

Building a Theory of Change: The Community Navigator Study



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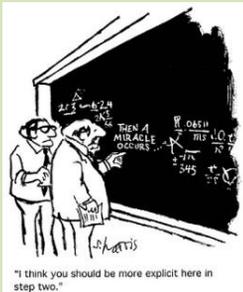
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AIM: To coproduce a theory of change as part of developing and testing an intervention to address loneliness for people with complex anxiety and/or depression funded by NIHR SSCR.

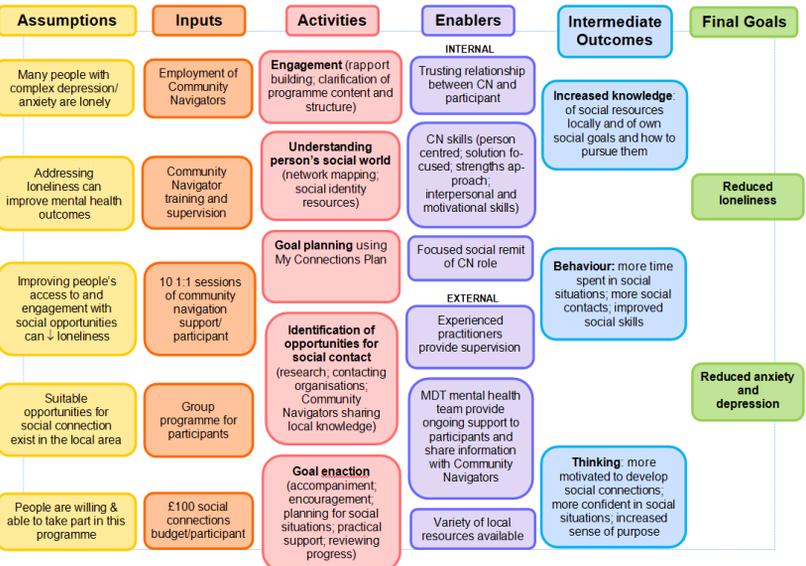
METHOD: A coproduction working group of service users with an interest in research and experience of depression and/or anxiety (n=6), practitioners working in relevant secondary mental health services (n=3) and researchers (n=5) was formed and met regularly. Together they developed the Community Navigator programme, and produced a theory of change, based on the NPC model¹, to illustrate how this intervention would reduce loneliness. Three sources of information were used: working group minutes; a rapid literature review; and in-depth interviews with participants and Community Navigators during the intervention pilot (n=9).

WHAT IS A THEORY OF CHANGE:

a specific type of methodology for planning, implementing, and evaluating programmes that promote social change. Theory of change defines long-term goals and then maps backward to identify necessary preconditions.



RESULTS: The theory of change is structured around **assumptions, inputs, activities, enablers, intermediate outcomes and the final goals** (see below). It incorporates research on methods working to reduce loneliness²: 1) improving social skills, 2) enhancing social support, 3) increasing opportunities for social contact, and 4) addressing problematic social cognition. Feedback from participants emphasised the importance of receiving personalised guidance around activities and interests to pursue, and planning the steps to achieve their goals. Community navigator feedback emphasised the importance of training and supervision in maintaining the focused social remit of their role. The draft below was agreed by the team; there have been several iterations and it will undergo further refinements.



CONCLUSIONS: The process of coproducing the theory of change allowed explicit articulation of how community navigation is intended to work and informed collaborative decision making about the development and trialling of the intervention. It will be refined based upon findings from a feasibility trial.



1. Harries et al (2014) Creating your theory of change. New Philanthropy Capital, London.
2. Masi et al. (2011) A Meta-Analysis of Interventions to Reduce Loneliness. Personality and Social Psychology Review, 15(3). 219-266. DOI: 10.1177/1088868310377394.

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