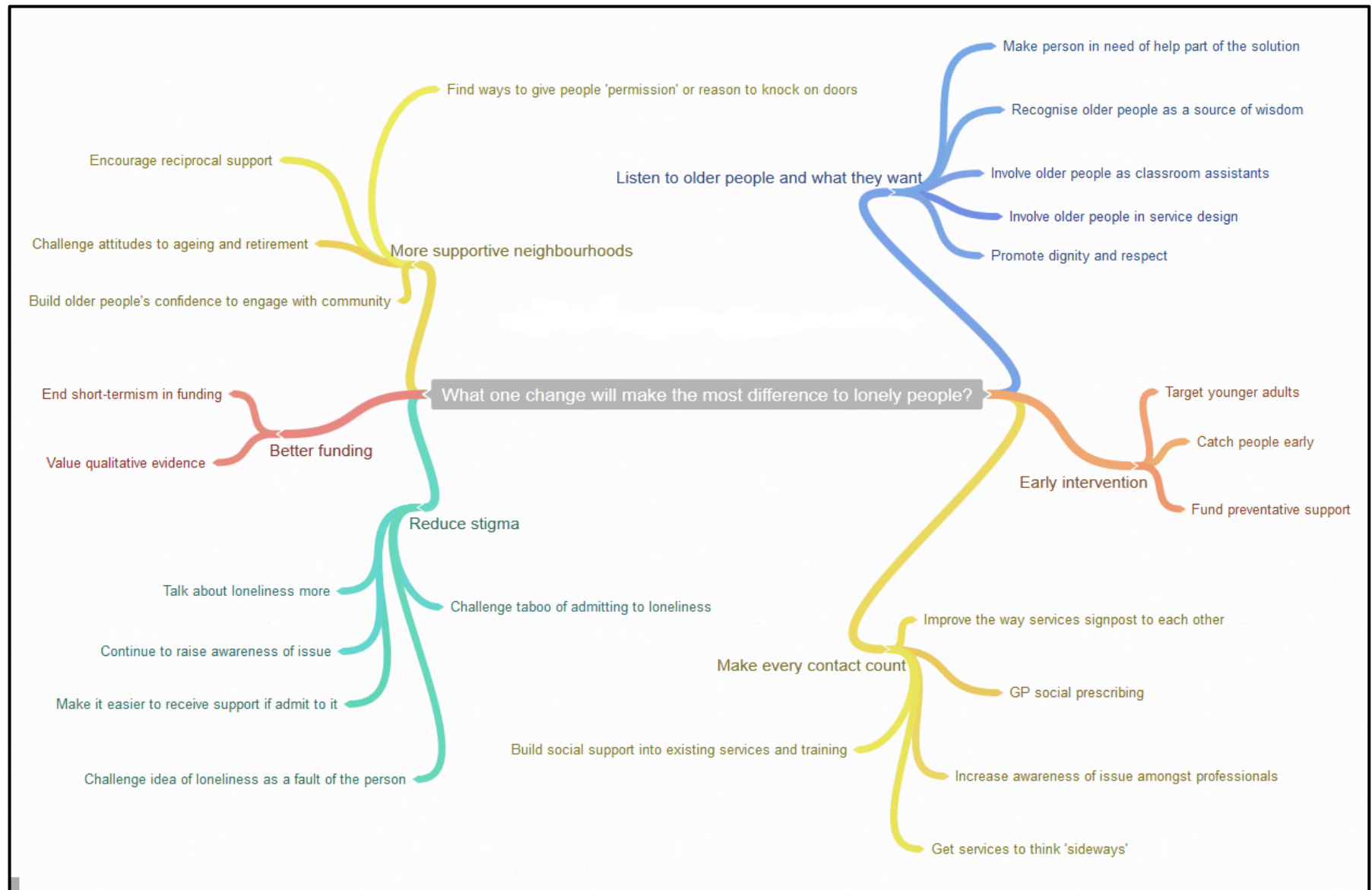


There were a number of lively discussions and debates during Connect + Act. We've captured some of the main points raised, and examples shared, in the morning and Open Space sessions.

Morning Session

Question 1:

What one change will make the most difference to lonely people?

