

ADULT CARE AND HEALTH PDS COMMITTEE
20th January 2021

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE ADULT CARE AND HEALTH PORTFOLIO
HOLDER**

Written Question to the Adult Care and Health Portfolio Holder received from Chloe-Jane Ross

- 1) What initiatives are the council undertaking (or providing direct funding for) to tackle loneliness especially during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Reply:

The Council is committed to doing all it can to support people who may feel isolated or lonely as we recognise the impact that loneliness can have on our residents. This work, led by the Executive Assistant to the Leader, Councillor Aisha Cuthbert, was initiated in the Spring 2019 with the launch of "The Tackling Loneliness" initiative in June 2019 via a seminar hosted by the Council during loneliness awareness week.

For those that are eligible for council services following assessment, this may be funded directly or services may be provided as part of a support package. For those who are not assessed as eligible for social care support the Council has worked with voluntary organisations within Bromley to publicise and grow the support they offer.

The piece of work with our third sector/voluntary partners has continued to be taken forwards by Councillor Aisha Cuthbert since the seminar in June 2019. Prior to the pandemic, Cllr Cuthbert was working closely with Community Links Bromley to bring together like-minded charities in order to raise the profile of services for Bromley residents experiencing loneliness or social isolation from all different backgrounds and walks of life. This continued via a virtual panel 'Tackling Loneliness' event, hosted by the Council via WebEx during the midst of the pandemic in June 2020. At this meeting the panel, representing various organisations in Bromley, discussed what they were doing to support residents during the Covid crisis taking into account the fact that as a result of the pandemic, and due to safety reasons, services that provided support to groups of people had to close to face-to-face activities and events had to be stopped.

Agencies across the Borough identified that they had been working to deliver their services in a different way including online and through digital platforms, also via phone calls, Royal Mail or appropriately distanced visits to ensure that they were still able to reach out to Bromley residents.

A sum of £170k from Direct Line was allocated to the Council to support Bromley's voluntary organisations whose services were impacted by Covid-19, as well as £15k which Cllr Cuthbert helped to secure personally from Clarion Futures. Community Links Bromley was responsible for coordinating and awarding the funding based on applications from a wide variety of local organisations.

The Council has itself also offered direct support to organisations affected by the pandemic, by various means including advancing payments of bills and by using government grants to offset additional expenditure. The Council has also used a large number of volunteers to support people who have felt isolated due to the restrictions and is currently working on developing a befriending service looking towards our volunteer cohort.