

Report to Cabinet

15 January 2025

Subject:	Scrutiny Review of Loneliness and Isolation in Sandwell
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Adult Services, Health and Wellbeing Councillor Jackie Taylor
Director:	Assistant Director – Legal and Assurance Mike Jones
Key Decision:	No
Contact Officer:	Democratic Services Officer John Swann John_swann@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

For the reasons set out in the report, it is recommended that Cabinet:-

- 1.1 consider and either approve all, approve in part or do not approve any of the recommendations of Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board in respect of the scrutiny review of Loneliness and Isolation in Sandwell as follows:-
 - a) that for any pilot schemes or trials aimed to reduce social isolation and loneliness consideration be given first to conducting them in Tipton and Wednesbury due to the identified need in those towns;
 - b) that information on support services, community groups and local events are publicised widely including in Sandwell’s libraries, on the Council’s website, on community notice boards, at pop-up stalls and via the Sandwell Herald and Health-related publications;
 - c) that the Council explore how they can support the community run their own sessions, based on their own interests, and how to get others to participate;

- d) that the Social Prescribing Strategy for Sandwell addresses the issues of loneliness and social isolation;
- e) that a training module on the Council’s e-learning platform be developed for frontline staff members to raise awareness of Loneliness and Social Isolation, their signs and how to direct individuals to support opportunities;
- f) that the Assistant Director of Place – Contracts, Projects, Strategy and Policy explore options to introduce ‘Happy to Chat’ benches within the borough’s green spaces and parks.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board commenced the scrutiny review into Loneliness and Isolation in Sandwell in the municipal year of 2022/ 23.
- 2.2 The Board established a working group to conduct the review which undertook substantial research to understand what initiatives in the public, private, voluntary and community sectors were effectively tackling systemic isolation.
- 3.2 At the meeting of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board in March 2024 the Board agreed range of recommendations based on the research and findings of the working group. These recommendations are now presented to Cabinet for consideration.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Council Plan?

Growing Up in Sandwell	Loneliness and isolation can affect people of all ages and can have a detrimental effect on health and overall quality of life.
Living in Sandwell	
Thriving Economy in Sandwell	Supporting people to have meaningful social relationships is not just crucial to people’s physical and mental health. It also affects their engagement in the workplace and wider community cohesion.
Healthy in Sandwell	
One Council One Team	Successfully tackling loneliness and isolation in an evidence led way, will therefore support the delivery of all of the Council’s Corporate Plan objectives.

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 Tackling loneliness and isolation is already a government priority, and the government published its strategy - *A Connected Society: A Strategy for tackling loneliness-laying the foundations for change* - in 2018. However, the problem has been exacerbated since 2020, as a result of the measures put in place to limit the spread of covid-19.
- 4.2 Research so far by the Working Group has shown that many organisations across the public, private and voluntary and community sector are undertaking initiatives that try to tackle loneliness and isolation.
- 4.3 The findings of the review are set out in the attached Scrutiny Review of Loneliness and Isolation in Sandwell report.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 There are no alternative options. The Cabinet may approve all, some, or none of the recommendations.

6 Implications

Resources:	There are no specific financial implications arising from this report. Any implications as a result of the recommendations will be considered by the Executive, should they be approved.
Legal and Governance:	Scrutiny Procedure Rules require the Board to prepare a report following a review and submit it to the Executive.
Risk:	There are no specific risk implications arising from this report. Any risk implications as a result of the recommendations will be considered by the Executive, should they be approved.
Equality:	There are no specific equality implications arising from this report. Any implications as a result of the recommendations will be considered by the Executive, should they be approved.
Health and Wellbeing:	There are no specific health and wellbeing implications arising from this report. Any implications as a result of the recommendations will be considered by the Executive, should they be approved.

Social Value:	There are no specific social value implications arising from this report. Any implications as a result of the recommendations will be considered by the Executive, should they be approved.
Climate Change:	There are no specific climate change implications arising from this report. Any implications as a result of the recommendations will be considered by the Executive, should they be approved.
Corporate Parenting:	There are no specific corporate parenting implications arising from this report. Any implications as a result of the recommendations will be considered by the Executive, should they be approved.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Scrutiny Review of Loneliness and Isolation in Sandwell.

8. Background Papers

[Summary of Evidence Gathered.](#)