

Loneliness harms health

Action six

Collect relevant information

Using local evidence to reinforce your argument is important if you are going to be really successful in your campaign. The more evidence you can present, the more seriously you'll be taken and the more likely it is that the board will listen to what you have to say. You shouldn't expect to do the work of the [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment \(JSNA\)](#) for the board, but simply present a strong indication of a much deeper problem in the community.

Have a think about the sort of evidence you may need; it is useful to gather facts and figures, nationally and locally, and also to collect case studies or 'personal stories'. The sort of local statistics you could gather can be seen in [action 7](#). Much of this evidence will be available online in the current JSNA or in local authority strategies. You can find national facts and figures at [section 6a](#).

You might also want to consider finding your own data by conducting a survey, talking to people face to face

or even setting up a focus group.

Before gathering the data, you should think about how you're going to use it. You could put your findings in a press release, send a briefing note to your local MP or councillor, or ask to meet directly with the health and wellbeing board to present your findings.

Conducting a survey

Surveys should be fairly short and easy to answer. Remember to collect demographic data such as age and gender, if appropriate. Surveys could be put online (using a tool like [Survey Monkey](#)) or in paper format; left in libraries or community centres, which people will then need to send back to you. Why not work with your local newspapers to promote the survey? This could be a good opportunity to get the issue into the local media and to develop a good relationship with local journalists. A sample survey is available in the pack at [resource 8](#). Remember, if you are going to conduct a survey, you will need to collate the

results at the end and this may be quite time consuming.

Case Studies

When conducting an 'open ended' interview (a more conversational method which avoids using firmly set questions and enables you to develop case studies), you should have around three main questions you want to be answered and also have a list of prompt questions in case the conversation steers away from this. The type of areas you might want your subject to cover could be:

- Experiences of loneliness/isolation
- Experiences of engaging (or not) with available services/activities/clubs etc. which could alleviate isolation
- What would help them to alleviate their own loneliness

If doing this you need to ask yourself whether there are any ethical issues you need to consider, such as:

- What impact will the research have on the participants, and myself?
- Do I need permission to collect and use this data?
- Does my data need to be confidential?
- Does my data need to be anonymous?
- Older people are classed as vulnerable and as such you may need to have a CRB check before interviewing them or go along with someone who has been checked.

Protect others and yourself!

Before conducting your own research, we would suggest getting in contact with your local Age UK or WRVS. It's likely that they will have lots of case studies that they've collected from their own work and they may agree to share some with you. Case studies that are particularly useful are those that demonstrate the value of interventions such as befriending schemes or other community based projects. If not, ask local service providers whether they have any beneficiaries who would be happy to be interviewed. You will need to get some support on this and you may need to interview alongside a member of staff.

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