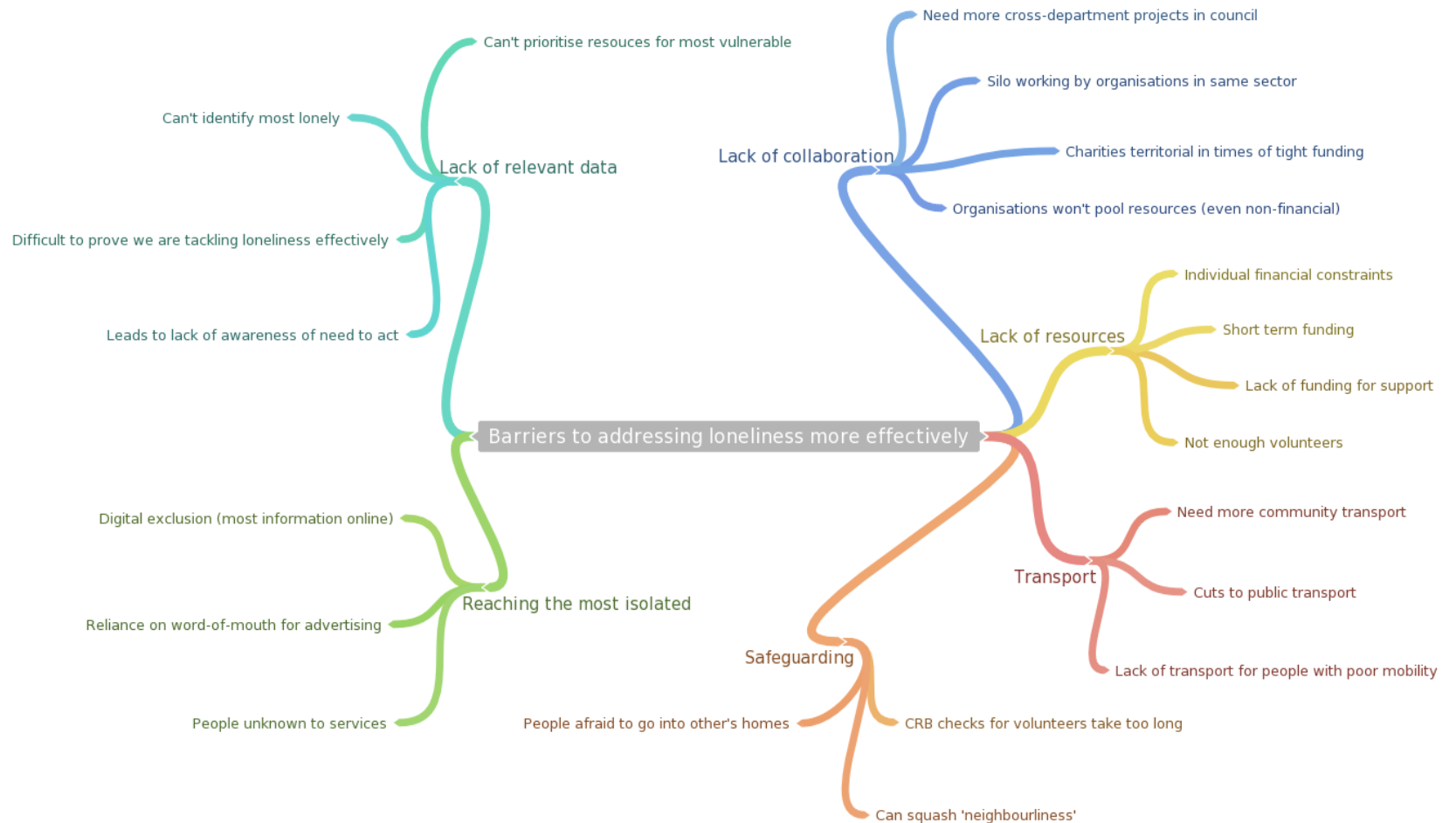


coggle

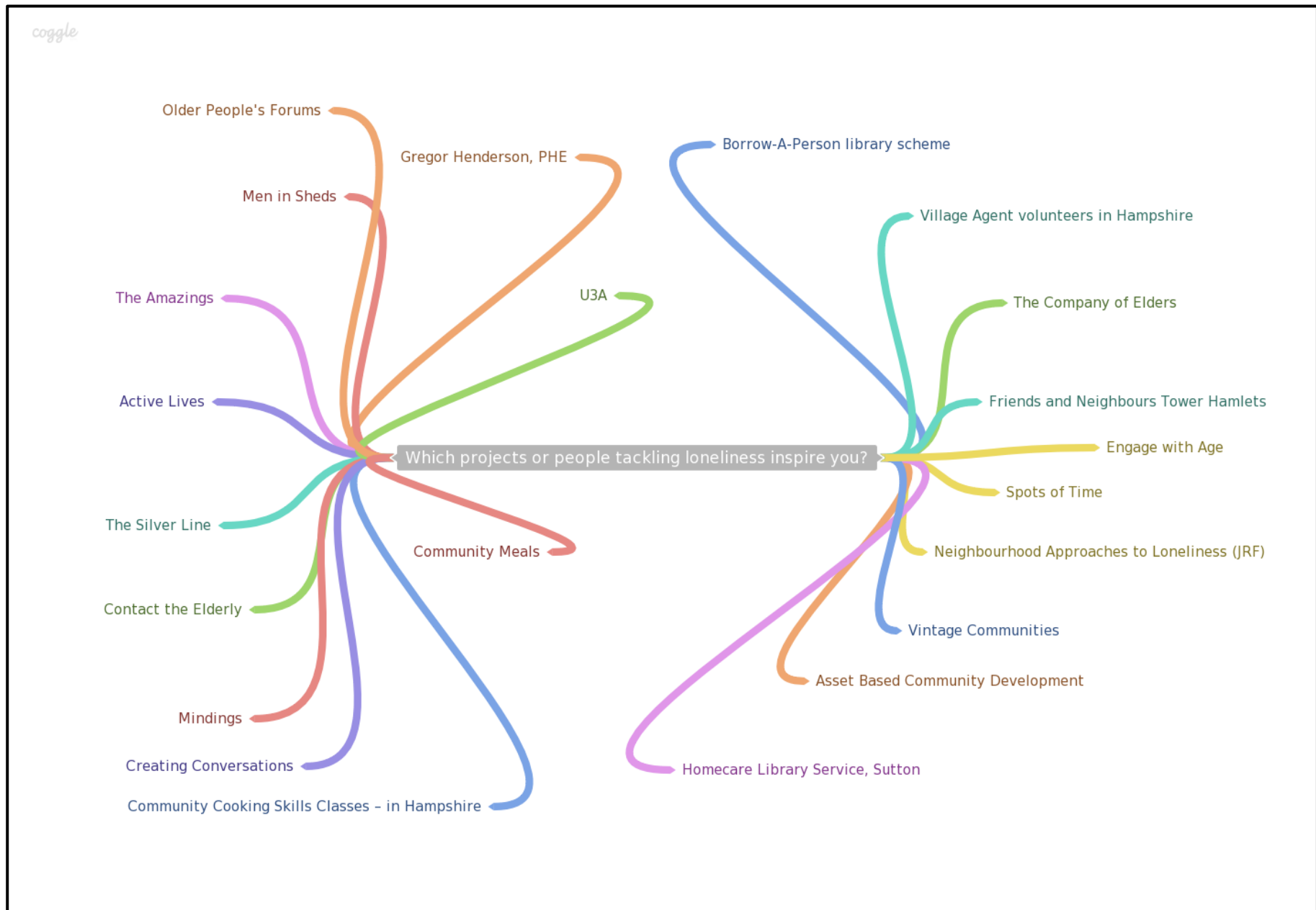
Morning Session

Question 2:

What are the barriers to you or your organisation to addressing loneliness more effectively?



Morning Session
Question 3:
What works?
Which projects or people tackling loneliness inspire you?



Open Space Group Discussions

There were fourteen discussions during the afternoon's Open Space session. Six of the group hosts have explained why they suggested the topic, summarised what was discussed and listed any interesting examples shared.

1. What are Age UKs are doing to address loneliness across the country? [Andrew Gardner, Age UK Essex]

With so many Age UKs gathered in one place, it seemed the ideal opportunity to see what everyone else was doing and perhaps swap ideas. The group discussed the whether donations or fee charging was best for befriending interventions, changes they were making in the face of funding and outcome measurement. They talked about how they could create services based on what people want to be able to do, rather than on need. Interesting examples included Digital Befriending, Active Lives and Dementia Connections. The group would like to see research commissioned into what today's 'younger' older adults will want to do when they are older.

