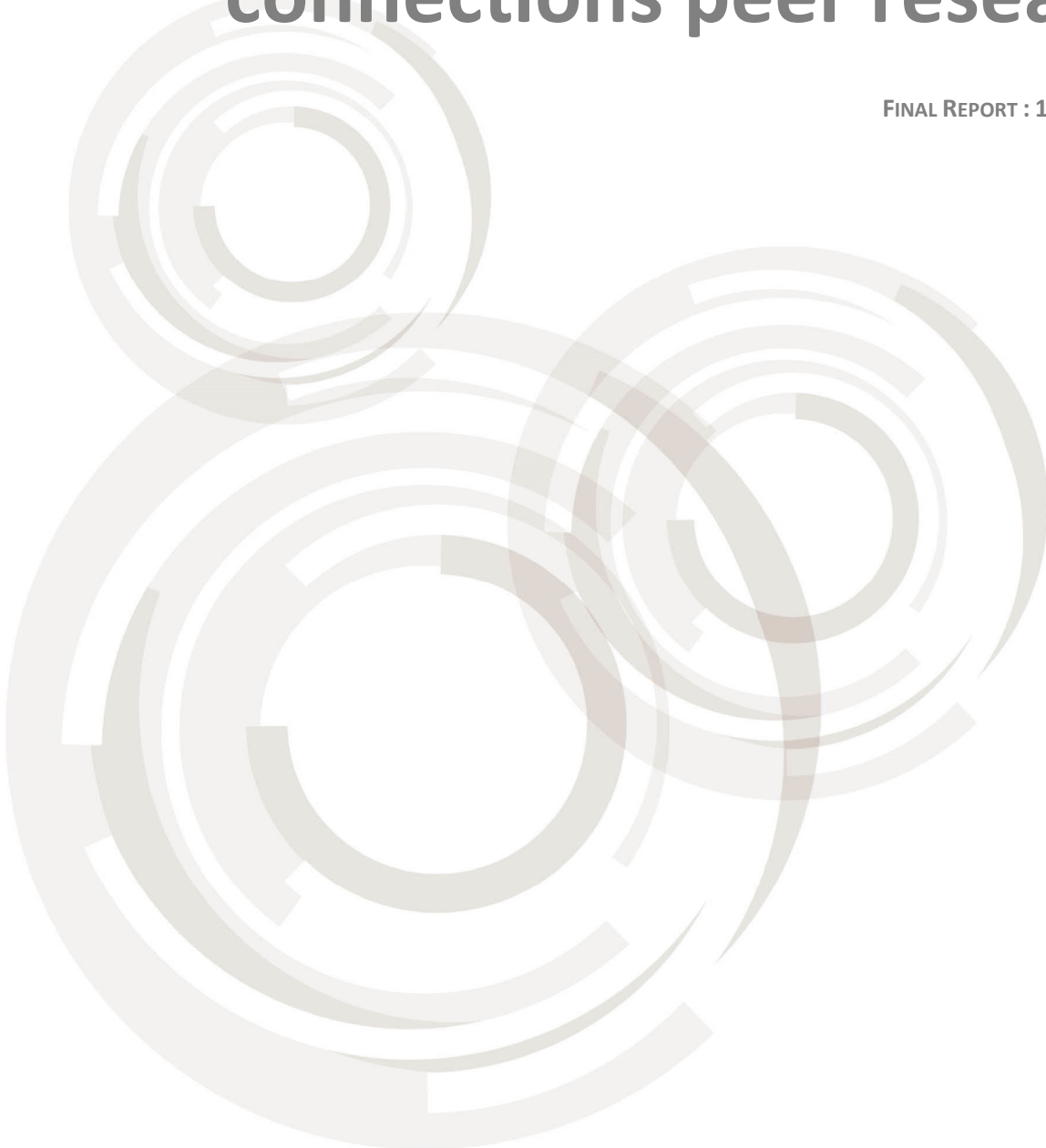


Kew Neighbourhood Association

Loneliness and social connections peer research

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Contents

Introduction	2
Background	3
Peer research objectives and methodology	3
Outcomes of the peer research process	5
Main findings	6
The sense of community in Kew	6
The importance of social contact	7
Impact of health on loneliness	9
The stigma of loneliness	9
Strategies adopted to overcome loneliness	9
Views on current services and support for those living alone in Kew	10
Barriers to using support services in Kew	11
Future activities and support to prevent loneliness	12
Groups who would benefit from support	13
Recommendations to reduce loneliness for Kew residents	14
Appendix	16

Introduction

This report describes the findings resulting from the Loneliness and Isolation peer research project completed in Kew TW9. The aim of the peer research was to train a group of Kew residents to explore how older people in Kew are affected by loneliness and isolation and to recommend local actions that could be taken to address the issues identified. A further aim of the project was to use the process to identify individuals who were living alone and not in contact with Kew Neighbourhood Association but would benefit from the services and support it offers.

