# UKRI Loneliness & Social Isolation in Mental Health Research Network

# Newsletter #3 - May 2019

## What have we been up to?

- On 13th May, the Network ran a **joint stakeholder event with the Campaign to End Loneliness**, to feed into our report on psychological models of loneliness and associated interventions – there's **more on this project below**. Thank you to everyone who took part!



- Network member, Dr Rebecca Nowland (pictured), from the University of Central Lancashire, presented her research at the **All-Party Parliamentary Meeting** (APPG) on self-harm and suicidal behaviour on 30th April 2019. The session focussed on the **association between youth loneliness and suicidal behaviour**. The meeting was opened by the Minister for Loneliness, Mims Davies MP. A handout of Rebecca's presentation, which included forthcoming findings of a meta-analysis on loneliness and suicidal behaviour that she is conducting with researchers at KU Leuven, University of Manchester, University of Glasgow and UCL, is available here: (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333132568_Handout_from_APPG_Meeting_Suicide_and_Self-Harm_Prevention_-30th_April_Loneliness_and_Suicide). Jacqui Morrisey, who is part of the network's advisory group, presented research conducted by Samaritans (https://www.samaritans.org/about-samaritans/research-policy/young-people-suicide/).

- On 14th May network coordinator Ellie Pearce attended **the APPG on Mindfulness in Older People and Ageing Well**, where a speaker with lived experience talked about how mindfulness has helped them improve their relationships.

- On 15th May network co-lead Sonia Johnson gave a **presentation** on the Community Navigator research project at the **Campaign to End Loneliness Policy & Research Hub meeting** on social prescribing.



- On 22nd May we had our first **meeting for early career researchers** (pictured – thanks to Bettina Friedrich), to start to get to know each other and to discuss how the network can support applications for the funding calls. Keep an eye out for the next meeting, and please email Ellie if you would like to get involved (ellie.pearce@ucl.ac.uk)!

- We've recruited four new people to our lived experience **co-production group (CoG)** and look forward to welcoming them at our next meeting, in June**.**

# How can you get involved?

**Come to events!**

- ➢ **26ᵗʰ June 12:30-5pm** interdisciplinary event on **'**Understanding loneliness in people with mental health problems' at UCL – invites to follow.
- ➢ **16ᵗʰ July 10:30am-2:30pm** Hypotheses generation workshop on the link between loneliness and mental health, held at UCL – details to follow.

**Get online!**

- ➢ We are planning to run regular **tweetchats** to facilitate discussions around loneliness, social isolation and mental health. If you would like to suggest a topic for discussion, and/or would like to be involved in hosting and supporting the topic discussion, please email Mary (m.birken@ucl.ac.uk).
- ➢ **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, and (4) 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.

**Contribute to our research reviews!**

- ➢ **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.
- ➢ **Call for evidence** Please let us know about community/NHS initiatives aiming to reduce loneliness either directly or indirectly by targeting internal factors such as thoughts or feelings to include in our research report for the Campaign to End Loneliness. Email: m.birken@ucl.ac.uk.

**Contribute to the newsletter!**

- ➢ Feature in the **Community Spotlight.**
- ➢ **Share your research** – we're particularly excited to hear about interdisciplinary and cross-sector collaborations.
- ➢ **Find collaborators** – let us know what/who you're looking for and we can let the network know and hopefully match up researchers and community organisations, as well as researchers from different disciplines.
- ➢ Suggest **other features** that we could add.
- ➢ **Email** ellie.pearce@ucl.ac.uk

**Spread the word!**

- ➢ We are on the lookout for **two young people to join our lived experience co-production group, CoG**– if you know anyone who might be interested and lives fairly near London, please ask them to get in touch (ellie.pearce@ucl.ac.uk).
- ➢ **Please let us know if you have suggestions of community organisations and researchers who might be interested in joining the network.** Feel free to pass on our contact details: email ellie.pearce@ucl.ac.uk or m.birken@ucl.ac.uk. We're particularly on the lookout for **early career researchers** and **researchers with lived experience**.

# Research collaboration with the Campaign to End Loneliness

Network co-investigators Roz Shafran, Sonia Johnson, and Alexandra Pitman, along with network coordinator Mary Birken and network members Sophie Bennett and Anna Coughtrey, were commissioned to do a review entitled: ***"Strategies for encouraging psychological and emotional resilience in response to loneliness"***. The project is funded by Lottery funds via the Campaign to End loneliness (https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/). We are excited that this is our first funded project within network and we hope that it is the first of many.

The project held a **stakeholder event** on 13th May to get wider views on psychological approaches found in the review so far. The day was introduced by Sonia Johnson, network principal investigator, and Robin Hewlings from the Campaign to End Loneliness. Mary Birken and Sophie Bennett outlined the research our team has reviewed so far, and we also had fascinating talks from network members Clare Gardiner, Christina Victor, Michelle Lim, and Joshua Buckman on their research. Bev Chapp, from our Co-Production group (CoG) gave her reflections on four videos that brought in a range of perspectives from lived experience. Participants had opportunities to share their expertise and insights through group discussions on various topics. The presentations from the day will be shared on the website as part of our redevelopment process, so please keep an eye out (https://www.ucl.ac.uk/psychiatry/research/epidemiology/Loneliness-and-Social-Isolation).

