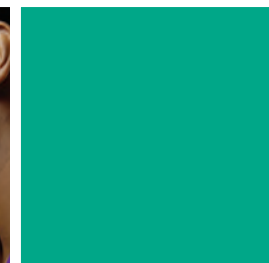
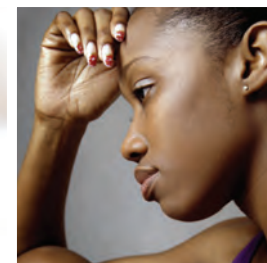


# Social Isolation and Loneliness



**Just  
BE**  
CROYDON



Annual  
report of the  
director of  
public health  
2016



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# POLITICAL FOREWORD

## Forward from the Leader of the Council

I am delighted to be writing the introduction for Rachel Flowers' first annual Director of Public Health report. Rachel has a wide range of experience at local, regional and national level and a track record of making a positive difference in the health and wellbeing of local people.

Earlier this year Croydon Council commissioned an Opportunity and Fairness Commission, a subject that I am passionate about, where Social Isolation was identified as a significant issue for some people in Croydon. In the summer, the Croydon Congress also had over 200 people attend to discuss the challenges around this issue.

Rachel has chosen Loneliness and Social Isolation as the theme of her first report as it impacts on the health and wellbeing of so many people in our communities and has identified ways in which we can all together take responsibility to reduce social isolation in Croydon. These are simple things that we can all do in our day to day lives and I would encourage you to read through and see what you can do for your family, friends and community to reduce social isolation and help us reduce the health harm that it can cause.



**Councillor Tony Newman**

Leader,  
Croydon Council

# FOREWORD FROM THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

## Welcome to my first annual report as Director of Public Health for Croydon.

I heard recently that the three most important things for people's health are "jobs, homes and friends" and I think that this is a good start to think about the multitude of things that impact on people's health and a signpost about how we can improve it.

When I arrived in Croydon, it was at the time that work was undertaken for the Croydon Opportunity and Fairness Commission and I was impressed with this approach. It sadly, didn't surprise me that a major theme of social isolation was identified, as it impacts on the health and wellbeing of so many people across all ages, communities, faiths, genders, sexualities and disabilities. I felt humbled to be invited to speak at the Croydon Congress where I met and talked to so many people wanting to make a difference for the people of Croydon.

This got me thinking – what are things that all of us can do that can reduce the social isolation of people – those we know, those we live by and those we work with? This report tries to capture the risk factors and health impacts of social isolation but also provides a few ideas about what we can all do.

One thing I didn't include but feel I should is that we should try and smile a little more often at people we don't know. A smile can be contagious and for people who are socially isolated – and you can't always tell who they are – it can make such a difference.

## Give us your feedback

Do let me know your comments on the report, either by emailing me at [rachel.flowers@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:rachel.flowers@croydon.gov.uk)

or by post to:

Croydon Council,  
Public Health Division,  
People Department,  
2nd floor Zone E,  
Bernard Weatherill House,  
8 Mint Walk,  
Croydon, CR0 1EA



**Rachel Flowers**

Director of Public Health,  
Croydon Council

# INTRODUCTION

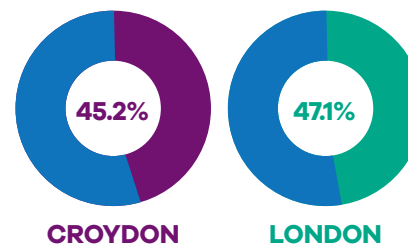
The impact of loneliness and isolation can be devastating to most people. Studies have shown *that relationships have more of an impact on individual's health than many other risk factors, such as obesity or physical inactivity.*<sup>1</sup> In other words, human interactions are seen as crucial to living a happy, fulfilled life.

Although the terms social isolation and loneliness are linked and are often used interchangeably, there are some important distinctions between the two terms.

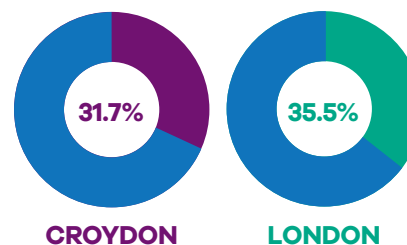
**Social isolation** can be defined as an objective state determined by lack of or insufficient quality and quantity of social relationships and contacts on the different levels that human interaction takes place (individual, groups, community and the larger social environment).