The research and report was commissioned by the trustees of Kew Neighbourhood Association. The principle funder was Richmond Parish Lands Charity with a contribution from the Joan Blackwell Legacy Fund gifted to KNA.



Background

As part of its Public Health Strategy, the London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames identified loneliness and isolation as a priority issue for older residents. In 2014, it commissioned peer research to understand issues relating to loneliness and isolation amongst older people. This included a project with local volunteers who were trained as peer researchers to interview other older people living alone. One key recommendation of this research was to, "Tailor borough wide services on a 'local' level." Kew Neighbourhood Association (KNA) identified that loneliness and isolation was an issue affecting many residents in the ward, and felt they would benefit from learning more about the ways in which Kew residents could be supported. KNA wanted to replicate the peer research in partnership with Chrysalis Research and Kew Community Trust. The aim of the peer research was to train a group of volunteers to understand older people's experiences and views in relation to the topic of loneliness and isolation and social connections with other residents. They also sought ways in which older people could be better supported to deal with living alone.

Peer research objectives and methodology

The peer research project reflected a community-based participatory research approach, designed to achieve a deeper understanding of local residents' views and needs, and the extent to which they feel current local services and initiatives to tackle loneliness and isolation are sufficient.

A partnership was developed between Chrysalis Research, acting as the research lead, and Kew Neighbourhood Association, which is familiar to many older residents in the area. A total of ten volunteers, who are residents in Kew, received a half-day training session in October 2015 to undertake one to one interviews with older residents. The training included:

- Brief introduction about topic of loneliness and key local data
- The role of peer researchers and advantages of this approach
- Discussion on topics peer researchers felt should be explored in the interviews

- Analysis of a transcript of an interview on loneliness with a local resident (completed by the research lead) to observe question styles and skills to encourage responses
- Using an interview guide to conduct the interview
- Practising questions
- Practicalities: confidentiality, obtaining permission, interview protocols, safety and recording responses and guidance on using recording devices.

During the training, the peer researchers were asked to develop their own aims and objectives based on the requirements of the project and their views on what issues should be explored. The objectives set by the peer researchers included:

- Explore residents' views and experiences of living alone in Kew
- Determine the types of resident of Kew who can and want to be helped and want help to alleviate feelings of loneliness.
- Identify what Kew residents would like to feel better and what can be done to give them greater social connections.
- Determine what Kew residents enjoy doing, what they would like to do and what would help them to do these things
- Ascertain people's views on existing support services and awareness of these, including key barriers to using the services and what can be done to encourage them/others to use them.
- Determine what can be done or offered within Kew that isn't being done already.
- Identify how can residents of Kew achieve greater social connections (if they want them).

These were used to write questions in the interview guide which can be found in the Appendix. This was used by interviewers when practising their interviews during the training.

Interviewees were identified by responding to an advert in the Kew Parish newsletter, fliers/adverts in the Avenue Club and email promotion through Churches Together Kew, Kew Horticultural Society, Kew Library Friends Group, Kew Society, and Rotary Club of Kew Gardens. In addition, some interviewees were identified by the Kew Neighbourhood Association (KNA) coordinator or the peer researchers, who knew of individuals living on their own. A loose recruitment criteria was set which was that the interviewees lived alone in Kew and were over the age of 65 years. The interviewers could also choose to interview a friend, neighbour, family member or someone they knew in their home or venue of their choice.

The peer researchers were given six weeks to conduct the interviews. An analysis session then took place in early December with the peer researchers. This explored the responses that researchers heard and helped them to interpret these to identify the main issues for residents. The analysis session was also used by peer research to develop a set of recommendations as a result of their interview findings.

A total of 32 in-depth interviews were conducted with 27 females and five males living in Kew. Interviewers were given audio recording devices to use during the interviews.