## Call For evidence

Do you know of any community/NHS initiatives aiming to reduce Loneliness either directly or indirectly by targeting internal factors such as thoughts or feelings? These could be group or individual initiatives and with/without a formal theoretical base. If so, please let us know by emailing Mary (m.birken@ucl.ac.uk).

# Making connections:

> **Find a collaborator!** One of our network researchers based at UCL is looking for academics who would be interested in collaborating on an application for a funded evaluation. It will be led by Mel Bound and Jo Lee, the founders of a community-driven women's running organisation - **This Mum Runs** – based in Bristol/Bath/Cardiff/London. They are planning an **evaluation of this intervention** on measures of loneliness, mental health and physical health among those who participate. They are putting together an application to compete for funding from the SPHR Public Health Practice Evaluation Scheme (PHPES) to fund projects led by practitioners (e.g. individuals working in local authorities, NHS, or social care settings) to evaluate innovative local projects, policies, strategies or initiatives. The academic representing the SPHR will be Dr Alexandra Pitman, UCL Division of Psychiatry. If you would like to collaborate on this funding bid please contact Alexandra by email:a.pitman@ucl.ac.uk. The deadline for the brief (4-page) Stage 1 application is **Monday 3rd June** (just over a week away), but the form has already been drafted by Alexandra, with input from the two practitioners, and from Dr Fiona Spotswood at the University of Bristol. If you are a member of the SPHR yourself, and would like to lead on this project as the SPHR academic, do also get in touch with Alexandra. Information on the funding scheme is here: https://sphr.nihr.ac.uk/get-involved/public-health-practice-evaluation-scheme-phpes/ . Further information on This Mum Runs is here:http://www.thismumruns.co.uk/our-team.

> 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/. We are delighted that Professor Barbara Gold Taylor (Professor of Humanities in the Schools of History and English & Drama at Queen Mary University of London), who leads that Wellcome-funded network, is now a member of our UKRI-funded network.

# Community spotlight on:

## Independent Age


An Independent Age volunteer visiting Valda, a service user.
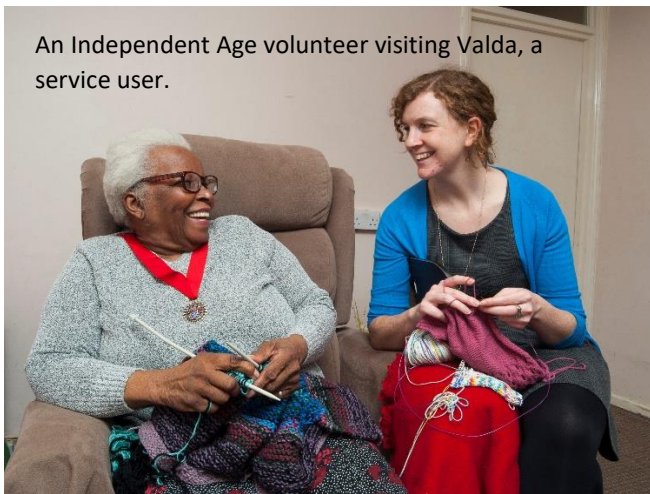
Independent Age offers regular contact, a strong campaigning voice, and free, impartial advice on the issues that matter to older people: care and support, finances, health and staying connected. They support older people through their Friendship Services, free advice guides on dealing with loneliness and depression, and through policy and campaigning.

Independent Age believes loneliness is not, and should not, be an inevitable part of getting older. Their mission is to enable older people to stay independent and connected, and to live with dignity, choice and control. They're particularly interested in interventions tackling loneliness, as well as improving access to mental health support for older people. We are very happy that **Meg Stapleton** is part of our network, particularly as she moved to Independent Age from another network partner - British Legion – where she was their Policy Officer. For more information please contact her at meg.stapleton@independentage.org.

# Cross-sector collaborations

## Museum & Study Collection at Central Saint Martins and the Claremont Project



The Museum & Study Collection at Central Saint Martins (CSM) works with a number of community partners to deliver a spectrum of object-led wellbeing activities aimed at combating loneliness and mental health problems. All activities begin with a handling session inspired by the Museum's rich art and design collections and move onto a creative intervention such as printmaking, collage or weaving. Here, the Museum is working with participants from the Claremont Project (https://www.claremont-project.org/), an Islington based charity offering a range of activities for the over 55s.

With the help of staff from the CSM BA Textiles programme, network member Judy Wilcox and her team got participants thinking about colour and working with a heat transfer press to make their own flags and banners. In the words of one participant *'you can forget how to socialise… it was nice to walk into a room and feel like I fitted in.'* Judy's blog on socially engaged practice can be found here: https://www.arts.ac.uk/colleges/central-saint-martins/stories/judy-willcocks-on-socially-engaged-practice.

