

Bringing Plymouth together to obtain solutions to isolation and loneliness

Conference and Exhibition 6 October 2021, Plymouth Guildhall

Plymouth Social Isolation Forum, a partnership of community and voluntary sector organisations with social prescribing teams, wellbeing hubs, social care roles and much more, is organising an important conference and associated exhibition, that is being held to address the issues of isolation and loneliness. The Forum partnership also includes the statutory sector in that we are working with Plymouth City Council's Health and Social Care Head of Department Rachel Silcock and her staff and the Director Public Health Ruth Hurrell

The conference and associated exhibition will be held at the Guildhall on 6 October 2021 from 10 am to 3pm with registration starting at 9am and networking encouraged throughout the day and after the formal close of the conference.

Frequently feeling lonely has been linked to early deaths and an increased risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, depression, cognitive decline and dementia. And the lockdown actions introduced to reduce the control of Covid-19 infections, have greatly exacerbated the problem of loneliness, and affected a broader swathe of society.

The objectives of the conference are to:

- raise awareness of the extent loneliness permeates all our communities;
- remove stereotypes from our thinking and actions;
- remove stigmas associated with seeking help;
- remove barriers for obtaining help;
- understand various causes and contributing factors;
- Identify different kinds of solutions.

In order to achieve these objectives, the conference aims to get attendees to take actions to:

- promote what is available now;
- consider Social isolation and Loneliness as part of the culture in planning;
- understand what needs to be done to embed the integration of services and the environment into policy documents of all organisations however large or small;
- improve community spaces and how to use them to encourage people to talk to each other;
- find ways to prevent isolation and loneliness;

The event will be highly interactive and people will be able to participate in workshops and meet exhibitors who have services to offer that address some of these problems.

The workshop topics cover:

- Transport
- Planning of community and green spaces
- Needs of people with obvious and hidden disabilities such as dementia and anxiety
- Issues underlying isolation and loneliness in young people

The conference will be structured to encourage networking and information gathering. At the start of the conference a speaker will set the scene and the facilitators of the different workshops will be introduced and given an opportunity to describe the kind of things that might be covered in a specific workshop. The exhibitors will be acknowledged. The whole event will be free to attend and registered participants will receive vouchers for food.

At the end of the day the workshop facilitators will have an opportunity to report back to the group followed by questions.

The most important thing is that this is a **CALL TO ACTION** with a possible follow on conference in 12 months' time to see what has transpired in the interim.

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