2. Is citizen led activity on loneliness sustainable? [Marc Mordey, Vintage Communities]

Marc put forward this topic for discussion as the volunteers and commissioners Vintage Communities works with in Balham have concerns about their ability to maintain the momentum after VC leaves. The group discussed factors that contribute to sustainable citizen-led activity, including events, a 'spark' for community driven actions and to find and nurture the natural leaders in a community. It was suggested that volunteers could 'piggy back' onto other groups such as Neighbourhood Watch. One interesting idea was to put yellow benches in public places, with a message anyone sitting on the bench would be open to having a chat. Other examples included Joseph Rowntree Foundation's Neighbourhood Approaches to Loneliness work. It was agreed citizen-led activity on loneliness was a slow process, and there were no 'quick fixes' but still worth aiming for.

3. How can we tackle social isolation amongst people who are 'under the radar'? [Seema Chopra, RSVP]

The topic was suggested by an employee of the Retired and Senior Volunteer programme, who seek to engage older people in voluntary action to help others as a means of tackling social isolation. The group debated how to reach older people 'behind closed doors' and not in contact with services offering support. Examples given included the Personal Best Programme and some academic research into this issue was shared.

4. What is the role of churches and faith groups in addressing loneliness and isolation? [Jeremy Sharpe, Link Visiting Scheme]

This topic was suggested by a delegate with a particular interest in exploring the role of churches and faith groups in addressing isolation. Jeremy is currently working to support faith groups who want to set up befriending services in their local areas. The group discussed how faith groups often have strong links to residents in small communities and a potential pool of volunteers. A key issue identified by the group was that faith groups often needed to work hard to establish trust with statutory agencies and other groups, so as to be clear about perceived 'ulterior motives' in relation to religious practice. It was felt though that faith groups held a significant resource which would benefit many local communities is utilised in the right way. The Link Visiting Scheme example was shared. The group discussion led to the conclusion that further action needed to be taken to demonstrate to commissioners and statutory health and social care bodies that they would benefit from exploring options for tackling loneliness with the faith sector.

5. How can physical activity reduce loneliness? [Jolanthe de Koning]

This group was hosted by a PhD student who is looking at how physical activity can be used to reduce loneliness as part of her research. The group discussed how to collect data that might demonstrate the link (if it exists) between loneliness and inactivity, and then reduced loneliness and increased physical activity. It was suggested that the health risks of inactivity as well documents and recognised by policy makers, so if we could prove a link between loneliness and inactivity, service providers could learn about what works well – and commissioners could understand how to fund them. Interesting examples were given about what is happening in rural areas around this topic, and some potential collaboration between groups was discussed. The host of the group is now planning to undertake participatory research to answer some of these questions.

6. Does regulation kill kindness? [Susan Allen, Joseph Rowntree Foundation]

"Regulation kills kindness" is one of the messages emerging from the JRF's Neighbourhood Approaches to Loneliness programme. An "Adopt a Granny/Grandad" idea was floated by the programme to bring children and adults together to meet and build confidence between generations in an area where families are often dispersed. However, the suggestion was diluted to become a 'pen pal scheme' because it would be easier to monitor. The group discussed how perceived risk (rather than strict regulation) often stops community groups from connecting in meaningful ways with neighbours. A Cabinet Office report '[Unshackling Good Neighbours](#)' and a website called [Barrier Busting](#) were recommended. The discussion made clear that most people took regulation (including the balance of risk) to relate to volunteering and much of the time was spent discussing CRB checks, the strengths and weaknesses of the process and the changes from CRB to Disclosure & Barring (DBS checks).

Other discussions included: Service example - Littlehampton Café Bus; Loneliness is not just for the old; how can we use creativity to tackle loneliness?; The challenge of organisational behaviour in partnerships collaborating to tackle loneliness; Loneliness and hearing loss; What would give people permission or an excuse to knock on doors?; How much safeguarding is necessary for volunteering in the home?; Does using the internet make loneliness better or worse?