Outcomes of the peer research process

During the analysis session, peer researchers described how they enjoyed carrying out the interviews. The interviewers were very enthusiastic about the findings and enjoyed describing the interview process and outcomes of the interviews and the ideas or changes they felt should be implemented as a result of the project. Some interviewees felt they had learnt new skills while others were able to utilise skills from previous employment such as social work. The peer researchers also saw the value in the interview process itself in giving someone an opportunity to be heard and talking to another person about their views. Some said their interviewee had enjoyed receiving a visit and having time to talk. Some interviewees had found it a challenge to explore the topic of loneliness and social connectivity with their interviewees and felt this was a finding itself, whereby people may not have liked to admit they are lonely and do not need support. Furthermore, the process helped some interviewers review their existing volunteering roles and ways in which they may prefer to be involved in working with those who are living alone. These points are discussed further in the report.

The notes provided by the peer researchers and the transcripts show that there was a good level of interaction with interviewees and that they were able to apply the skills covered in the training. Some of the transcripts revealed that the interviewer was able to demonstrate empathy and share similar experiences or issues related to living alone, as well as the things they would like to do to that might alleviate their own feelings of loneliness.

This report has been written using a combination of detailed notes provided by the interviewers, eight interview transcripts carried out by a local transcription organisation and the points discussed by interviewers in the analysis session.

Main findings

The sense of community in Kew

Many residents described Kew as an enjoyable place to live, most thought there was a strong sense of community and felt safe living there. For those who were confident and able to leave the house independently, they liked the proximity to Kew Gardens, river and easy access to nearby Richmond and central London by public transport.

I feel very safe here, it is rare that I walk about at night, but I would feel quite happy doing it.

Well it's the proximity to the centre of London, as well as being a lovely green area to live in.

It is one of the nicest places around, especially Kew Gardens

The friendly attitude of those running local shops in Kew was also important to those who do not have regular social contact with many other people.

I like the fact that although it is London, it feels like a village, and you have the shops, they are very friendly. I have got to know the shopkeeper and particularly the shop on Victoria Parade...which is a lifesaver. There is always someone to say 'good morning' to and have a smile.

Some residents have lived here for many years, and had very well established contacts/friendship groups. Others had moved here more recently to be closer to family members. Of these, some had forged more recent friendships or contacts with neighbours whom they felt they could rely on if they needed help. Residents clearly valued knowing that someone was looking out for them. This reassured them and provided a sense of safety.

The family two doors down are very nice and they check to see whether I've got my shutters open in the morning...so they make sure I'm around.

The lady down the road says "Now if you want anything" and there's another lady down the road here – a young one – that comes to the forum and [says] "If you want anything, ring anytime".

I have neighbours that have known me for a long time and although we're not in each other's pockets they do look out for me, particularly if I don't put my rubbish out or something, they'll knock on the door.



Others who had moved here more recently did not have the same degree of support. The peer researchers felt that these individuals were more isolated as a result.

Some interviewees had described their engagement with local religious, community or interest groups gave them a sense of belonging and formed the basis of their friendship groups/social connections since living alone.

I think that's like a big family, the Church. It's the people [at the church], we're like a community.

Overall, people were happy living in Kew. They valued the sense of safety which, combined with the location, appears to provide a nice environment for older people living alone.

The importance of social contact

Interviewees appeared to be in a mix of circumstances when it came to the type of social contact they received. Some had a group of friends or one or two close friends with whom they met regularly. Others had family members that they saw regularly but not necessarily weekly, while other people appeared to have regular social contact through visits to the Avenue Club, church or through other interests. Some had very little or no contact with friends or family members and were unlikely to be in contact with anyone at all on a regular basis. This was more the case for those who were housebound.

For those who had family members such as siblings and children, they relied on this as a prime source of social contact. Some were able to see their family more frequently than others for social occasions but overall the degree of contact provided comfort as well as a sense of safety in case they became ill or something was wrong.

Many individuals had recently found themselves feeling lonelier following the death of a partner or relationship breakdown. Interviewers indicated that some had wider family and close friends they could rely on but others did not have this and consequently felt the absence of their partner more significantly. Others had experienced long term or acute illness which left them less mobile or able to leave the house as independently as before, which extremely limited their level of social contact. The interviewees revealed that the loss of mobility or illness had reduced confidence in leaving the house independently and trying new things. One interviewee reported that the level confidence required in attending new places and events alone can be underestimated. Indeed, the peer researchers felt that it could be a little daunting for others to go somewhere new for the first time and this could be enough to prevent them from attending.

I think people have got to being lonely because they haven't got enough confidence, and how you instil that into people, I don't really know.

