

engage

Community Planning in Ards and North Down #myvoicemyAND

December 2019



Welcome...to the winter 2019 edition of engage! Keeping you up-to-date with the Big Plan and all things community planning in Ards and North Down.

In this edition...we highlight the important issue of social isolation and loneliness which is often felt to a greater extent during the winter months and holiday period. The Community Planning Partnership, consisting of public, private, voluntary and community members, understand that social isolation and loneliness is a major public health issue that negatively impacts on a person's physical and emotional wellbeing.

The **Big Plan** seeks to reduce social isolation and loneliness so all people in Ards and North Down can fulfil their lifelong potential and enjoy good health and wellbeing. This edition provides some examples of how we're taking action to tackle this problem.

The winter months also bring additional financial costs which put individuals and families under strain. This edition provides information on some services that are available to help individuals and families cope with added financial pressures during the winter months. Keep reading to find out more!



Social Isolation and Loneliness

What is community planning doing to combat social isolation and loneliness?

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Social Isolation and Loneliness

Taking care of your emotional health and well-being is important in order to live a fulfilled life but social isolation and loneliness is often a neglected area of conversation despite us all feeling lonely at some point in our lives. Loneliness is also recognised as a major contributor to poor mental health that can result from social isolation. However, social isolation in itself may not lead to loneliness, so what is the difference?

Loneliness

People can be surrounded by people and feel lonely. People often feel lonely when they do not have good quality relationships. Loneliness is never desired.

Social Isolation

Social isolation relates to the number of people you come in contact with; it is about the number, not the quality, of relationships. People can be alone and not feel lonely. People may choose to have a small number of relationships and enjoy their own company.

The Negative side of being Socially Isolated

There is a strong link between social isolation and loneliness (Scottish Gov, 2018). Whilst some people enjoy their own company others who are socially isolated may become lonely. For example, those who are socially isolated as a result of bereavement, retirement, health conditions, moving to a new environment (city/country) or living in a rural geography. It is the complex nature of social isolation and loneliness that makes it a difficult problem to tackle. It is also difficult to target our interventions as we don't always know, or come into contact with, those who are socially isolated.

Seasonal Impact

The darker, colder winter months and associated poor weather conditions can make it difficult to get out and about for some, especially for those with mobility issues (Lindsay and Yantze, 2014). The holiday period, generally associated family, friends and merriment, can exacerbate feelings of loneliness, especially when a person's ability to participate is restricted by their mobility. This is often the case for older and disabled persons.

However, loneliness transcends age and physical ability for example, a third of all new mums claim to be lonely and eight out of ten carers have felt lonely looking after loved-ones (NHS, 2017).



Lindsay, S. and Yantzi, N. (2014) Weather, disability, vulnerability and resilience: exploring how youth with physical disabilities experience winter. Taylor and Francis. 36:26, p2195-2204.

NHS. (2017) Lethal combination of loneliness and winter. URL, <https://www.farehamandgosportccg.nhs.uk/news/Lethalcombinationoflonelinessand-winter.htm> (last accessed 29/11/2019)

Scottish Government (2018) A Connected Scotland: Tackling social isolation and loneliness and building stronger local connections.

The Impact of Loneliness on Health

When you read the following facts it really matters that efforts are made to combat loneliness

Loneliness, living alone and poor social connections are as bad for your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, (Holt-Lunstad, 2010)



Loneliness is worse for you than obesity, (Holt-Lunstad, 2010)



Lonely people are more likely to suffer from dementia, heart disease and depression, (Valtorta et al, 2016)



Loneliness is likely to increase your risk of death by 29%, (Holt-Lunstad, 2015)



Half a million older people go at least five or six days a week without seeing or speaking to anyone at all, (Age UK, 2016)



Two fifths all older people (about 3.9 million) say the television is their main company, (Age UK, 2014)



Younger people increasingly feel digital contact/technologies have taken over –face to face contact and has increased isolation, (Lin.L. et. al., 2016)



Research suggesting that “8 out of 10 carers have felt lonely or socially isolated as a result of looking after a loved one”, (Carers UK, 2018)



Childline revealed that last year 4063 counselling sessions were about loneliness, (NSPCC, 2018)



In the second half of 2016, 33% of calls to the National LGBT Helpline were from people experiencing loneliness and social isolation



Community Planning

The Big Plan for Ards and North Down is an aspirational plan for what we, the Community Planning Partnership, want to achieve for the people in the Borough.



