

# Tackling Loneliness Together:

## British Red Cross and Co-op end of partnership report



[#TacklingLoneliness](#)



Supporting



# Foreword



**Norman McKinley**

Project Sponsor, Executive Director of UK Operations at British Red Cross

As part of our humanitarian mission, the British Red Cross has a long and proud record of supporting people experiencing social isolation in communities across the UK.

We have been providing health and social care services since the NHS was first established. In 2018 alone, we helped more than 100,000 people get home from hospital. Few of these people come to us first and foremost because they are lonely, but we know that social isolation is one of the most frequent underlying problems affecting the people we support.

The British Red Cross

knows that social connections can be essential to help people recover and rebuild their lives when crisis strikes. When people build and maintain strong social connections, they and their communities become more resilient. Likewise, when communities and the people within them are well connected, kindness can flow – and that is the most powerful way to tackle loneliness.

Nowhere has the power of kindness been more apparent than in Co-op staff and customers' incredible efforts to fundraise and work alongside us to transform the lives of some of the UK's most isolated people. By coming together to collaborate and share our expertise I am proud to say that nearly five years on, our achievements are far reaching – from our Connecting Communities services to our ground-breaking research and campaigning. By joining in partnership with three further charities; Home-Start, FareShare and Cruse Bereavement Care, people facing the most challenging life changes have been helped to re-connect.

This kindness has a ripple effect. From sharing the expertise of our partnership, to convening the Loneliness Action Group and supporting an All-Party Parliamentary Group on Loneliness, we now have England's first cross-Government Loneliness Strategy, and similar commitments in the devolved nations.

From neighbours simply reaching out to support one another, to our ongoing dialogue with government and most of all the movement that this partnership has helped to grow, I look forward to watching our legacy gain momentum into 2020 and beyond.



**Paul Gerrard**

Campaigns and Public Affairs Director at Co-op

Our Co-op is owned by four and half million active members and not only are we the oldest co-operative in the world but we're one of the largest co-operatives as well. Our members have always been at the heart of what we do and we have a long history of campaigning on issues that matter to them and their communities.

In 2015, we partnered with the British Red Cross to tackle loneliness and social isolation in communities throughout the UK because our members and colleagues chose loneliness as the issue they wanted us to stand up and champion. Tackling loneliness is a very co-operative thing to do – the heart of a Co-op is people coming together to help each other.

We are proud to have raised £6.7 million to help tackle the issue of loneliness hands on. But that's not all - we were the first and only business to be a founder member of the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness. We've campaigned for national policy change resulting in the appointment of a Minister for loneliness. We also secured a commitment from government to tackle loneliness in the form of a strategy 'A Connected Society'. Our own charity, the Co-op Foundation, has become an influential voice on youth loneliness in particular, and is playing a leading role in delivering several of the commitments in this strategy. Finally, we changed the way we operated as a business to better support our colleagues and customers experiencing loneliness, for example social groups for the bereaved through our Funeralcare business and have built opportunities for connection in local communities through our donation of £17 million to support thousands of local charities through our Local Community Fund in the last year alone.

We are really proud of our work on tackling this issue and are pleased to be able to leave a long term legacy in this space. We are also proud that we did this in partnership with the British Red Cross, co-operating together to deliver change and improve people's lives.

Anyone can be lonely but everyone can help.

Although there were fantastic organisations working in the loneliness space back in 2015 doing great work, it is true to say that loneliness wasn't widely recognised as a key issue and was mainly seen as something that impacted older people. Together we helped to reframe this. Through our research we found that 1 in 5 people were always or often lonely and, for example, that young new mums were one of the key trigger groups of people experiencing loneliness. We have collectively shifted the dial on the issue – from loneliness affecting older people to loneliness being a public health issue impacting anyone of any age.

# Our partnership achievements

# 39

Connecting  
Communities  
services provided  
across the UK<sup>1</sup>

Over  
**£6.7  
million**  
raised

# 11,830

people  
supported

# 71%

of people less  
lonely after  
accessing  
our support

Over  
**60**

**organisations**  
from the voluntary,  
private and public  
sectors are active  
members of  
the Loneliness  
Action Group

Social return of  
**£2.04 per  
£1 invested**  
(excluding set up costs)<sup>2</sup>

# Seven

ground-breaking  
reports published

**All our**  
recommendations  
incorporated  
into the loneliness  
strategy  
for England

Over  
**1,000**

pieces of  
media coverage  
showcasing the  
partnership's work  
on loneliness<sup>3</sup>

Over  
**6,000**  
downloads of  
research reports  
produced during  
the partnership,  
such as 'Trapped in  
a Bubble', 'Barriers  
to Belonging' and  
the Connecting  
Communities  
service evaluation

More than  
**15,000**

mentions  
of the  
partnership  
hashtag  
**#Tackling  
Loneliness<sup>4</sup>**

# Won awards

including Best  
Charity Partnership  
in Consumer Goods  
and National  
Partnership of  
the Year with  
a Retailer

<sup>1</sup> Including four Support at Home services.