The peer researchers felt some older people would benefit from support to build confidence to be less fearful of attending new events or using public transport again on their own, for example. This is particularly important following illness or death of a partner, to prevent it from becoming a significant barrier to leaving the house and having social contact with others.

Even those interviewees who felt they kept active, explained that this does not always replace the type of social contact they felt was needed to alleviate loneliness. They reported that this feeling was particularly intensified for them when they were at home.

Although one does a lot of things, like I do, I read, I read the newspaper, I keep up with what is happening, I watch television, I knit, I do tapestry, I paint, I do all those things but apart from that, the hours are very long. There is nobody one can chat to ... who says "How are you feeling today?", or anything like that. So loneliness is really the fact that you are alone and even if you make huge efforts, which I do, it is still a long time [to be on your own]. [The absence of] social intercourse, shall we say.

I have no one to talk to and my grandchildren come to see me, one looks after me quite well, but the hours stretch. When you come home from The Avenue Club, after exercises or painting or something. It is a long afternoon and evening. There is nobody.

Interestingly, one interviewee agreed that having a person to accompany them somewhere such as a gallery or theatre would provide the encouragement and motivation they need to attend the theatre or gallery and they were less inclined to go alone.

I've seen quite a lot but I don't much want to go [to the theatre] but if you've got somebody there who says "oh come on let's go". (Interviewer: it gingers you up a bit?). Yes.

Interviewees talked about occasions when they often felt lonely, Sundays were frequently mentioned as a day that brings on feelings of loneliness, even for those who have regular social contact and are quite active on other days.

Sometimes I do yeah [feel lonely]. Sundays I do. Sunday is a terrible day. Saturday is okay more or less because I go and get the paper in the morning and see lots of people to chat to in the morning on the way to the paper shop. But on a Sunday morning, no one's going to the paper shop really.

There are times when it hits you that you're on your own. Sometimes on a Sunday and I don't call my friends on a Sunday, because they're with their families. Sometimes on a Sunday you can feel a bit low and I suppose you could call it lonely.

One interviewee explained that holidays can be an occasion that is avoided or finds difficult because of the absence of a partner or friend.

Certainly holidays, lots of package holidays say for two people, I wouldn't want to rent a cottage or go camping by myself. So certainly for holidays I feel the lack of somebody.

These findings indicate that social contact and companionship of some form is extremely important and tends to be lacking the most whilst at home. The degree of social contact can affect a person living alone in relation to:

- Personal reassurance and sense of safety
- Motivation and encouragement to do activities whether alone or with someone else
- Confidence in attending unfamiliar or new places/events
- Having a sense of purpose.



Impact of health on loneliness

The interviews revealed that having reasonably good health was an important factor in preventing loneliness and placed a great deal of value on being able to leave the house or be pain free to undertake activities or visit places. As mentioned previously, there was a small number of interviewees whose health restricted them from being able to leave the house independently and did not get out very often. In some cases this was because of a mobility issue and the view that loneliness is caused *'when you can't go out alone'*; a loss of independence being equated with loneliness. In other cases an interviewee may not want to leave the house and therefore feel lonely because of loss of confidence following an illness. Furthermore, interviewees discussed mental as well as physical health being important in dealing with living alone.

The stigma of loneliness

There was a mix of opinion on the concept of loneliness. Some interviewees described how it was down to a *'positive mindset'* and avoiding feelings of loneliness was about *'making the best of it and having to get on with it'*. Others were less positive about their situation. Some of the peer researchers felt that their interviewees did not want to say they were lonely at times. Discussion in the analysis session led to the conclusion that perhaps it was hard for them to articulate or define. Perhaps they did not wish to admit they are lonely or experience occasions when they feel lonely. This is an important consideration and KNA and its partners may wish to focus on a positive angle, such as social contact or social connectivity to draw people into its services. Alternatively, it may be effective to openly discuss the concept of loneliness, encouraging people to feel comfortable in talking about it and how it might affect them.

Strategies adopted to overcome loneliness

The peer researchers found that many of the interviewees were quite active and had a range of interests between them. Interviewees described a variety of former and current hobbies and many were interested in the arts and cultural leisure pursuits such as film, music, stamp collecting, literature, horticulture, painting, walking, seated aerobics etc. The motivation was generally a desire to keep their mind active. For some these were new activities/hobbies they have taken up since being alone and often mentioned as a way of meeting other people and occupying time.