**Loneliness** is often defined as a subjective state based on a person's emotional perception of the inadequate quality of their social connections, irrespective of the breadth of their social networks. It can manifest as an anxious feeling of unmet need to connect or communicate with others.

Loneliness and social isolation can occur at the same time, and in some instances one can be a direct consequence of the other, for example where feelings of loneliness cause a person to withdraw from their social interactions and therefore become isolated. It is however also possible for the two to occur independently, where a person is isolated but not lonely and vice versa.



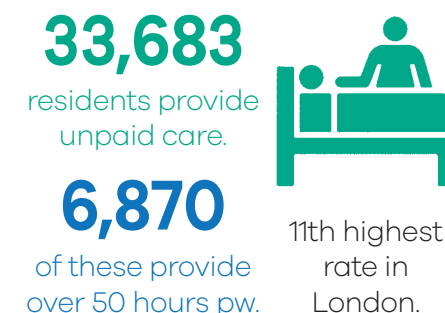
**45.2%** of people who use adult social care services reported that they have as much social contact as they would like.



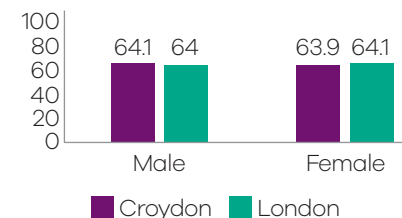
**31.7%** of carers reported that they have as much social contact as they would like.



Suicide rate of **8.2 per 100,000**. This is the **15th highest in London**.



## Healthy Life Expectancy 2012-14



### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

The 2016 Croydon Opportunity and Fairness Commission<sup>2</sup> report highlights the growing issues of loneliness and isolation facing communities today and the need to put these issues at the heart of our local and national agenda. Of equal importance is the need to ask more of ourselves when it comes to addressing the challenges of loneliness and social isolation.

As the Opportunity and Fairness Commission report found, the natural inclination for most of us is to ask what more the government can do to address many social issues we face however, there is so much we can do as individuals and as a community to address loneliness and social isolation. In other words, **“local services can provide the supporting framework and help nurture the best ideas but Croydon residents must play their part”**.

Relationships and human interaction have a significant impact on an individual's health and wellbeing. Research shows that protective aspects of neighbourhood relationships otherwise called social capital, are important for preventing self-harm and suicide.<sup>3</sup> Social capital can be defined as “the sum of positive relationships including families and neighbours that serve as buffers to the negative influences within one's immediate environment.”

**Social capital can build resilience and can reduce the effects of other negative factors like deprivation on individuals in a community. Social capital and community cohesion are essential factors in supporting people through trying times.**

### HOW DO WE DO THIS?

Reduced social capital and cohesion can result in further fragmentation of communities and isolation of individuals while positive social relationships and networks can promote health for people at any age through, for example:

- providing social support to cope with life's challenges and changes such as becoming a new parent, redundancy, or retirement.
- providing people with a sense of belonging.
- sharing knowledge on how to access health and other support services when needed.

### WHAT WILL THIS REPORT COVER?

It will discuss the risk factors that can lead to loneliness and social isolation at the various stages of one's life (pregnancy and early years, children and young people, working age, and retirement and later life) and present quick tips for what we can do as individuals to combat loneliness and social isolation and as a community with the support of voluntary sector organizations, and health and social care services where applicable.

# EXTENT AND IMPACTS OF LONELINESS AND SOCIAL ISOLATION

## Extent of Loneliness and Social Isolation

In 2013, Public Health England estimated that 20% of the older population (aged 65+) are mildly lonely and 11% are intensely lonely; with a further 7% of the 18-64 population being socially isolated.

In Croydon, there are an estimated 9,860 older people who are lonely and 5,423 older people who experience intense loneliness. There are also 17,227 people aged 18-64 who are socially isolated.