<sup>2</sup> Costs which were explicitly associated to set up and wider partnership objectives outside of the schemes were removed from this analysis.

<sup>3</sup> Coverage constitutes any coverage of the British Red Cross and Co-op partnership and both organisations' work on loneliness, plus associated activity, for example the Loneliness Action Group.

<sup>4</sup> Between December 2016 – September 2019.

# Our partnership story

- Co-op and its members select the British Red Cross as **charity partner**

**Jul 2015**

- Launch of groundbreaking **'Trapped in a bubble'** research report

**Dec 2016**

- **Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness** runs throughout 2017

**2017**

**Oct 2015**

- **18 months of fundraising** by Co-op colleagues, members and customers begins

**Jan 2017**

- **£4m raised** by Co-op colleagues, members and customers

- Roll out of new partnership services in **39 communities**

**May 2017**

- Appointment of **world's first Minister for loneliness**
- **Set up of new Loneliness Action Group** co-chaired by Co-op and the British Red Cross meeting all Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness final recommendations
- Set up of the new **APPG on Loneliness**, chaired by Rachel Reeves MP and supported by the British Red Cross and Co-op

**Jan 2018**

**Q4 2017**

- **£6.7m raised** by Co-op colleagues, members and customers

**June 2018**

- Launch of **joint APPG on Loneliness and DCMS 'tackling loneliness' pack for MPs**

- Connected Community shared learning conference took place with more than 100 attendees from across the UK

**July 2018**

- **Launch of the government's first ever Loneliness Strategy**, setting out the approach to tackling loneliness in England
- **Tackling Loneliness receptions held at Party Conferences** (Labour and Conservative)
- Launch of our **shared learning report 'Connecting Communities to Tackle Loneliness'**
- Connecting Communities service **achieves 100% of its original target number of people supported.**

**Sept - Oct 2018**

- **Community Connector Frontline Practitioner Conference**

**Jan 2019**

- Flagship **Loneliness Action Group** conference
- Launch of social prescribing shared learning report **'Fulfilling the Promise'** and our service evaluation **'Tackling Loneliness and Isolation: Findings from the evaluation of our Connecting Communities Service'**

**May 2019**

- **14 Connecting Communities services funded by Co-op (and 11 funded by the British Red Cross)** are extended until December 2019. The remaining services close
- **Over 10,000** people supported reached

**Jul 2019**

**Jun 2019**

- Launch of **Barriers to Belonging** report

**Sept-Oct 2019**

- **Tackling Loneliness receptions held at Party Conferences** (Labour and Conservative)
- Launch of **Loneliness Action Group shadow report** assessing government progress
- **Launch of National Social Prescribing Academy**

# Our partnership fundraising



Photo © Joel Chant/BRC

Fundraising began with an 18-month programme of national and local campaigns, supported by Co-op members, staff and customers. With Co-op's incredible support, the partnership raised a ground-breaking £6.7million, exceeding our partnership target by 91.4%.

The dedication and commitment to fundraising shown by all Co-op members, staff and customers was instrumental in enabling us to deliver our partnership on such a large scale and was paramount to our success.



Photo © Joel Chant/BRC

## Key achievements include:

**100% of stores** engaged in fundraising

**Three national fundraising initiatives** delivered across all Co-op's businesses raising **£1.1m** collectively

**£250,000 raised** through challenge events including marathons and a trek to Mount Everest base camp

Working with Co-op suppliers, **over £500,000 raised** through cause-related marketing for **10 food products** and **two insurance policy incentives** for Co-op customers and members

Nearly **£250,000** donated through **Co-op's Local Community Fund**

**£60,000 raised** through **British Red Cross charity scratch cards** sold in store<sup>5</sup>



Photo © Co-op

<sup>5</sup> Charity scratch cards sold during Q4 2017.

# Our partnership impact

We began our partnership by building evidence on what it's like to feel isolated and lonely through a wide range of in-depth interviews, group sessions and online forums. Working alongside 45 experts from health policy fields, we established that loneliness can affect anyone, regardless of age, and that life transitions can act as risk factors in triggering loneliness. Our research also showed that there is no 'one size fits all' solution to tackling loneliness.

Over the following months we designed a delivery approach to prevent loneliness when people are at risk, respond to those facing loneliness already, and restore people's confidence and sense of connection. Our work cumulated in the development of a new service model designed to tackle loneliness and social isolation: Connecting Communities.