During the interviews, interviewees also described things that they do to avoid feeling lonely. Aside from specific hobbies and interests, the interviews revealed a range of activities or *'strategies'* which were adopted by those living alone to help avoid feeling lonely. Some of these things seem to be *'every day'*, otherwise trivial activities to most, but are things that people might do as a form of positive action to avoid feeling down about being on their own. These included:

- Watching television or listening to the radio – *‘It’s the fact that there is a noise if you are on your own.’*
- Doing grocery shopping more frequently – *‘I don’t do a big shop anymore, I prefer to go out more regularly, which means I have to get out, because sometimes it’s easier to perhaps go back to bed, on a day like today which is very miserable.’*
- Visiting local shops (Kew Retail Park) for social interaction with staff who work there – *‘As soon as Marks and Spencer came there with their food...I was over there all the time and now I find it’s a form of socialising. All the ladies know me in there very well.’*
- Using technology such as an iPad to play cards, word or mind games – *‘My husband and I played cards and so I play Crib on it [the iPad].’*
- Using a diary, calendar or a wallchart – *‘You can get up in the morning and you think “there’s nothing happening today” but I look at my wall chart every day.’* (For one interviewee this mainly served as a reminder but helped her to see that she had activities to look forward to doing)
- Speaking on the phone or emailing a family member or friend – *‘If I’m feeling very, very low, I’ll ring somebody up or send somebody an email.’*

These interviewees were very honest about their situation and demonstrated the level of resilience that is required by someone living alone.

Views on current services and support for those living alone in Kew

Interviewees who made use of local support in Kew (beyond statutory services) were most likely to report using local transport services to take them to appointments, shopping or attend the Avenue Club. Other local services or interest groups that were mentioned included the Kew library service, befriending service and support provided by church groups. Some interviewees had little awareness of services on offer in Kew and researchers discussed how the interview itself provided an opportunity to talk about the ways in which they could be supported by existing services.

For those who used the Avenue Club, this was described as a *lifeline* and a valuable place to go. The Avenue Club was certainly referenced as a place to go to prevent people from feeling lonely. Furthermore, the services that it offered were rated highly. One interviewee was surprised at the range of activities that were on offer there when she first attended. KNA's volunteer drivers, who collect people from their homes and take them to The Avenue Club and back home again, were also rated highly by interviewees.

The befriending services was raised in some interviews. Peer researchers also described how the befriending service was unappealing to some as it could convey something a little artificial and they found this slightly off-putting. They felt the term ‘befriender’ was slightly patronising and did not necessarily encompass everything that the service could potentially offer someone. They also felt that interviewees may not wish to use the befriending service because this was an admission that they were lonely and needed help. Alternative suggestions included a visitor scheme, companion scheme or something that conveys a greater sense that it can offer companionship, a chat or shared activity on an informal basis.



Consequently, peer researchers also discussed at the analysis session how the befriending service could be expanded to include one-off or regular visits to the home and match 'befrienders' based on interest and/or hobbies that others may also enjoy or have enjoyed in the past. They felt the befriending service could be used more effectively in this way to cater for these expressed needs and wishes for those living alone.

Barriers to using support services in Kew

Location

Whilst people generally felt well served in Kew, there was a perception by some interviewees that local services and activities on offer to older people tended to focus around the Avenue Club or the village near the station. This meant it was difficult for some residents to use these if they did not live close by. Some felt that local businesses did not always accommodate older people and felt that they could do more to provide older people with an appropriate setting or place to go to meet others. For example, there was a feeling that many of the coffee shops were taken over by mums with babies and young children.

Perception of the types of activities on offer

The interviews with males in particular revealed a perception that many of the local activities at the Avenue Club were more female oriented and attended mainly by women and were therefore less likely to attend as a result.

So if I go to the Avenue Club the women there are always talking about their sons and daughter and their grandsons and granddaughters and I have nothing to add to any of that because I don't have any.

Other less frequently mentioned barriers about the Avenue Club included:

- Perception the Avenue Club has a 'cliquey' atmosphere where everyone knows everyone else
- The location of the Avenue Club makes it difficult to reach independently
- Perception that the Avenue Club is for older people who want to sit around in chairs

Confidence and mobility

As mentioned previously, the absence of a companion can also mean a person is less likely to do an activity beyond the home because they lack the confidence or motivation to do so alone. Those who had recently lost a partner or were unwell for some time appeared to have less motivation to leave the house.

Whilst it did not directly affect her, one interviewee explained that older people may not like to ask for help or access to local support services within Kew because they are nervous about admitting they need help or fearful that the local authority may judge their capacity to look after themselves.