Loneliness can have serious consequences for the mental and physical health of people. It is linked to **obesity, smoking, substance abuse, depression, and poor immunity.**<sup>4</sup>

The effect of loneliness and isolation on death is greater than the impact of well-known risk factors such as obesity, and has a similar effect as cigarette smoking.<sup>5</sup>



## Who is at risk?

Risk factors for loneliness and social isolation can be categorised into four distinct areas:

### Personal factors



Sexuality




Ethnicity

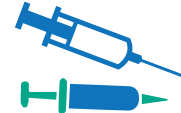


Age


### Health, wellbeing and disability



Cognitive or sensory impairment




Substance misuse problems




Physical or mental impairment or disability


### Life changes




New, young or lone parenthood




Becoming a carer (both young and old)



Retirement



Unemployment



Separation/ Bereavement

### Wider or social determinants of health



Domestic abuse and violence



Long term unemployed



Recent migration



Poverty and deprivation



Homelessness



Stigma and discrimination



# LONELINESS AND SOCIAL ISOLATION ACROSS THE LIFE COURSE STAGES

Throughout the various stages of one's life (pregnancy and early years, childhood and teenage years, working age, and retirement and later life), certain individuals and groups will be more vulnerable to social isolation and loneliness than others depending on factors such as physical and mental health, gender, race/ethnicity and the determinants of health inequalities such as deprivation, income, education, occupation etc.

In general, improving access to services and improvements to the wider social determinants of health like access to education, employment, and to the built and natural environment are likely to have a positive impact across all stages of the life course.

The following sections highlight the general risk factors for loneliness and social isolation across the various life course stages followed by quick tips on how to mitigate them.



## PREGNANCY AND EARLY YEARS – FACTS AND FIGURES

In 2015 there were

# 5833

live births in Croydon.



There are **805** looked after children in Croydon. This is 87 per 10,000 children under 18 (Statistical neighbours 58.4%, London 52%).

# 64.7%

of children have a good level of development at the end of reception (School Readiness). This is the 9th lowest in London.

# 85.9%

of eligible 2 year olds had their MMR vaccination. This is the 14th highest in London.

# 175



babies born in 2014 had low birth weight. This is 9th highest in London.

# 68

babies died in their infancy between 2012 and 2014. Croydon Infant Mortality rate is 4.0 per 1000 live births. This is the 10th highest in London.



### RISK FACTORS

- Being a new parent, young parent or parent carer
- Having a physical or learning disability
- Lack of/or inadequate social networks for support during pregnancy
- Maternal depression and a lack of awareness of how to access mental health support
- Ethnicity and deprivation or low income – Economic deprivation and ethnicity may impact on maternal depression and seeking help or support for depression<sup>6</sup>

Social isolation of mothers can lead to disadvantage across generations and can cause health inequalities over the life course. Maternal depression can severely impact early childhood development and development in early childhood has a significant impact on factors such as educational attainment and employment which in turn impact health. *Simply put, social isolation in new mothers could lead to disadvantage and therefore social, economic and health inequalities in the children and families.*

# CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE – FACTS AND FIGURES

**64.7%** 

of all pupils age 5 are achieving a good level of development. (Statistical neighbours 67.8%, London 68.1%).

**54%** 

of all pupils age 5 who are eligible for free school meals are achieving a good level of development (Statistical neighbours 59.6%, London 59%).



There are 805 looked after children in Croydon. This is 87 per 10,000 children under 18 (Statistical neighbours 58.4%, London 52%).

**19,075** (21.1%) dependent children under 20 in Low income households. This is the 17th highest rate in London.



**96.4** PER 100,000 YOUNG PERSON

(under 18) hospital admissions for mental health conditions. This is the 13th highest in London.



**313.3** PER 100,000 10-24 YEAR OLD

hospital admissions due to self-harm. This is the 2nd highest in London.


**3,207** YOUNG CARERS 

provide between 1-50 hours care. This is the 5th highest in London.

Under 18 conception rate is 28.4 per 1,000 girls aged 15-17. This is the 4th highest in London.



**20.3%** OF 4-5 YEAR OLDS

 are either overweight or obese. This is the 9th lowest in London.

**39%** OF 10-11 YEAR OLDS

are either overweight or obese. This is the 11th highest in London.



**3.3%** OF 16-18 YEAR OLDS

are not in education, employment or training (NEET).



**1,792** 

children have statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans.