We recognised the importance of truly understanding the impact we were aiming to achieve and worked with a dedicated team to support the collection and analysis of data. We also utilised the invaluable insight and expertise of external partners including Kantar Public and Runnymede Trust. In May 2019 we published a summary of the findings from an independent evaluation of the Connecting Communities services using data collected up to the end of 2018.<sup>6</sup> This was conducted by the University of Sheffield and can be [read here](#).

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**Since the launch of the first Connecting Communities services in 2017, together we have:**

## Reduced loneliness<sup>7</sup>

- Supported **11,830 people** facing loneliness and social isolation in the UK.
- **71% of people<sup>8</sup> supported** had a **positive change in their loneliness at the end of our support**.
- **Almost half of these people** (47%) moved from being classed as lonely at the start of our support, to being **not lonely at the end of our support**.
- **Only 48% of people** we supported were classed as **lonely at the end of support**, compared to 84% at the start of our support.<sup>9</sup>

These findings build on the independent evaluation referenced above and are the result of an internal analysis conducted by the British Red Cross on data collected up to the end of September 2019.

## Improved well-being<sup>10</sup>

- **76% of people supported** (who had recorded start and end scores)<sup>11</sup>, had an **improvement in their wellbeing**.
- The average improvement was 3.6 points ( $\pm 1.2$  points), in line with what researchers identify as being a **meaningful change**.
- Many of the people interviewed by the researchers spoke about the impact of the support on the development of their self-esteem and confidence.



Photo © Camilla Greenwell/BRC



**I feel as though I'm on the road to recovery. I'm getting out most days now, even if it's just a walk down to the shops to pick up some of the shopping. It's amazing, even if you get out once a day it does help. It lifts your spirits. The difference has been tremendous.**

- Person supported through our Connecting Communities service

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<sup>6</sup> Tackling Loneliness and Isolation: Findings from our evaluation of our Connecting Communities service (May 2019). Available at <https://www.redcross.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/research-publications>. This evaluation was based on results from our Connecting Communities sites and not including the four Support at Home services.

<sup>7</sup> Loneliness was measured using the three item UCLA scale for loneliness.

<sup>8</sup> Those supported with a UCLA score from the start of support and at the end of our support.

<sup>9</sup> Analysis undertaken by British Red Cross evaluation team for all people supported from May 2017 to September 2019 through Co-op funded services.

<sup>10</sup> Findings measured using the short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing scale.

<sup>11</sup> Based on 67 people with matched start and end scores.

## Delivered value for money<sup>12</sup>

- Analysis found a social return of **£2.04 per £1 invested** (excluding set up costs).<sup>13</sup>

When all costs are included, our social return was **£1.48 per £1 invested**. Both figures are an incredibly positive result and proves our partnership model provides value for money.

## Significantly enhanced knowledge on how to tackle loneliness

Prior to our Trapped in a Bubble report, there had been no published research on social prescribing projects using a validated loneliness measure.

Connecting Communities was **the first national social prescribing service to measure loneliness as an outcome**, which is a significant advance on how loneliness is measured.

## Taken pressure off statutory services

Our services helped to **shift support from statutory to community activities**. Statutory services including the NHS and local authorities were the main source of referrals (41%), but through our service, people were **most likely to be signposted to third sector organisations or community activities** (57%).<sup>14</sup>



## Developed a sustainable model of support

**Our Connecting Communities service model has proved to be a successful and sustainable asset to combat loneliness, which will leave a lasting legacy for our partnership. A number of these services are planned to continue in 2020 thanks to corporate support, ensuring people experiencing loneliness will continue to receive much-needed support within their community.**

In addition to our service model, over 30 community assets have been established or supported through collaboration with local organisations including libraries and community centres. These assets, such as book groups and local activities, will not only continue to provide value to local communities and ensure individuals' needs are met outside of our formal services, but will also play an integral role in social prescribing schemes going forward.



## Maintaining a reduction in loneliness following support

**The evaluation undertaken by the University of Sheffield found reduced levels of loneliness and increased wellbeing at the end of our support, however we also contacted 71 former service users three months after our support had ended to find out how they were getting on:**

More than three quarters (78%) either still felt less lonely (42%) or had experienced no deterioration in their loneliness (35%) from when they had started receiving our support.<sup>15</sup>

We were only able to follow up with a small proportion of the thousands of people we supported, and further research is needed to explore the long term outcomes of a social prescribing service for loneliness and what influences people being able to maintain a reduction in loneliness.



Photo © Mimi Malicea/BRC

<sup>12</sup> Analysis undertaken by the University of Sheffield and reported in April 2019.

<sup>13</sup> Costs which were explicitly associated to set up and wider partnership objectives outside of the schemes were removed from this analysis.

<sup>14</sup> As reported by University of Sheffield in April 2019.