The Big Plan contains 5 Outcomes which are aspirational aims:

Outcome 1: All People in Ards and Ards and North Down fulfil their lifelong potential



Outcome 2: All People in Ards and Ards and North Down enjoy good health and well-being



Outcome 3: All People in Ards and Ards and North Down live in communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure



Outcome 4: All People in Ards and Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy



Outcome 5: All People in Ards and Ards and North Down feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment



The Community Plan has prioritised tackling social isolation and the negative impact it can have on families and individuals regardless of whether it stems from where you are geographically located, your mobility or your age. Everyone should feel included!

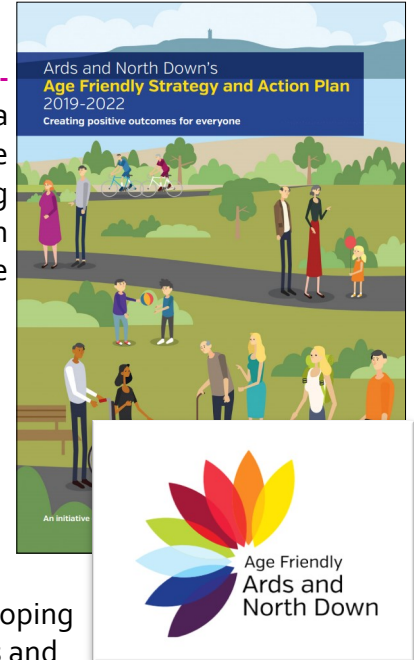
How is Community Planning addressing Social Isolation and Loneliness?

There are a number of ways in which community planning is addressing social isolation and loneliness in Ards and North Down. One way is addressing the barriers faced by certain groups that lead to experiences of social isolation and loneliness. Below are some examples of the work the Community Planning Partnership has undertaken to date. The Community Planning Partnership will endeavour to continue its collaborative efforts to tackle this important issue!

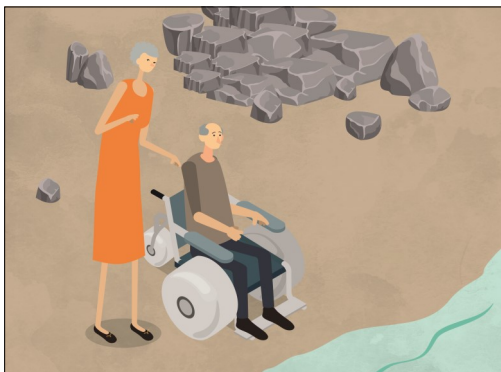
The Ards and North Down **Age Friendly Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2022** represents a concerted collaborative effort to make the Borough a great place to grow older for everyone. Informed by engagement with the community, the action plan seeks to promote a positive image of growing older, increasing opportunities for all age groups and abilities to remain active in society. It is considered that designing age/ability appropriate services, activities and environments will assist in reducing social isolation.

On 28 October 2019 we celebrated **Positive Ageing Month** at the Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Centre with over 120 older people taking part in exercise and learning taster sessions with opportunities to connect with others including services.

Among other work streams, the Age Friendly Alliance is looking into developing age friendly walking trials throughout the Borough as well as making Ards and North Down Dementia Friendly, Autism Friendly and Disability Friendly. In 2018, we held a Real Lives event which listened to people living with Dementia with Community Planning Partners including PSNI officers and 86 Council officers have been trained as Dementia Friends.



As we've mentioned on pages 2 –3, social isolation doesn't just occur among older people. People can feel excluded from actively participating in society for lots of reasons. Access to the natural environment is key to maintaining positive emotional health and wellbeing. Based on this understanding the Council, Sport NI and the Mae Murray Foundation partnered to create the first wheelchair accessible beach in Ards and North Down located at Groomsport. Groomsport beach now has:



- a graded access slope
- a toilet facility with a hoist and height adjustable bench facilities.
- a storage area to house beach friendly wheelchairs and rollators.

This is an important development for enabling people to access the beautiful landscape as 12% of people living here reported having a mobility issue.

Sport NI and Mencap have developed a virtual reality tour of Bangor Aurora Aquatics and Leisure Centre with the aim of getting more people who are not confident in unfamiliar environments engaged with sport and sports facilities. This allows potential users to virtually become familiar with the centre before attempting to visit it.