### RISK FACTORS

- Adverse childhood experiences like abuse, neglect, witnessing drug or alcohol abuse or experiencing domestic violence
- Being bullied
- Being a young carer
- Being a Looked after child or recently leaving care
- Being Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)
- Teenage pregnancy
- Sexual identity (LGBT – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered)
- Having a physical or learning disability
- Ethnic identity especially those from an economically disadvantaged background

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE – FACTS AND FIGURES

Adverse childhood experiences severely impact early years development which as mentioned earlier, has a significant impact on factors such as educational attainment and employment which in turn impact health.

Teenage pregnancy may increase the risk of social isolation for parents and children because it can cause material deprivation and stigma. There is a detrimental impact on the lives of children of teenage mothers who have inadequate social networks and live in deprived areas. This poor start in life could lead to continued disadvantage through life and can cause health inequalities over the life course.

Bullying of young people who are LGBT can have a negative impact on self-image, confidence and educational attainment and lead to psychological stress and social isolation.

A young person with a physical or learning disability is at risk of becoming lonely and socially isolated because they may not have the support to connect or engage with others in their community. Similar to a young person with a disability, a young carer is also at risk of social isolation because they will not have time to see family and friends in addition to their caring responsibilities without support from others.



# WORKING AGE

## WORKING AGE – FACTS AND FIGURES

**155** 


people aged 18-64 have a serious visual impairment (PANSI\* estimate).

**8,587** 

people aged 18-64 have a moderate or severe hearing impairment (PANSI\* estimate).

**60.6%** 

of adults over 16 are doing at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week. This is the 9th highest in London.

**25.7%** 

of adults are inactive. This is the 11th lowest in London.

**38,629** 

people aged 18-64 are predicted to have a common mental health problem (PANSI\* estimate).

**17,185** 

people aged 18-64 are predicted to have two or more psychiatric disorders (PANSI\* estimate).

**17,932** 


people aged 18-64 are predicted to have a moderate physical disability (PANSI\* estimate).

**5,156** 

people aged 18-64 are predicted to have a serious physical disability (PANSI\* estimate).

**63%** 

of 16+ population are either overweight or obese.

**2,840** 

people claim Job Seekers Allowance in Croydon. This is 1.2% of the working age population. This is the 11th lowest in London.

**970** 

people in Croydon have been claiming Job Seekers Allowance for over a year. This is 0.4% of the working age population and is the 16th lowest rate in London.

### RISK FACTORS

- Unemployment
- Bereavement or relationship breakdown
- Having a physical or learning disability
- Mental ill health
- Being an unpaid carer
- Substance misuse and addiction

\* Projecting Adult Needs and Service Information

### WORKING AGE – FACTS AND FIGURES

For some ethnic minorities, increased risk of social isolation is associated with social and economic disadvantage, housing problems and language barriers. Working age adults who are unemployed are at risk of becoming isolated because of the loss of contact with colleagues and withdrawal from social engagements due to the need to cut back on expenses and because of the embarrassment of being unemployed.

Experiencing bereavement or a breakdown in a relationship can lead to loneliness and social isolation without a support network to enable the person to re-engage with people.

Research has found that many carers experience social isolation and loneliness as a result of caring.<sup>7</sup> This may be due to having less time to socialise due to their caring role and being unable to afford social activities. This effect can be greater the longer someone has a caring role, due to the increasing amount of care they may have to provide.


Findings from the Life Opportunities Survey Report released in 2015 show that having a physical or mental impairment appears to be associated with lower levels of social contact.<sup>8</sup>

Physical and mental disability can leave many unable to leave their homes due to mobility and lack of confidence issues and therefore without support many can become isolated from their family, friends and communities.



# RETIREMENT AND LATER LIFE

## RETIREMENT AND LATER LIFE – FACTS AND FIGURES

**13%** 

of Croydon population is aged 65+. This is the 12th highest proportion in London. This equates to 49,300 people which is the 3rd highest number in London.

**6.1%** 

of Croydon population is aged 75+. This is the 12th highest proportion in London. This equates to 23,000 people which is the 3rd highest number in London.

**4,264** 

people aged 65+ have depression (POPPI\* estimate).

**1,356** 

people aged 65+ have severe depression (POPPI\* estimate).

**18,057** 

people aged 65+ live alone (POPPI estimate). This is 37.6% of the 65+ population.

**4,324** 

people aged 65+ have a visual impairment (POPPI estimate). This is 8.8% of the 65+ population.