<sup>15</sup> Please note, figures do not sum due to rounding.

## Broadening our reach through partner organisations

Nearly three quarters of those who stated they were often or always lonely fell within one of the groups identified as at risk of loneliness in our Trapped in a Bubble research.<sup>16</sup> This was due to people experiencing life transitions which can disrupt existing social connections with groups, including new young mums and those recently bereaved.

Through collaborative programmes with three expert organisations, Home-Start, Cruse Bereavement Care and FareShare, we provided support to combat loneliness in vulnerable groups who may be at risk of loneliness, but who were under-represented among our existing service users.



**345 young mums** were supported through 13 Home-Starts across the UK.<sup>17</sup>

**66% of young mums surveyed showed a positive change** in their loneliness, with **23% experiencing no change**, which shows there was no deterioration in their loneliness.



Photo © Percy Dean/BRC



Photo © Percy Dean/BRC

Sarah, a mum of four, began attending Home-Start York's group in the city after she moved to the area and didn't know anyone.

The group met regularly at a local library which offers play facilities for children and a chance for mums to chat, make new friends and get advice from Home-Start staff and volunteers. Sarah said: "It was when I was offered the help that I realised how I felt before, I'd felt lonely since the birth of my first child.

"I don't know how to explain it, it wasn't until I got out of my routine, of just spending time with my kids that I realised what was going on. When I came to York and later joined the Home-Start group I realised that before all I did was sit in the flat. I now know I was depressed but meeting new people through the Home-Start group has opened doors to a lot of new opportunities for me."

**“ Some of the mums I've met now come round to my home or go out with me for coffee, it just makes you feel normal, I feel much better for it and able to cope with what life can throw at me.**

<sup>16</sup> Young new mums aged 18-24, individuals with mobility limitations, individuals with health issues, those recently divorced or separated, 'empty nesters' and retirees as reported in Kantar Public (2016) Trapped in a bubble: an investigation into triggers for loneliness in the UK. British Red Cross & Co-op. Available at: [www.redcross.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/action-on-loneliness](http://www.redcross.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/action-on-loneliness).

<sup>17</sup> based on data collected up until June 2019.

**856 individuals** across 12 cities received support and training on bereavement.<sup>18</sup>

**218** of these individuals subsequently trained as **More Than Words Champions** to run peer-support activities in their local communities, ensuring sustainable support to their community after the partnership comes to an end.

FareShare worked with **325 charities** to bring communities together and provide food for **over 23,000 people**.<sup>19</sup>

The majority of charities<sup>20</sup> agreed attending the food service helped individuals **feel less isolated (89%)** and **part of their community (89%)**, showing how this partnership helped tackle loneliness in this hard to reach group.



Photo © Percy Deary/BRC

Wayne, from Birmingham, was left devastated by the sudden death of his wife of more than 30 years Elaine following a short illness. The couple, who met as teenagers, have three children and grandchildren. Elaine had been Wayne's carer and he describes her as his best friend.

After Elaine's funeral Wayne found himself feeling alone as friends and family gradually got on with their

own lives. He joined a Cruse Bereavement Care 'More Than Words' group to meet others experiencing loneliness after bereavement. Wayne said: "When [Elaine first died] I had a lot of family members coming around but then after the funeral came and went that was it. All the well-wishers and distant relatives are leading their own lives. I sit [at home] most days and I just want time to stop. Being able to meet up with other people cushions the blow."

**“ Going to Cruse and More Than Words was really helpful. I spoke to other people and expressed how I felt. Other people talked about their coping mechanisms and I've been trying to put them into my life, and they are working to an extent.**

FareShare provide surplus food to Mike's Table, a social enterprise based in London who run pop-up supper clubs. Mike's Table works with organisations including the Carers' Network, Prisoners Abroad and charities helping people who are seeking asylum or experiencing homelessness.

They provide communal meals cooked from scratch for up to 60 people at a time. Louise, the founder of Mike's Table, says that loneliness is a big issue for many of the people who attend. The communal meals offer attendees a chance to meet and socialise.



Photo © Co-op

<sup>18</sup> based on data collected up until June 2019.

<sup>19</sup> based on data collected up until September 2019.

<sup>20</sup> As reported from FareShare's initial research findings, based on 72 survey responses.

## Mobilising local communities

As with so many social health issues, we found that all aspects of society can play a role in prevention and early response to loneliness.<sup>21</sup> Local volunteers were therefore essential in helping tackle loneliness and social isolation within their own communities. By mobilising our volunteer networks and the local community through the creation of a volunteer programme, we increased support for our Connecting Communities services.

**1,526 people** applied to the Connecting Communities volunteer roles throughout the course of the partnership.

On average, **400 volunteers** worked with Connecting Communities and Support at Home services at any one time.

