

Not on your own – be safer together
- Tackling social isolation in Bromley

What is social isolation? A briefing

The purpose of this briefing is to give delegates some background information about social isolation and also highlight what we do know about social isolation for people living in Bromley.

Definition of social isolation

According to the Campaign to End Loneliness, we can be clear when we talk about social isolation that we mean the absence of any social contact e.g contact with friends, families or community involvement or access to services.

National picture

We know that feeling isolated can affect people at different stages of their life. National figures tell us that social isolation can significantly affect following groups of people.

For example:

people with learning disabilities

- Nearly half of young people aged 18-35 (47%) surveyed by Mencap with a learning disability would like to spend more time outside their house. (Mencap, 2016)

carers

- Research by Carers UK in 2015 found that 83% of carers surveyed felt lonely or isolated due to their caring role.
- In a survey carried out by the London Borough of Bromley in 2014 (Your future, your support and your say) revealed that a third of carers who responded (total 105) do not have any friends or family close by to support them.

older people

- It is estimated that more than 1 million older people (aged over 65) say that they always or often feel lonely (Age UK, 2016)

young people leaving care

- 77% of the care leavers surveyed by the Centre for Social Justice highlighted their feelings of loneliness or social isolation when leaving care

What is the impact of social isolation?

Safeguarding and social isolation

If you are socially isolated, you can be more vulnerable to abuse, whether this be physical, domestic abuse or violence, sexual abuse, psychological or emotional, financial or material, modern slavery, discrimination, organisational, neglect or self neglect. Being isolated can make you a target for an abuser.

Not only can being isolated make you a target but if you have little contact with other people, it can make it really difficult to report. The work of our community organisations in Bromley, many of whom are represented here is vital in bridging the gap for many, many people.

Excess Winter deaths

More people die during the winter months. The cold of winter is hazardous to health especially to the elderly and the sick but the latest figures for Bromley show that the number of excess winter deaths in Bromley is worse than elsewhere in England and that there are around 150 potentially preventable winter deaths each year, accounting for 6% of all Bromley deaths. People especially at risk include those living in poorly heated or expensive to heat homes, and those with underlying chest conditions (breathing). Obviously social isolation can be a factor in identifying people who cannot afford to heat their homes or are not aware that their home is too cold – but currently we don't know how much a factor it can play.

Falls – people falling at home

It is estimated that more than 1000 older people (1214) living in Bromley will be admitted to hospital as a result of an unintentioned fall. If you are socially isolated, and don't have friends or family to call on, you may not found quickly and may not get prompt hospital treatment (often A and E) to get you back on your feet.

Research carried out in Devon and Cornwall which has a growing elderly population due to the numbers of older people that choose to retire there, found out of all older people admitted to A and E, a third had little social contact (less than one contact a month) .

Costs, social, psychological, financial

The impact of social isolation can be equivalent to obesity or smoking and thus can have a real impact on health and social care budgets. Age UK estimated that being isolated can be more damaging than smoking 15 cigarettes a day, and also cites a study that found that lonely people have a 64% increased chance of developing clinical dementia.

People who are socially isolated have higher blood pressure than their less lonely peers. A recent study from York University found that lonely people are around 30% more likely to suffer a stroke or heart disease, two of the leading causes of death in Britain.

In Bromley, the 2011 Census showed that 31,012 people (10% of the population) are unpaid carers. Carers who feel socially isolated are more likely to experience depression or other impact on their mental health and potentially be unable to carry on their caring role – obviously any increase in the number of people who can no longer be supported by their carer would lead to increasing pressure on health and social care budgets.

What about social isolation in Bromley? What is happening here? What do we know?

We know in Bromley from the most recent Adult Social Care Users Survey that more people in Bromley compared to other London Boroughs and other areas in England tell us that they feel socially isolated or lonely. Out of 680 people that answered the survey, we know that 23% of people have some social contact but do not feel that it is enough or feel socially isolated. (This is a higher percentage compared to other London Boroughs/ rest of England figures) Out of this group of people who felt that they needed more social contact, 62% of people were over 65 years old.

This is an important figure because we know that Bromley's population of older people is growing over the next few years thus more people in the future may experience social isolation.

□ **Facts and figures:** The proportion of older people in Bromley (aged 65 and over) is expected to increase gradually from 17.7% of the population in 2015 (56, 500) to 17.9% by 2020 (58,600) and 18.7% by 2025 (62, 800).

What is already happening in Bromley?