**16,402** 

people aged 65+ are unable to manage at least one self-care activity. This is 33.3% of the 65+ population (POPPI\* estimate).

**20,764** 

people aged 65+ have a hearing impairment (POPPI estimate). This is 42.1% of the 65+ population.

**20,019** 

people aged 65+ are unable to manage at least one domestic task on their own. This is 40.6% of the 65+ population (POPPI\* estimate).

**12,166** 

people aged 65+ with a limiting long term illness are limited a little in their day-to-day activities while 10,903 are limited a lot (POPPI\* estimate).

**12,877** 

people aged 65+ have a BMI of 30 or more. This is 26.1% of the 65+ population (POPPI\* estimate).

\* POPPI – Projecting Older People Population Information

# RETIREMENT AND LATER LIFE

## GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY (GLA) REPORT ON “PROPENSITY FOR SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF OLDER PEOPLE IN LONDON”

The report looks into the various drivers of social exclusion amongst older people (although many of these indicators are equally relevant amongst all age groups) and attempts to identify areas in London where susceptibility is particularly high. *See Appendix A for additional information used in the report.* The areas in Croydon identified to have the highest propensity of social exclusion for over 65s are indicated in the map.

### OTHER RISK FACTORS INCLUDE:

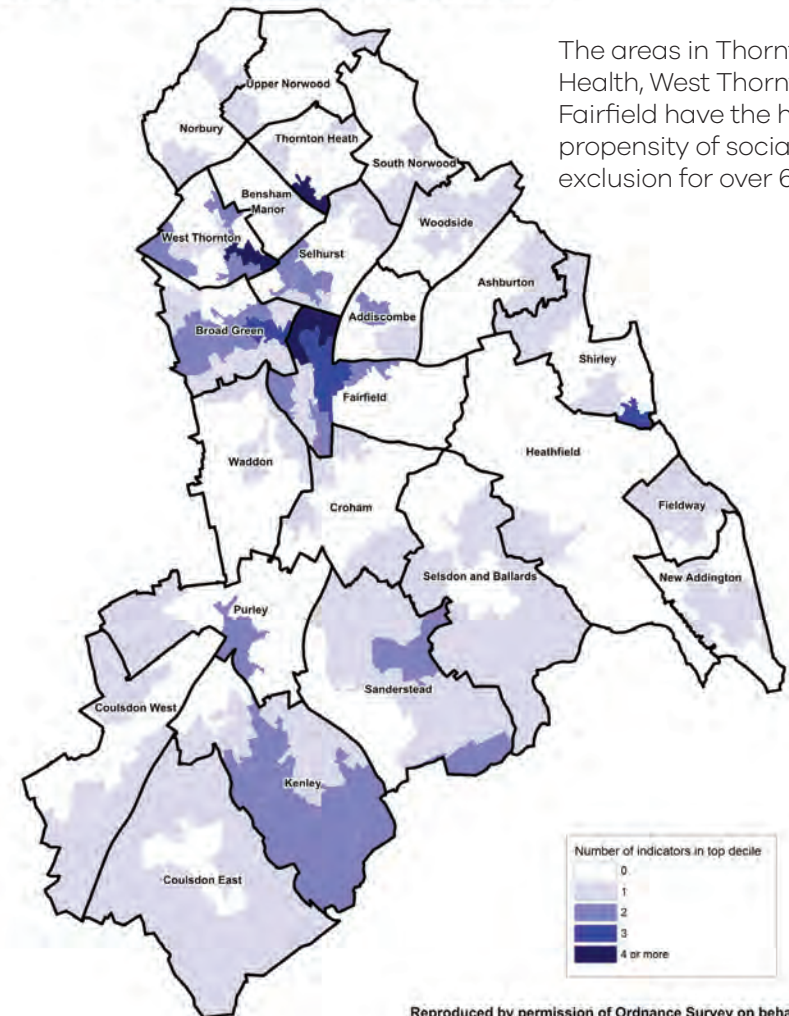
- Retirement/unemployment
- Becoming a carer
- Bereavement/ loss of a spouse or partner

For older adults, retirement and/or unemployment as highlighted for working age residents can result in losing connections with colleagues and friends, which can lead to social isolation. Retirement may also mean that there is a dependence on a smaller income and therefore a reduced likelihood of participating in social events.