On average, **30% of volunteers** indicated that they were sourced through **Co-op channels**.

We received over **53,000 unique views** and **over 63,000 total page views** for volunteer sign up pages for our loneliness work.

### Shuchi, Connecting Communities volunteer, London

When Shuchi, 34, moved from Delhi to London, she left behind a large circle of friends and found herself experiencing loneliness first hand. Familiar with the Red Cross through the organisation's work in India, she signed up as a volunteer with the Connecting Communities service in Barking and Dagenham, and has described it as 'transformative'.

Shuchi has since worked with a number of service users, using her own experience of loneliness to offer them practical and emotional support to reconnect with others.

Shuchi said: "When I started volunteering it was just for two days a week, but I immediately felt a difference in my own mental health. It is a basic human need to interact with others and I really noticed a shift in the way I felt once I started to meet people through this role.

"My happiness improved, I was looking forward to things, I had more energy."

**Seeing the people I support push through their challenges, which are quite extreme at times, and reconnect with their communities is really motivating. On most days I come back feeling re-energised to tackle my own issues.**



Shuchi (right), support worker for the Connecting Communities team in Barking and Dagenham pictured with service user Georgina (Left)

Photo © Pery Dean/BRC

<sup>21</sup> Kantar Public (2016). Trapped in a bubble: an investigation into triggers for loneliness in the UK. British Red Cross & Co-op. Available at: [www.redcross.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/action-on-loneliness](http://www.redcross.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/action-on-loneliness).

## The power of re-connecting

### Case study 1



Jeremy

**Jeremy was dealt a double blow when both his wife and mother passed away within a few months of each other. With the grief of both bereavements leaving him feeling paralysed Jeremy felt unable to do everyday activities he had once enjoyed and says he 'felt very low'.**

At an appointment with his GP he was diagnosed as borderline Type 2 diabetes – which can be reversed through improvements to diet and exercise. Jeremy was referred through his GP to the Connecting Communities service in his local area. With the help of Alison, the Community Connector for Southampton, Jeremy has joined a walking group, begun attending coffee mornings and started playing badminton to get out more and meet new people.

He said: "Initially I thought 'oh great what good is this going to do?' but Alison from the British Red Cross Connecting Communities service has been brilliant. She's got me out doing things again. It's unbelievable how Connecting Communities has turned things around."

Photo © Camilla Greenwell/BRC

### Case study 2

**Shruti experienced loneliness after moving to live in Belfast with her husband.**

She was often at home on her own while he was working. Shruti found the 'Connected Voices' choir run by the Belfast Connecting Communities team and began attending rehearsals. After a few weeks Shruti increased in confidence and was able to make friends with other choir members.

**“ Since being anxious on the first visit I have made friends here who I look forward to seeing every week. The project has made a big difference.**

- Shruti



Shruti

Photo © Phil Smyth/BRC

# Our partnership voice

Our partnership recognised that tackling loneliness requires a society-wide response. By harnessing the strengths and expertise of third, public and private sector bodies, together we were able to create a truly holistic approach to elicit long term, sustainable change.

We've played a **key convening role** in bringing together government, charities, businesses and public-sector leaders, working nationally on loneliness through co-chairing the Loneliness Action Group together and providing secretariat to the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Loneliness. Through convening these groups, we've ensured a breadth of voices could contribute to the loneliness agenda, developed wide-ranging solutions and secured meaningful commitments from decision makers across the UK.



Olivia Field, policy and advocacy manager (centre), with MPs Andrew Gwynne, Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (left) and Barbara Keeley, Shadow Minister for Mental Health and Social Care (right) at the Co-op and British Red Cross Tackling Loneliness reception at the 2018 Labour Party Conference

We've **helped shape the government's first ever loneliness strategy for England**, which incorporated all our recommendations, and those put forward by the Loneliness Action Group. The government's strategy provided a formal mandate to the Loneliness Action Group to 'continue to work hand in hand with the government, acting as a critical friend and source of expertise'.<sup>22</sup> This emphasized the integral role our partnership played in the strategy's development.

We've **ensured that loneliness remains high on the political agenda** by convening organisations and government stakeholders, including relevant ministers, policy makers and influencers. Through the Loneliness Action Group network, sector events, party conference receptions and the APPG, insight, learning and lived experience have been shared. This has directly shaped government policy and legislation, thus ensuring the issue of loneliness is being tackled in a more inclusive and sustainable way.

## Key achievements include:

**Seven** ground-breaking reports published.

**More than 60 organisations** in the Loneliness Action Group from the voluntary, private and public sectors actively taking part, including Age UK, the advertiser JC Decaux and the Arts Council.

**All our recommendations incorporated into the new national loneliness strategy** for England, including all the final Jo Cox Commission's calls to action.