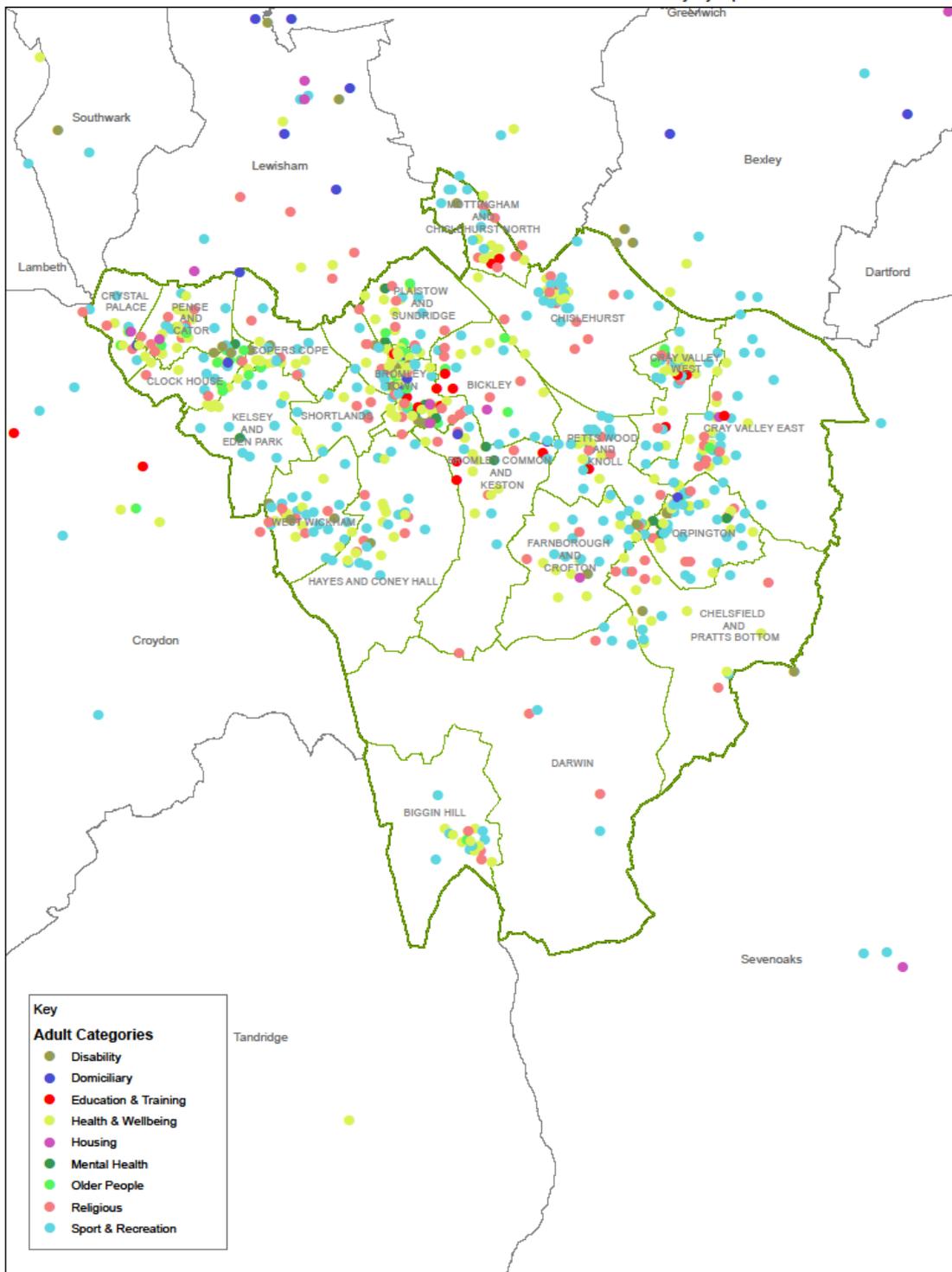
Bromley has a wealth of community organisations which connect people who may be feeling isolated. The Conference is an opportunity to find out more about what is going on in the local area, and delegates will also have the chance to see maps which show where services are located in the borough.

MAPS

What do we know about where support services in Bromley are located?

Adult Support Services in Bromley – from Bromley MyLife website

The purpose of this map is to show a snapshot of services aimed at adults in Bromley (as of October 2016). The data has been drawn from the Bromley MyLife website and gives an idea of where many services and support is concentrated. The data has been categorised to give an idea of the kind of support that is available for adults and where it is located. More detailed information about individual services can be found at bromley.mylifeportal.co.uk



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Adult Support Services in Bromley Town Centre – from Bromley MyLife website

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