Older adults can also become socially isolated as a result of reduced mobility due to a number of long term conditions like dementia and musculoskeletal conditions. In this age group, men are more likely to become socially isolated than women and ethnic minorities who experience language barriers and higher levels of poverty are more likely to become socially isolated than the rest of the population.

Older carers are also likely to have a lower resistance to stressors which could result in fatigue and physical inactivity which in turn increase the risk of social isolation.

Number of indicators in top decile (out of twelve indicators)



The areas in Thornton Health, West Thornton and Fairfield have the highest propensity of social exclusion for over 65s.

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# TOGETHER TAKING RESPONSIBILITY – QUICK TIPS

The following are some quick tips on what we can do as individuals and members of our communities to combat loneliness and social isolation. They include a small snapshot of initiatives that members of communities in Croydon are taking to support each other and hopefully allows you to appreciate the value and impact this support can make to the lives of many Croydon residents.



## GENERAL TIPS:

- **Maintain frequent contact.** If someone you know has hit a milestone birthday, lost a spouse or other important person, or is ill or immobile, they need more contact so make a note to call or visit often.
- **Do what you can to make your pregnant friend feel like she is still a part of the group.** Invite her to do things she will enjoy, like to tea, to a park for a picnic, or on a nice walk. Be creative and think about things that she will enjoy, not things that will require her to be a passive observer.
- Socially isolated older people may be vulnerable to a variety of unexpected problems and may have underlying issues such as dementia. **Loved ones should consider informing trusted neighbours that there is a vulnerable adult in the neighbourhood so they can keep a friendly eye out and check in on them regularly.**
- If you know **a carer, or a loved one in your family shoulders the burden of caring for an elderly family member, take whatever steps you can to make that person's life easier** and to enable them to have a social life of their own.
- **Everyone has a role to play in making an effort to recognise and understand caring, ageing and disability better** so they can recognise and support people in their communities who might need it.
- Caring is part and parcel of everyday life – **more people openly talking about caring responsibilities** would reflect this and allow everyone to understand caring better.

## TIPS FOR CARERS:

- If you are a carer, **remember to take care of yourself**. It is not just the person you are caring for who is at risk of social isolation, it is you.
- You may not always feel you have time to focus on looking after yourself but **it is important that you make time to look after your physical health**, and there are many things you can do to improve it. Eat healthily, get enough rest, do regular physical activity – even a short walk can be good exercise and can help you clear your head. Take time to notice when you are becoming unwell and try to take a break and ask for help.
- **Peer support from people who understand can help you feel less alone**, for example through a carer support group or social activities organised by a local carers organisation.
- **Try asking for a small amount of help from family or friends** – help with shopping or sitting with the person you look after for a short time to allow you to pop out. Telling them what a difference it has made might result in them offering to help out again.
- **Focusing on the positives in your situation can help you feel that you have a deeper relationship and understanding of the person you care for**, and appreciate that they may feel this way about you too.
- **It is important to be realistic about what you can do**. Having a clear idea about what you can do, and accepting the things that you cannot change or do alone, helps to reduce stress and can make you feel more able to cope.



## TIPS FOR NEW MUMS:

- **Join antenatal classes** – meet other women in a similar situation to you especially if you are the only one of your friends who is approaching parenthood and are therefore feeling disconnected from them.
- **Practise positive thinking** – create positive scenarios in your head and picture your future life with your baby in a happy, fulfilling setting. You could also record positive events of the day or week – even tiny details such as laughing at a joke, enjoying lunch with friends or seeing an uplifting movie can help to combat negative feelings.
- **Be honest about how you are feeling** – especially with your spouse or partner and your family.
- Take care of yourself – **find time to eat well, take regular exercise and get enough rest.**
- **Speak to a midwife about how you are feeling** and how to access antenatal classes and other support services.
- Use social media to your advantage. **Seek out websites that specialise in Mums coming together.**
- **When you meet new Mums be brave and make the first move** – ask if they would like to meet up for a coffee or go to the park with the babies. You may be making their day!
- Going to a baby group and meeting new Mums can seem daunting at first. **Just smile and fake your confidence until you become more at ease.** Babies can often make it easy to strike up a conversation.
- It can be hard to break away from new day-to-day responsibilities as a parent, but **you need to take time for yourself** and will feel so much better for getting out of the house for a walk or a coffee with a friend/family or an exercise class.