You've got to be able to ask for help and a lot of old people don't like to ask they're frightened. They are frightened of authority, social services coming into their house and telling them it's not clean.

The interviewers supported this view in their analysis as they felt that older people did not like to ask for help because they did not want to be a burden.

Local infrastructure

Some other smaller points to be noted about barriers to using services or reducing the likelihood of someone getting out related to the local infrastructure:

- Uneven pavements means it is difficult to walk to local amenities
- The division of local shops in Kew Village by the railway line and absence of a lift at the station means it is difficult to cross the line to access amenities on the other side.
- It may be worth noting that one interviewee wanted to do online grocery shopping as this helped them not to have to carry bulky items. However, they expressed that they were often unable to order online because there was a minimum spend amount (£60). This may be something worth exploring with a local supermarket or joining grocery shopping orders/delivery with other people who would like to do it online.

Future activities and support to prevent loneliness

Interviewees who had less social contact and not engaged in regular activities or specific hobbies made suggestions to help them receive greater social contact. For example, receiving a regular visitor or telephone call.

I do feel alone a lot except for the cat. But I manage on my own quite well. But I do miss company. Conversation, somebody to pop in and say hello. Yes.

What I was going to say was really and truly it would be nice if somebody occasionally said 'let's ring [interviewee] and see if he's alright'.

The best quality of life I think for somebody who is disabled as I am is to have company, because that is what I miss.

Some interviewees who discussed the difficulty of Sundays in their interview, suggested that it would be good to offer activities on a Sunday for those living alone.

Absolutely, something to break the day up, or just Sunday afternoon tea would be lovely.

One interviewee talked about receiving help with gardening but revealed that it this was just as much about having a visitor as it was about providing a service.

[Someone to do the] weeding and a cup of tea and a piece of cake

For me, what I would really like to have somebody, a younger person who could take me to Kew Gardens and push me around. I would like to go out everyday. I don't know if such a person exists.



Someone to come and take you out.

Overall, the interviews alone revealed that residents of Kew hold a wealth of knowledge and skill based on a wide range of cultural interests that could be shared with others. During the analysis session, the peer researchers discussed potential options in setting up a matching system where volunteers are identified based on interest or something they are passionate about and they can arrange to visit an older person living on their own to talk about this or re-introduce the hobby for example chess or art.

The peer researchers had a sense that some interviewees would like to refresh their involvement in hobbies and interests that they no longer pursue. In some cases, the interviewees had enjoyed talking about their previous interests and would welcome the opportunity to continue this, if possible. This represents an opportunity for the befriending service to respond to the need to increase social contact in the home. Volunteers could be made available to arrange to 'pop in' to see someone for a chat or shared activity, particularly for those less likely to be able to leave the house. This could also focus more on occasions where people tend to feel most lonely, such as Sundays and evenings.

It may also be useful to consider how the service can be used to provide volunteers to accompany someone other places of interest rather than just the Avenue Club. As mentioned previously, there appeared to be a high degree of interest in cultural events and activities such as art, film, theatre and music, but people may be less willing or able to travel somewhere on their own. Some of the peer researchers even said would prefer to be involved in befriending or volunteering in this capacity rather than being a weekly driver.

It is understood that KNA's current befriending programme does have a process by which it aims to match people with likeminded interests. However, in its current format it is reliant on the volunteers being available and clients requesting a match at that point in time. The peer researchers agreed that there could be greater emphasis on the matching element of the service to show older people how they can be supported in other ways i.e. based on interest and hobbies rather than a service promoted to older people because they are living alone. Positioning the service in this way may reach out to different groups of older people who may ordinarily be put off by signing up to a befriending service but would appreciate social contact for a different reason.

Groups who would benefit from support

During the analysis session, the peer researchers identified particular groups of people living in Kew who would benefit from additional support:

- The newly retired who may be finding it difficult to fill their time
- Males were identified as being less likely to ask for help and would prefer to attend more male oriented events and interest groups or not all female oriented groups/events
- Those who are reluctant to use services because they don't want to feel they are being a burden or putting people out
- Those who would prefer to receive a visitor regularly for an informal chat on a one-to-one basis rather than attend something in a group setting

- Those who lack the confidence to visit somewhere alone but would attend with someone else
- Those who are completely housebound and unable to leave because of mobility or health issues

Further work on loneliness and isolation in the Kew area should aim to focus on one or more of these groups.

