

Tackling loneliness and isolation in Northern England

Devising visible strategies to address hidden problems

A seminar organised by the *Institute for Local Governance* at **MEA House, Newcastle**

Friday 7th December 2018, 9.30 – 13.00

In October 2018, the Government launched *A Connected Society: a strategy for tackling loneliness*. It is a wide-ranging document which recognises that loneliness can affect people in all stages of the life course and is often compounded by social isolation.

The seminar aims to explore the underlying meanings and causes of loneliness and isolation so that informed debate can ensue on what can be done about it for different constituencies of people. We can't cover everything, so in this seminar we will look at either end of the life-course, focusing on the experience of young people and older people – to see what experiences they may have in common and those which differ.

Tackling loneliness, as the seminar will show, is not an easy thing to do. Often feelings of loneliness and isolation are associated with social stigma – this can potentially undermine well-meaning attempts to tackle the problem through, for example, generalised approaches to social prescribing. This was recognised in the *Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness* report 'Combating loneliness one conversation at a time.' Simplistic strategies which look for easy answers will not work.

So the seminar looks at a variety of approaches which have been taken in North East England to consider their merits, but also learn from the difficulties they encountered in reaching and supporting people with diverse experiences and needs.

The seminar will be chaired by **Cullagh Warnock**, Trust Manager, Millfield House Foundation, and speakers will include:

- **Professor Thomas Scharf**, Professor of Social Gerontology, Institute of Health and Society, Newcastle University: on understanding the similarities and differences between loneliness and isolation.
- **Lesley Carberry-Campbell**, Head of Regions, England and the Channel Islands, Silverline: on the provision of out-of-hours and weekend support for lonely or isolated older people.
- **Dr Stephen Crossley**, Senior Lecturer in Social Policy, Department of Social Work, Education and Community Wellbeing, Northumbria University: on a multi-agency intervention to tackle loneliness and isolation in Gateshead.
- **Helen Mills**, Chief Executive Officer, AgeUK Northumberland: on the priorities to be tackled when addressing loneliness and isolation amongst older people.
- **Steve Watson**, Development Advisor, Youth Focus North East: on raising awareness of isolation and loneliness amongst young people.

The seminar is free to attend, but places are limited and they tend to book up quickly, so please register your attendance via: Janet Atkinson, Institute for Local Governance, Durham University
janet.atkinson@durham.ac.uk.

The Institute for Local Governance is a North East Research and Knowledge Exchange Partnership established in 2009 comprising the North East region's Universities, Local Authorities, Police and Fire and Rescue Services. Further information about the content of the event can be obtained by contacting:-
tony.chapman@durham.ac.uk or john.mawson@durham.ac.uk.

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AGENDA

- 10.00 – 10.05 Welcome to the seminar: **Professor John Mawson**, Director, Institute for Local Governance.
- 10.05 – 10.10 Chair's introduction: **Cullagh Warnock**, Trust Manager, Millfield House Foundation.
- 10.10 – 10.35 **Professor Thomas Scharf**, Professor of Social Gerontology, Institute of Health and Society, Newcastle University: on understanding the similarities and differences between loneliness and isolation.
- 10.35 – 11.00 **Helen Mills**, Chief Executive Officer, AgeUK Northumberland: on the priorities to be tackled when addressing loneliness and isolation amongst older people.
- 11.00 – 11.25 **Steve Watson**, Development Advisor, Youth Focus North East: on raising awareness of isolation and loneliness amongst young people.
- 11.25 – 11.50 Coffee and networking.
- 11.50 – 12.15 **Dr Stephen Crossley**, Senior Lecturer in Social Policy, Department of Social Work, Education and Community Wellbeing, Northumbria University: on a multi-agency intervention to tackle loneliness and isolation in Gateshead.
- 12.15 – 12.35 **Lesley Carberry-Campbell**, Head of Regions, England and the Channel Islands, Silverline: on the provision of out-of-hours and weekend support for lonely or isolated older people.
- 12.35 – 1.00 Questions from the floor and panel discussion.
- 1.00 Close of seminar.