## OUT IN THE COMMUNITY

### LOCAL MOTHERS – BUMP DANCE FITNESS

Led by Daisy Lennon, a group of New Addington residents who are passionate about safety and healthy living aimed to engage local mums from the community to make new friends, combat isolation and keep healthy and safe.

They developed Bump Dance Fitness at Timebridge Youth Club and to date have involved over 30 women and their children. Through increasing their networks, those attending feel less isolated and more able to gain support from others in relation to their safety. Many of those attending have experienced crime including domestic violence and report that the initiative has helped them seek support and 'take more control of their lives'.

Amina\* has attended the sessions for two months and talks enthusiastically about the benefits of being a part of the initiative; "As well as helping me to lose weight, taking part in this project has given me the opportunity to get support from other parents helping me to overcome anxiety by gaining advice and being able to talk about issues. In fact I feel able to use my experience to help others. I haven't found anything like this before and the fact that it is local and run by local people has helped me feel able to take part".

*\*name changed*

## TIPS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE:

- **Find something you like doing and do more of it** – sometimes it's hard to find the motivation, especially if you don't feel confident or you worry about what other people think. Making small goals can help you to feel more positive about yourself. You don't have to be perfect at it to enjoy yourself.
- **Be careful when comparing yourself to others and remember that things are not always what they seem from the outside** – social media, and the fact that we very often only see what other people want to share about their lives, can make you feel like you are the only one feeling lonely.
- **Focus on your positives** – you may think that you are not good at something and this may stop you from doing things you enjoy or trying new things.
- **Try to celebrate your successes** – no matter how small they may seem to you.
- **Accept compliments** – keep a note of them and look at them when you feel low.
- **Write a list of what you like about yourself** – aspects of your personality, appearance, what you like to do and remind yourself of them often.



## OUT IN THE COMMUNITY

**YOUNG MIGRANTS – LINGUA HOUSE**

Members of the Afghan community identified a need to develop English language classes to help younger members of the community develop their language skills and therefore take greater part in the wider community. This has also allowed for conversations to take place related to a range of issues for young people who are new arrivals in the borough through language support and peer to peer guidance.

The founder of Lingua House explains that many of these young people are lonely and isolated and therefore vulnerable, so being supported by those who care and understand them is vitally important; “Being around people they trust and who understand them is so important for these young people many of whom have had traumatic times in the recent past and yet just want to play a part in the local community. How we develop what we do is based on sharing our skills and encouraging all of us to support each other”.

Participants are helped to identify the future support they need particularly in relation to employment and activities they wish to undertake and the work also looks at ways in which they can offer their gifts to each other in terms of knowledge, skills, experience and contacts.

## OUT IN THE COMMUNITY

**YOUNG PEOPLE – SPORTS IN THE REC**

Local Broad Green residents with sporting skills and expertise identified the need to create a safe and interactive space for young people in the area to take part in activities. Many young people had talked about their vulnerability and the lack of affordable opportunities to take part in sport.

They came together and developed sports activities for young people utilising the skills of parents and other young people. They use equipment to hold impromptu coaching sessions in football, basketball, cricket, boxing and martial arts in Canterbury Road Rec. The aim is to develop localised bespoke sessions that are accessible to all. This initiative is currently working with over 40 young people.



## TIPS FOR PARENTS:

- Research shows that children who achieve a healthy weight tend to be fitter, healthier, better able to learn, and are more self-confident. They are also less likely to have low self-esteem and be bullied. **Listen to your child's concern about their weight, they need to feel supported and loved.** Five key ways to help your child achieve a healthy weight are:
  - Be a good role model
  - Encourage 60 minutes of physical activity a day
  - Keep to child-size portions
  - Eat healthy meals, drinks and snacks
  - Less screen time and more sleep
- **Younger children may have a harder time identifying and challenging negative thoughts.** They can however benefit from coming up with some coping statements they can say to themselves to help them cope in social situations. For example, "I can try calm breathing to feel better" or "I just need to try my best".
- **Children need to understand that all of us have unique differences that make us individuals.** We are all far more alike than we are different, and these differences should not be feared or ridiculed.