Creation of **world's first Minister for loneliness, retained through two government administrations to date.**

**Hundreds of organisations engaged through our events** such as our flagship Loneliness Action Group conference, *From policy to action: where next for loneliness?* attended by over 150 organisations.

**A series of APPG on Loneliness events** throughout 2018 and 2019, keeping up momentum in parliament and resulting in 78% of MPs reporting they'd be interested in supporting a campaign to tackle loneliness among people of all ages and from all backgrounds in the UK



Lord Victor Adebowale, Co-op independent non-executive director, speaking at the Loneliness Action Group flagship conference, 2019

Photo © Kate Stanworth/BRC

<sup>22</sup> A connected society: a strategy for tackling loneliness (October 2018). Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-connected-society-a-strategy-for-tackling-loneliness>.



Matt Hancock, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (centre) with Zoe Abrams, British Red Cross executive director, communications and advocacy, and Paul Gerrard, Co-op campaigns and public affairs director.

We've **influenced and shaped the implementation of key policy commitments** including the roll out of social prescribing across England securing the universal provision of link workers across all local health and social care systems. Welcomed by leading figures in the health and care space, this will enable a major shift in perspective, improving the health and wellbeing of individuals in need whilst reducing pressure on GPs and the NHS.

We've **encouraged and advanced policy commitments in the devolved nations** including setting up Loneliness Action Groups in Northern Ireland and Scotland, and sitting on the Welsh Government's Loneliness Strategy Advisory Board. Through these strategic relationships we have helped ensure political momentum is amplified and loneliness is tackled in all nations across the UK.



**As part of our partnership legacy, we will continue to run a meaningful and influential programme of work via the APPG throughout 2020, aiming to influence legislation and policy making to reduce loneliness across the UK, ensuring long term change for society.**

## Research

Our partnership has published a range of ground-breaking reports, ensuring our research will continue to give credible weight to the issue of loneliness and provide a strong evidence base to help support other organisations to improve society. Our publications include:

### Trapped In A Bubble: An investigation into triggers for loneliness in the UK

Helped persuade government to appoint a Minister for Loneliness and changed the national conversation on loneliness as an issue that affects all ages, not just older people.

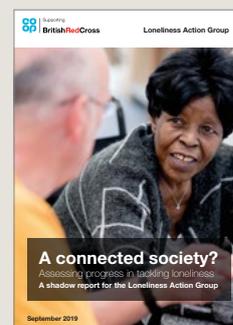


### Barriers to belonging: An exploration of loneliness among people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds

Garnered high profile media coverage and emphasised the importance of 'belonging' within the loneliness debate.

### Fulfilling the promise: How social prescribing can most effectively tackle loneliness

Informed regional and national plans for the roll out of social prescribing.



### A connected society? Assessing progress in tackling loneliness

Welcomed by a range of government officials and is currently helping to shape national plans to take forward the cross-government work in tackling loneliness and ensure the government's commitments in the loneliness strategy are achieved.

# Our partnership voice – communications



## Publications and media coverage

Our research found that loneliness was viewed as an issue of public interest, yet there was a common misconception that loneliness only affected older people. We recognised the importance of shifting these perceptions.

Through a dedicated programme of communications and campaign activities, we have achieved a number of successes.



Photo © Kate Stanworth/BRC

Claire Horton (centre), Online Editor of The Guardian's Society section, chairs a panel at the Loneliness Action Group flagship conference, 2019



Photo © Percy Dean/BRC

### The publication of numerous reports and substantial media coverage has positioned our partnership as an authority on loneliness:

Over **1,000 pieces of media coverage** about the work of our partnership and/or associated stakeholders, including the Jo Cox Commission and Loneliness Action Group, across national, regional, trade and sector and consumer media titles/outlets.

Trapped in a Bubble research cited **nearly 400 times** in media coverage of loneliness,<sup>23</sup> across a wide range of titles including BBC News, The Telegraph, Channel 4 News, Harpers Bazaar, Esquire, Retail Week and Civil Society.

Barriers to Belonging report covered in depth online and in broadcast media by **target media outlet Al Jazeera** plus The Voice, Eastern Eye and The Guardian.

The stories of our service users, volunteers and staff members **featured in high profile publications and outlets** including The Daily Mail, Al Jazeera, The Guardian and Channel 5 News.

<sup>23</sup> Since the research launched in late 2016.



## Online content and engagement

Online content and engagement has amplified awareness of the issue of loneliness and secured wide-ranging coverage for the partnership:

Reach of **nearly 130,000<sup>24</sup>** and almost **7,000 engagements (reactions, shares and comments) for social media content** on British Red Cross channels featuring our loneliness work and our partnership.