Recommendations to reduce loneliness for Kew residents

The analysis session provided an opportunity to discuss key recommendations and actions which could be taken forward to address some of the issues raised by interviewees. The main recommendations resulting from this research are as follows:

1. Increase opportunities for greater social contact at home

It is important to respond to the expressed need for greater social contact in the home, where loneliness is most often felt. This affects those living alone who are active as well as those unable to leave the house. It may include addressing how the befriending service can meet this need but also other volunteering routes where Kew residents can provide regular social contact through company or activities with those living on their own.

2. Challenge perceptions about the nature and type of activities/services on offer for Kew residents

Existing services and venues such as the Avenue Club may wish to consider offering some more male oriented activities to attract men who are living alone. Furthermore, it may be useful to run a local marketing campaign to communicate the activities offered by the Avenue Club in a way that challenges misconceptions and expectation *'that it is for old people sitting in armchairs'*. A campaign of this type could also work to challenge the stigma around loneliness and isolation. As an extension of the marketing campaign, there is a need to provide key messages that resonate with some of the target sub-groups who may be in need of more support or encouragement such as males, those who feel they are being a burden by asking for help, people who have recently retired, those lacking in confidence to go somewhere alone, newcomers to Kew e.g. who have moved to Kew be nearer to family members.

3. Promote the idea that addressing loneliness in Kew is everyone's business

It is important to recognise the sense of safety and reassurance that is given through a neighbour looking out for an older person. This could be achieved by introducing a local programme or distributing information within local neighbourhoods to encourage residents to be mindful of those who are living alone and reach out to them. Other ways in which the wider Kew Neighbourhood Association and partners can support this work is:

- Work with local businesses e.g. cafes and restaurants in Kew Village to offer events for older people that are accessible and tailored to their needs.
- Begin a dialogue with GPs in Kew to provide greater signposting to local support services to support older people living on their own that would alleviate loneliness
- Offer activities across the ward and within the village area so they are easily accessed by all residents.
- Offer support to newcomers to Kew who may have left their friends and to be nearer to family members.



4. Support Kew residents to engage in activities outside the home

It is recommended that support is provided for older people to build confidence by offering 'hand-holding' for a few weeks to encourage individuals to try new activities on offer or visit a new venue until they felt they were able to go alone. Explore how the befriending or a volunteer service can provide support and/or companionship to attend activities and events of interest outside the home.

5. Review the existing befriending service in Kew

It is recommended that the current befriending service could be re-positioned so that it:

- offers the option of a regular visitor (either the same or different) to pop in for a cup of tea on an ad-hoc basis.
- takes account of some of the former and current interest and hobbies of the individual so that these can be matched to volunteers with similar interests.
- promotes the way in which it matches volunteers to residents needing support based on the type of involvement desired e.g. one off ad-hoc visits, regular visits or visits out if mobility permits.

Alternatively, a different scheme could be offered to achieve this and complement the befriending service. Alongside this, there may be a need for a fresh recruitment drive to attract volunteers who may prefer to offer their time based on their interests and hobbies rather than practical support such as being a driver, for example. It may also be useful to re-name the befriending service so that it conveys a sense of providing ad-hoc companionship, a visitor for a chat or shared activity on an informal basis. This may appeal to a different group of older people who ordinarily would not sign up to a befriending service.

6. Explore existing services and scheme in other areas that may be useful to implement in Kew

Some existing schemes may work well in Kew for example a scheme that takes place in Jesus Green called the *Freedom Passers* which offer the delivery of food (fish and chips or pie and mash) every couple of months. This has been a way of building a contact and relationship with older people living alone who aren't into the idea of joining a club or feeling that people are taking pity on them. This has turned in to an unobtrusive and non-patronising way of supporting older people and identifying other needs. The Casserole Club was also mentioned and a pet scheme e.g. owning a dog or cat where possible to give someone a new sense of purpose or to be relied on again. For men, ManShed which is run by Princess Alice Hospice is a scheme which encourages men living alone to take part in practical 'male-oriented' activities. Organisations that have been identified as relevant are included in the list below:

- Contact the Elderly - Spare Chair Sunday - http://www.bistotogetherproject.com/#/spare_chair_sunday (includes a driver for the older person)
- Contact the Elderly - Sunday Afternoon Tea & A Chat (includes a driver for the older person & proactively looking for people in the Kew area) <http://www.contact-the-elderly.org.uk/>
- Casserole Club - <https://www.casseroleclub.com/>
- Good Gym - <https://www.goodgym.org/> (Starting in LBRUT in September 2016)
- Pets As Therapy - <http://petsastherapy.org/>
- The Green Gym - <http://www.tcv.org.uk/greengym>
- Side by Side (Alzheimer's Society) - <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/sidebyside>
- Manshed - <http://www.pah.org.uk/manshed/>