# Events:

- **Network events:**
    - **26th June 12:30-5pm** interdisciplinary event on '**Understanding loneliness in people with mental health problems' at UCL** – invites to follow.
    - **4th July 2019 16:25-17:40** symposium on loneliness at the Royal College of Psychiatrists conference chaired by our network co-lead Professor Sonia Johnson, UCL. Enrol at: https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/events/congress/programme
    - **16th July 10:30am-2:30pm** Hypotheses generation workshop on the link between loneliness and mental health, held at UCL – details to follow.
- **Other events of interest:**
    - **1st-2nd June** The Big Lunch from the Eden Project: https://www.edenprojectcommunities.com/
    - **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.
    - **12th June 2019 10:30 – 16:00** Thinking and Measuring Loneliness Across the Lifecourse workshop at Manchester Metropolitan University: http://www.lonelinessconnectsus.org/2019/04/03/thinking-and-measuring-loneliness-across-the-life-course/
    - **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=erellivmlt
    - **20th June 9am-6pm** Behavioural Science Summit, Warwick University: https://www.wbs.ac.uk/events/view/5948

# Hot off the press:

- **Research paper** from network member Mai Stafford about social relationship adversities throughout the life-course and risk of loneliness in later life: https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/ageing-and-society/article/social-relationship-adversities-throughout-the-lifecourse-and-risk-of-loneliness-in-later-life/D46215D05189D19C9B8CC020F151267B
- **Research paper** from network member Michelle Lim on her positive psychology-based app intervention targeting loneliness in young people with psychosis: https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs00127-019-01681-2
- **Research paper** from network member Tim Matthews on how lonely young people perceive their neighbourhoods: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0956797619836102
- **Research paper** from network member Rebecca White on barriers and facilitators to mental health professionals in supporting people who experience psychosis with their romantic relationship: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09638237.2019.1608928
- **Report from the Loneliness Connects Us Project** based at Manchester Metropolitan University on youth loneliness: http://www.lonelinessconnectsus.org/outputs-2/
- **Blog** from the Office of National Statistics on 'why our children are lonely': https://blog.ons.gov.uk/2019/05/17/why-are-our-children-lonely/
- **Aeon article** about the idea that social pain and rejection are experienced in the same way as physical pain (thanks to Nick Barber for providing the link): Health warning: social rejection doesn't only hurt – it kills – Elitsa Dermendzhiyska | Aeon Essays
- **Report** from the Office for National Statistics looking at personal and economic well-being in relation to what people value and life satisfaction:

https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/personalandeconomicwellbeingintheuk/whatmattersmosttoourlifesatisfaction

- **Report** from the UK Parliament's Human Rights Committee discusses the psychological harm associated with the use of solitary confinement for children in detention: https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/joint-select/human-rights-committee/news-parliament-2017/youth-detention-report-published-17-19/#163961_20190424105140
- **Observer article** on digital technology reducing intergenerational contact: https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/apr/27/technology-threatens-child-development-psychology-expert-warns?utm_source=UCL%20%28Internal%20Communications%29&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=10512503_The%20Week%40UCL%3A%20Issue%20386%20%E2%80%93%202%20May%202019&utm_content=Tech%20%E2%80%98cuts%20off%20young%20people%20from%20adults%E2%80%99&dm_i=UAA,69BHZ,V86TOK,OP1OK,1
- **Announcement** that the Coop Foundation, which is a member of the network, is working with their partners to help the youth sector beat loneliness: https://blog.coopfoundation.org.uk/index.php/2019/05/22/working-with-our-partners-to-help-the-youth-sector-beat-loneliness/
- **Blog** from What Works Wellbeing on measuring quality of life for people with learning difficulties: https://whatworkswellbeing.org/blog/measuring-quality-of-life-for-people-with-learning-disabilities/?mc_cid=c81d262e5a&mc_eid=9114fdf785
- **BBC article** on the launch of Shout, by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and the Duke and Duchess of Sussex; a text messaging service for people experiencing a mental health crisis: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-48222833
- **Article** about Ventilen, a Danish community organisation working to tackle loneliness: https://qz.com/1591563/the-danish-have-designed-a-simple-way-to-cope-with-loneliness/?utm_source=pocket&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=pockethits

# Funding opportunities:

- **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
- **Community Spaces - Coop Foundation funding available (Wales only)**: split into two strands – grants of up to £10,000 for organisations looking to explore enterprising ideas that could increase their income, and interest-free loans of up to £50,000 to grow more established business ideas.
  Deadline: 21st June
- **ESRC and What Works Wellbeing funds for Secondary data analysis**: up to £300,000 per project for up to 24 months.
  Deadline: 31st July

- **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 health problems, how they are experienced in individuals with mental health problems, 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 health problems. 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 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.

**Twitter:** @UCL_Loneliness

# Useful links

- **MQ**
- **Mind**
- **McPin Foundation**
- **The Jo Cox Foundation**
- **Campaign to End Loneliness**
- **Mental Health Foundation**
- **UKRI mental health networks**