**More than 15,000 mentions of our partnership hashtag #TacklingLoneliness**

More than 57,000 unique views and over 71,000 total page views for our [redcross.org.uk/lonely](https://www.redcross.org.uk/lonely) and associated 'get help with loneliness' web pages.

**Over 17,000 unique views** and almost 20,000 total page views for our blog posts on loneliness.

**Over 6,000 downloads of research reports** produced during the partnership including 'Trapped In A Bubble', 'Barriers to Belonging' and the Connecting Communities service evaluation.



## Powerful content and stories

Engaging and powerful content telling the stories of staff, volunteers and service users helped raise the profile of loneliness as an issue that can affect anyone:

**Over 40 case studies captured** showing the breadth and diversity of those affected by loneliness including stories from each of the 'trigger groups', across all four UK nations, men and women, younger and older service users and people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds.

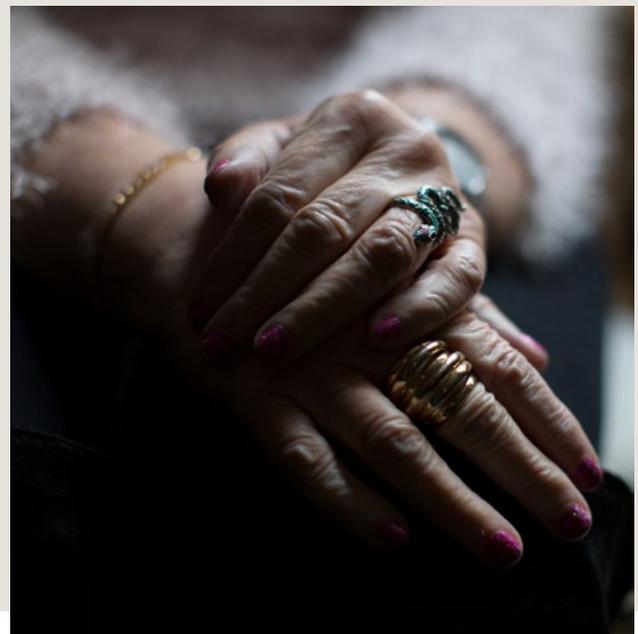


Photo © Caroline Ibbotson/BRCC

<sup>24</sup> Number of users who have viewed content.

## Opening up about loneliness

Telling the stories of our service users and staff and volunteers – who have often experienced loneliness themselves – has been a key way to raise awareness of loneliness through media and social media content.



Daniel and Michael



**After being bullied at school, Daniel had been left feeling anxious and isolated. He rarely went out and was feeling very low when he was referred to the Connecting Communities service in Blyth, Northumberland. But when he met Michael, the Community Connector for the area, all that was to change.**

After hearing about his interest in the outdoors, Michael arranged for Daniel to visit a nearby falconry centre, where he learned to handle birds of prey. The owner of the falconry centre was so impressed with Daniel's enthusiasm he agreed he could stay on as a volunteer.

Volunteering has increased Daniel's sense of self confidence and he is now feeling much more positive about life.

Daniel said: "I was staying in the house all the time, not going out.

"I was just bottled up all the time.

"The first bird I held [at the falconry centre] was Jessica. Once I held Jessica, I was like 'I'm in love with this place'.

"I've come out of my shell, I can talk to people now."

Community Connector Michael said: "It's a case of finding out what someone is interested in. And then finding them some way of getting them back involved.

"The change [after visiting the falconry centre] was amazing.

"For a young man who had not left the house for 12 months I believe we made great progress."

**“ The first bird I held [at the falconry centre] was Jessica. Once I held Jessica, I was like ‘I’m in love with this place’.**

- Daniel

# Sustainability of benefits from our partnership

We are delighted to create a partnership legacy with sustainable benefits, that will continue after our partnership ends. In addition to the legacy we have left in the advocacy and services space, highlighted earlier in our report, there are numerous learnings the British Red Cross can take forward to improve and innovate as an organisation.



Photos © Amara Eno/BRC

These learnings will help the British Red Cross to reach more people who are lonely, which would not have been achieved without our transformational partnership:

## **Influencing and informing the British Red Cross' new organisational strategy:**

The British Red Cross plans to build its new 10-year strategy upon the foundation of connectivity and how, when people and communities have positive connections, relationships and networks, this builds resilience. By making the shift towards community connectedness and the prepare and recover space, the British Red Cross will in turn strengthen its emergency response activity, whatever the crisis being addressed. The learning taken from our partnership and the development of the Connecting Communities services will play a vital role in informing and shaping future British Red Cross strategy in this area.

## **Equipping British Red Cross staff and volunteers with the skills to recognise and tackle loneliness:**

Expertise and learning resources built up over the partnership will be repurposed to provide specialist training for British Red Cross staff and volunteers across service areas, to ensure that our workforce is well prepared to identify and tackle loneliness in their respective areas. This will help ensure all people will get access to the correct help and support they need irrespective of how they have come to the British Red Cross.

