaches to understanding and measuring wellbeing.
Deadline: 20th June
- [ESRC New investigator grants](#) £100,000-£300,000 for postdoctoral researchers to develop independent research projects
Deadline: ongoing
- [Reaching Communities England](#) Flexible funding over £10,000 for up to 5 years to organisations in England who want to take action on issues that matter to people and communities
Deadline: ongoing
- [Allen Lane Foundation – Social Cohesion Programme](#) Up to £110,000 per year for 25 projects benefitting people affected by mental health problems or helping social cohesion.
Deadline: ongoing

Who are we?

We're one of the 8 new mental health research networks funded by the UKRI. Each of the networks has its own specific focus and our remit is to understand how loneliness and social isolation are linked to mental illness, how they are experienced in individuals with mental illness, and how we can work together to prevent and alleviate social disconnection and mental ill-health.

To do this we're bringing together individuals with lived experience, community organisations, practitioners, and policy-makers, as well as academic researchers from diverse disciplines, such as neuroscience, arts interventions, the built environment, and design and technology. This is a hugely exciting endeavour and **we need your help to make it happen!**

In the first 18 months we will be focusing on understanding how loneliness and social isolation relate to mental ill health. In the second phase of the network we will be looking more at what interventions work best to improve the mental health of people who feel lonely.

Funding will be available for small interdisciplinary research projects through two funding calls, the first of which is planned for the Autumn. We will keep you posted on the application process and we particularly encourage early career researchers and researchers with lived experience to apply. For more details, please keep an eye on our website for when we update this with the application process :

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/psychiatry/research/epidemiology/Loneliness-and-Social-Isolation>.

Useful links

- [MQ](#)
- [Mental Health Foundation](#)
- [The Jo Cox Foundation](#)
- [Campaign to End Loneliness](#)
- [Mind](#)