## TIPS FOR WORKING AGE ADULTS:

- **Nurture your support network** – do not underestimate the importance of what you have to offer.
- **Expand your social network** – online social sites are ideal places to meet people who share similar interests and hobbies.
- **Recognize the importance of being alone and enjoying solitude** – being alone is not the same as being lonely. Enjoy peace, quiet, freedom, space and the opportunity to connect with your deeper self.
- **Just show up** – you will be surprised at how much you enjoy something you initially dreaded doing.
- **Have a sense of purpose or take up a hobby** – many hobbies and interests are inherently social in nature. Anything that involves a group, for example, playing backgammon or card games, could be said to be socially healthy.
- **Open yourself up, take risks, and allow yourself to be vulnerable** – sharing aspects of yourself, including experiences, feelings, memories, dreams, desires, etc. will help you feel more known and understood.
- **Adopt a pet** – the playfulness of pets, plus the troubles (and fun) you will experience while training them will make you forget about your troubles.
- **Encourage a positive body image** – individuals with a poor body image may decrease or cease interactions with their social networks to the point where they could be at risk for social isolation. Compliments and positive comments can go a long way to boosting the self-esteem of others.
- **Volunteering** is also a great way of maintaining and expressing a sense of purpose and staying connected with your community.
- **Get out and about** – don't wait for people to come and see you – travel to visit them.
- **Grab every chance to smile at others or begin a conversation** – for instance, with the cashier at the shop or the person next to you in the GP waiting room. If you are shy or not sure what to say, try asking people about themselves.
- **Plan the week ahead and put things in your diary to look forward to each day**, such as a walk in the park, going to a local coffee shop, library, sports centre, cinema or museum.
- **Maintain contact with family and friends over the phone, social media or video conferencing applications.** They can be the next best thing to physically being with them.



## TIPS FOR OLDER ADULTS:

- **Share a meal with others whenever possible.**
- Undiagnosed or untreated hearing problems may lead to avoidance of social situations because of difficulty communicating or embarrassment. **Have your hearing checked and hearing problems treated as needed.**
- **Have regular eye checks** so that you can read generally and captions more easily.
- **Try and get out as much as possible** – go shopping/window shopping, on bus rides, swimming, for walks in the park and to museums whenever you can.
- **Be open to learning how to use technology to maintain connections.** A computer with a camera is a bridge to anyone in the family.
- **Consider taking up a hobby** like tending a garden or caring for an older animal.





## FINAL THOUGHTS

There is so much we can do as individuals and as a community to address loneliness and social isolation. It's not always grand gestures that are required; a smile, a meal shared or asking or offering help can make a real difference.

Croydon has made a commitment to address social isolation; it is currently an objective within the Health and Wellbeing Board strategy and the Council will continue to form strategic partnerships with health, social care and voluntary sector organizations to ensure that actions and activities positively impact the external conditions of residents to reduce the burden of social isolation and loneliness across Croydon and in all people who live and work here.

So it's over to us...



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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A – GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY (GLA) REPORT ON “PROPENSITY FOR SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF OLDER PEOPLE IN LONDON”

The report looks into the various drivers of social exclusion amongst older people (although many of these indicators are equally relevant amongst all age groups) and attempts to identify areas in London where susceptibility is particularly high.

Six key drivers have been included with twelve indicators used in an attempt to measure these.

The majority of these indicators are at Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) level in an effort to identify areas at as small a geography as possible.

Key Driver	Indicator	Description
Economic Situation	Income deprivation	Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Score from the 2015 Indices of Deprivation
Transport Accessibility	• Public Transport	• Average Public Transport Accessibility Score
	• Car access	• Percentage aged 65 and over with no cars or vans in household
Household Ties	• One person households	• Percentage aged 65+ living alone
	• Providing unpaid care	• Percentage aged 65+ providing 50 or more hours of unpaid care a week
Neighbourhood Ties	• Proficiency in English	• Percent aged 65+ who cannot speak English well
	• Churn Rate	• Churn Rate: (inflow+outflow) per 100 population
Health	• Mental health	• Estimated prevalence of dementia amongst population aged 65 and over (%)
	• General health	• Percentage aged 65+ with a limiting long-term health problem or disability
Safety	• Fear of crime	• Percentage in borough worried about anti-social behaviour in area
		• Percentage in borough who feel unsafe walking alone after dark
	• Crime rates	• Total offences per 100 population

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