Appendix

Living alone and social connectivity research - Kew residents' interview guide – Key Questions

- If you were talking to a friend about living in Kew, what would you say?
- How would you describe it? What are the good and bad things about living in Kew?
- To what extent do you think living alone affects your quality of life?
- How would you describe a good quality of life (in respect of living alone?)
- What might make it difficult for someone living alone to have a good quality of life?
- In your own words, how would you define loneliness?
- How does it make someone feel?
- What, in your view, causes loneliness?
- What is different in the life of someone who is not lonely?
- What, in your view, would help to prevent loneliness?



- If you were talking to a friend about the things that are available in Kew to prevent people from being lonely, what would you say to them?
- How would you encourage them to make use of what's there?
- Why don't people use these services and things available?
- What do you think can be done locally in Kew to help address loneliness?
- What can be done that isn't being done already?

Detailed interview guide

Timing	Theme	Key questions
0-5 mins (5 minutes)	Introduction and background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working in partnership with Kew Neighbourhood Association to explore residents' views. • I'm here today to have a conversation with you to gather your views as a Kew resident. • The purpose of the interview is to ask you about the lives of people living alone (and social connectivity). • Go through permission sheet before continuing. • Any questions before I start the interview?
5-15 mins (10 minutes)	About you...	<p><i>Aim to establish rapport and put person at ease</i> Tell me a bit about yourself. Can you please describe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long you have lived here. • If you were talking to a friend about living in Kew what would you say? • How would you describe it? What are the good and bad things about living in Kew? <p><i>Note to interviewer, consider the following as probes to help the person talk:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local community/neighbourhood (probe on sense of community and support) • Local services and access to these • Paid or unpaid work, interests and hobbies • <i>Key relationships beyond the home – family, friends, local support network?(Care to be taken when asking about this)</i>
15-25 mins (10 minutes)	Exploring quality of life, health	<p>I want to ask you a few questions about quality of life.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent do you think living alone affects

	and wellbeing in older age and its relationship to loneliness	<p>your quality of life?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you describe a good quality of life? • What might make it difficult for someone living alone to have a good quality of life? • Explore reasons behind interviewee's responses • How important are the following on quality of life: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Interaction with others ○ Getting out of the house ○ Easy access to local services ○ Getting help from family or friends • Do any of these things affect someone's feeling of loneliness?
25-35mins (10 minutes)	Exploring the factors that affect loneliness	<p>Show interviewee stimulus sheet (factors affecting quality of life and loneliness). Here are some things that people say can affect whether someone experiences loneliness or not.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circle or say which you find stand out to you as being particularly important. What are your top 3? • Why are these particularly important? • Is there anything missing from this list?
35-45 mins (10 minutes)	Exploring the definition of loneliness and its causes	<p>I now want to ask you about your views on the causes of loneliness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In your own words how would you define loneliness? • How does it make someone feel? • What in your view causes someone to feel lonely? • What is different in the life of someone who is not lonely? • What impact do you think loneliness has on individuals? Probe specifically on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Impact on quality of life, specifically health and wellbeing. ○ Impact on practical issues e.g. getting out of house and living independently ○ Impact on making use of services • Is there a difference between being lonely and being on your own? If so what is the difference?
45-55 (10 minutes)	Preventing loneliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What in your view would help to prevent loneliness? • Is there anything which is lacking locally: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a) for you ○ b) for other local residents? • What difference would it make to have these things in place? Probe: how would it affect your/someone's health and wellbeing?
55 mins – 1 hr 05 mins (10 minutes)	Local assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you were talking to a friend about things that are available in Kew to prevent people from being lonely, what would you say to them? • How would you encourage them to make use of what's there? • How easy is it to access these things? • What is missing for residents?



		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do you think can be done locally in Kew to help address loneliness?• Whose role is it to reduce loneliness? <i>Probe: Individuals, communities, council, services?</i>• What should they do to reduce it?
1 hr 05 mins – 1 hr 10 mins (5 minutes)	Close	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do you have any other points to make on this?• Do you have any questions?• <i>Thank interviewee, PRESS STOP ON RECORDING DEVICE and close interview</i>



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