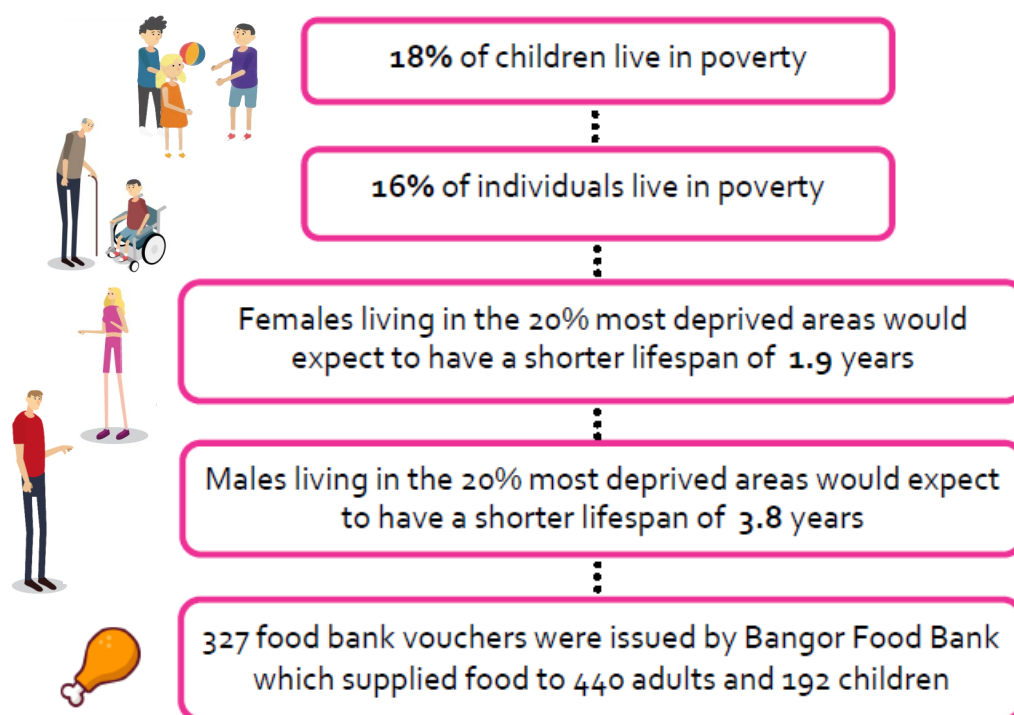


Poverty, Social Isolation and Loneliness



Social isolation and loneliness impacts people in varying circumstances at different points in life. Social isolation has been linked to socio-economic status with it considered that living in poverty can lead to feelings of social isolation and loneliness (Payne, 2012). The simplest explanation of poverty is when someone is lacking the basic needs for a minimum standard of well-being and life.

Those experiencing poverty may suffer from poor mental health arising out of the effects of being poor in terms of, for example, the stress of managing a low income or living in low quality housing. If a person's emotional health and self-esteem decreases as a result of poverty then feelings of social isolation and loneliness may arise. Winter and the associated extra fuel and warm clothing costs and Christmas time, with pressures to purchase presents and specific foods, pose a difficult financial time for those experiencing poverty. In Ards and North Down:



The evidence, collected from NISRA and Bangor Food Bank, highlights that poverty exists in Ards and North Down. Ards and North Down has a Poverty Forum that is made up of community, voluntary and public sector partners to help address some of the issues experienced by individuals and families who need a little extra support at a difficult point in their lives. It is hoped that the work of the Poverty Forum will assist in reducing poverty and therefore social isolation and loneliness. New members are welcome and should express interest via info@ardscommunitynetwork.com. Some of the services provided to tackle poverty are listed on the following page.

Despite work undertaken to date to tackle social isolation and loneliness, the question remains '**what is needed to effectively address social isolation and loneliness, to build more connected communities?**' This is a complex question given the multifaceted nature of social isolation and loneliness. Nonetheless, Community Planning will endeavour to work collaboratively with communities and its partners to address this issue as we want to see strong connected communities across Ards and North Down.