## **Supporting lonely and isolated people across all British Red Cross service areas:**

- The UCLA scale will be extended across all British Red Cross Support at Home services as well as any future social prescribing initiatives, across the UK. Each year more than 80,000 people are reached through these services and through this tool, the impact on loneliness will continue to be captured.
- Learnings from our Barriers to Belonging research and operational work will be used by British Red Cross refugee support teams to help identify and tackle loneliness among people who use its service. As an issue that is inherent within the lives of many asylum seekers and refugees, the partnership learnings will support service development, including place based support programmes.
- Learnings will help to inform future British Red Cross youth engagement strategy. As young people are susceptible to experiencing loneliness, tackling this is already an important focus. By incorporating our partnership learnings, we will continue to better address this issue within this key group.



## **Securing future investment and innovation**

Having established a trusted reputation within the loneliness space through our partnership, the British Red Cross will continue to strengthen and diversify its approach to supporting those who are lonely through future collaboration and innovation with third parties. With this investment, we hope to build on our partnership successes and continue to evolve our loneliness offer. None of this would be possible without the expertise and reputation developed throughout our ground-breaking partnership with Co-op.



## **Co-op Foundation – tackling youth loneliness**

Co-op's own charity, the Co-op Foundation, will continue to tackle youth loneliness through its Belong programme. This includes #LonelyNotAlone, a campaign co-designed with young people which encourages everyone to show they care about youth loneliness by wearing yellow socks. In partnership with Government, the Foundation is delivering the youth strand of the Building Connections Fund, created in response to the Jo Cox Commission's calls to action. It is also delivering Space to Connect, helping communities improve how local spaces can be used to tackle loneliness.

# Thank you

A huge thank you to all the Co-op colleagues, members and suppliers, as well as the British Red Cross staff and volunteers, the partner organisations and last but not least the government representatives who have worked tirelessly to tackle loneliness across the UK.

Because of your dedication, enthusiasm and commitment, together we've been able to change the lives of thousands of people experiencing loneliness.

We are stronger together and we could have not have achieved all of this without you.

**Thank you!**

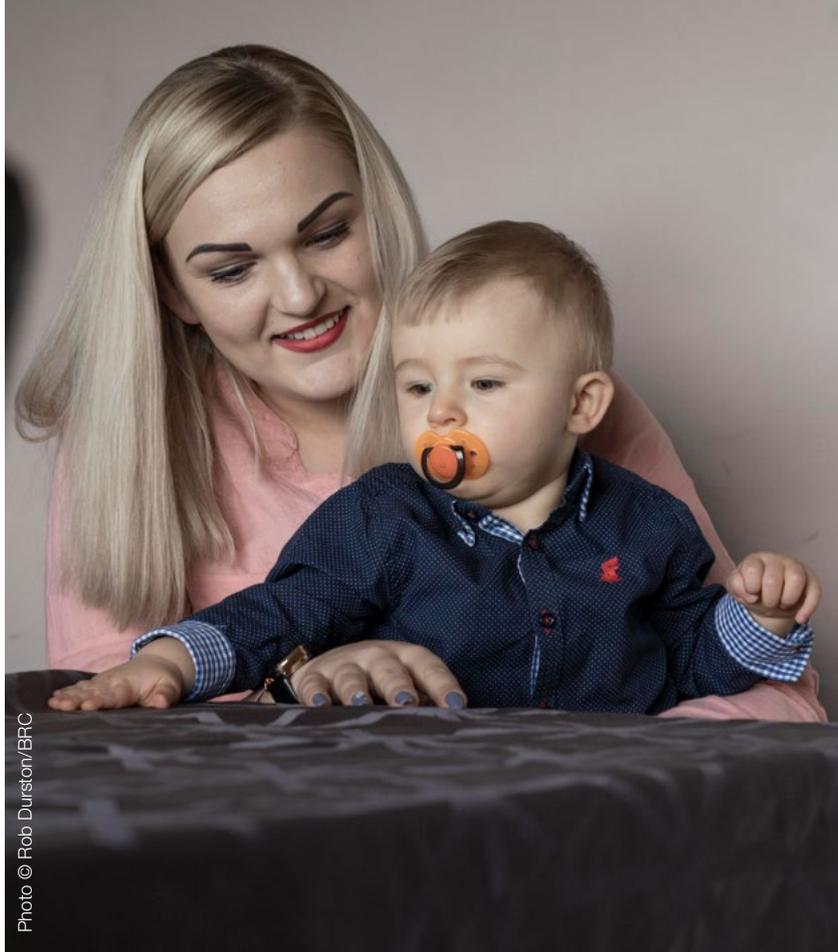


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