Service		Contact No.	Website/Facebook Page
Food, Heating and Benefits Advice Services			
Foodbanks	Bangor Foodbank	02891 271800 07821 791 674	www.bangorni.foodbank.org.uk
	Newtownards Foodbank	028 91817487 079 0293 3297	www.storehousenorthdown.com
	Storehouse	07526 541168	www.newtownards.foodbank.org.uk
Winter Fuel Payment Centre		0800 731 0160	www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment
Community Advice Ards and North Down		0300 123 9287	www.caand.co.uk
North Down Community Network		028 9146 1386	www.ndcn.co.uk
Ards Community Network		028 9181 4625	www.ardscommunitynetwork.com
Make the Call (Benefits Advice Service)		0800 232 271 (Freephone)	
Emotional Need, Activity Services and Advice Services			
Peninsula Healthy Living		028 4273 9021	www.peninsulahealthyliving.org
Agenda		028 91271968	www.agenorthdownards.co.uk
Action Mental Health		0808 808 8000 (crisis hotline)	www.amh.org.uk See website for local contact no's
Carers Support (South and Eastern Health and Social Care Trust)		028 9756 5456	www.setrust.hscni.net/services/CarersInformation.htm
Church Works North Down (Directory of Churches)		www.churchworksnorthdown.com	
Caring Communities Safe and Well Initiative (South and Eastern Health and Social Care Trust)		028 9756 6934	www.setrust.hscni.net/healthyliving/2428.htm
National Trust (volunteering opportunities)		See website	www.nationaltrust.org.uk/volunteer
Volunteer Now		028 9023 2020	www.volunteernow.co.uk/volunteering
YMCA		028 9145 4290	www.facebook.com/NorthDownYMCA/
Home-Start North Down (Parental support)		028 9127 1201	www.homestartnorthdown.org.uk/
Surestart	Bangor	028 9145 7248	www.facebook.com/bangorsurestart
	Newtownards	028 9181 9722	www.setrust.hscni.net/2296.htm

This list of services is not exhaustive and many more services exist that can help with social isolation and loneliness.



Are you struggling to keep warm this winter?

winter WARM PACKS

The criteria to be able to receive warm packs is:

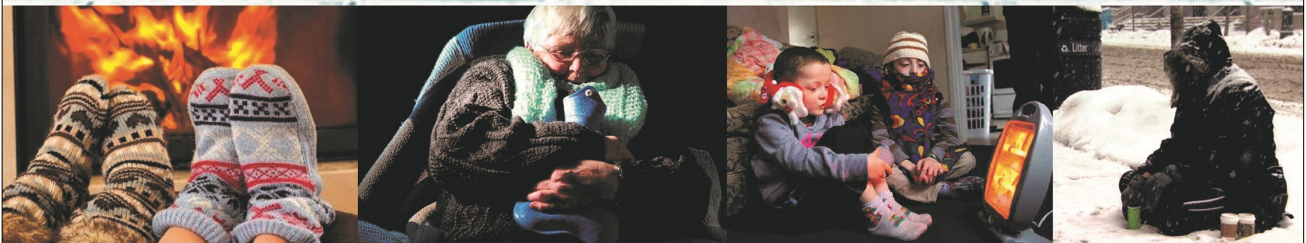
1. Be experiencing fuel poverty.
2. NOT have received a keep warm pack from a different source.
3. Fall into at least one of the following six categories:
 - a. A person with a long-term health condition including: an underlying issues that makes them more vulnerable in colder weather (e.g. asthma, chronic bronchitis or emphysema, coronary heart disease, stroke) or a physical or mental health condition which results in them spending more time at home.
 - b. A person with a disability that makes them less mobile or means they need to spend more time at home.
 - c. Anyone aged over 65 years old.
 - d. A family with dependent children.
 - e. A pregnant woman.
 - f. A person who is homeless.

**LIMITED
NUMBER
AVAILABLE**

 HSC Public Health Agency

 NDCN

 Community Hub

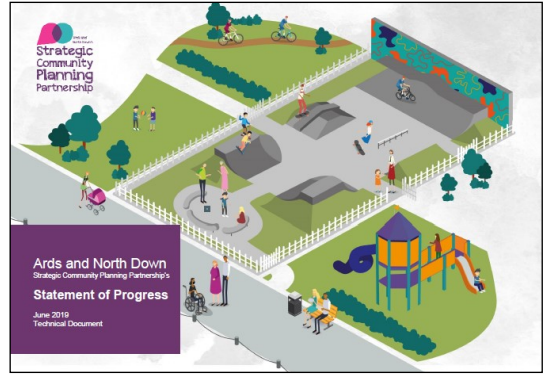


If you meet the criteria and would like a warm pack either call in to the NDCN Community Hub on Main Street Bangor (facing Halifax) phone: 02891 461386 or email: admin@ndcn.co.uk

Community Planning Update

We have produced our Statement of Progress. A technical document and a summary version are can be downloaded from the Council website. This document lets you know about the progress community planning has made on headline actions and outcomes.

In addition to taking the Big Game on tour around the borough, we will soon be asking you how you want to be engaged and participate in community planning. In the meantime, please get in touch if you are a community group/church group/ youth group etc. and fancy playing the Big Game.



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