



AN EVALUATION OF RAINBOW SERVICES COMMUNITY BUILDER PROJECT

The Senior Safe and Social Programme

November 2018

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About Us

Rainbow Services

Rainbow Services is a registered charity and was established in 1999. Rainbow works to alleviate the effects of disadvantage, deprivation, and social exclusion in Harlow and surrounding areas through imaginative projects that support, enable and develop people and organisations, and which stimulate beneficial change in the local community.

HWE Insights

HWE Insights Ltd is an arms-length subsidiary of Healthwatch Essex, wholly owned by the charity Healthwatch Essex.

It was set up to allow Healthwatch Essex to undertake high quality research, engagement, communication and training activities on a commissioned basis, and to participate in joint venture arrangements.

It means that the range of skills and expertise for which Healthwatch Essex has developed an excellent reputation as a charity, can now be committed to commercial projects too.

Acknowledgements

Our thanks go to all those who have supported and contributed to the evaluation of the project, including Rainbow Services staff and partners. Special thanks go to all the volunteers and participants from the social groups for taking time to share their experiences, and for telling us their stories.

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Executive Summary

This document provides the evaluation of the Senior Safe and Social Project in Harlow: a project which aims to reduce loneliness and social isolation in older people.

The project has been a great success and exceeded all targets. Monitoring data collected by Rainbow Services indicates that a large majority of participants felt that they, as a direct result of the services provided by the project, socialised more, felt less lonely and reported that their lives had changed for the better. This evaluation aims to provide an insight into why the model is working well, whether it could be applied to other demographics, how the approach compares with similar models, and the sustainability of the project.

The evaluation involves a range of methods and data sources both qualitative and quantitative. This data was collected through interviews with staff, volunteers, participants and partners; and observation of the social groups in action. As well as document analysis of key project documentation.

Key findings:

Our findings indicate that there are a number of key success factors, many of which stem from the reputation of Rainbow Services and its relationships with local organisations, but also the skills, personalities and passion of its staff. The project approach also plays a key part in achieving the desired outcomes.

The reasons why the model applied is working well

Each club is different and tailored to the participants' interests and needs. Participants understand and appreciate this and can attend other clubs, to experience other activities, should they wish.

The clubs provide a safe and accessible place to socialise and meet new people, and a sense of place and belonging is created. The participants reported that the clubs are friendly and inclusive, they always felt welcome which encouraged regular participation.

Recruiting the right volunteers and supporting them effectively has been paramount. The volunteers' involvement in the local community typically represents a reciprocal exchange, which gives them the opportunity to socialise and maintains their sense of feeling useful. They also play a surveillance role for participants.

Locality alongside age and gender are likely to play a role in Rainbows' project being widely used and popular. Yet, while the project's success will be influenced by geographical factors amongst others, the literature suggests this is not a primary reason for Rainbow's success. Method, people's needs and wishes, and the projects activities appear to be more significant than regional features.

Applying the model to other demographics and locations.

From our investigation it is clear that the model could be applied to other areas where there are older people feeling lonely and isolated. Indeed, other groups at risk could also benefit, provided they are co-designed. Consideration would need to be given to the following:

- The locations and venues used to host the groups.
- The recruitment and management of the right volunteers.
- The Community Builders having good connections with the local community, and an ability to build and nurture partnerships with other local organisations.
- The timing of the groups.

Similar models within and outside of Essex.

The approach used by Time to Shine is similar to that of the Community Builder Project. Both projects are aimed at isolated older people, utilise an ABCD approach and involve social activities at community venues.

Evaluations have found that both projects are supportive, friendly and social. The lessons learnt from the evaluation of the Time to Shine involved the advertising methods, community involvement and challenging and informational activities.

The sustainability of the project

Some of the clubs are already being run independently by volunteers. These volunteers have the confidence and ability to run the club with little input from Rainbow Services.

However, it is recognised that support would be required to set up new groups, in terms of linking up with partners, attracting participation and supporting volunteers. Large group outings and events would also need to be organised by an external force.

1. Introduction

Rainbow Services commissioned HWE Insights to carry out an independent evaluation of the Community Builder project. This aims to provide an insight into why the model is working well, whether it could be applied to other demographics, how the approach compares with other models, and the sustainability of the project.

This document provides the findings of the evaluation of the Senior Safe and Social Project in Harlow, which is a community builder project. A largely qualitative approach has been used to gather data and views from all those involved in the project. Staff, volunteers, participants and partners have been interviewed and case studies drawn. Additionally, each of the diverse 13 weekly social clubs were observed to see how they were run. A review of key documents has also been undertaken.

The first section of this report outlines the project and provides background information about isolation and loneliness. The second section gives details about the method used for the evaluation. The third section outlines the findings from the evaluation process, the final section draws conclusions based on these findings.

1.1. Overview of Senior Safe & Social

The Community Builder project has grown from an initial 18-month pilot project funded by an Essex County Council Strengthening Communities grant. Initially using an Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) model, older people expressed the desire to make new friends and feel part of their local community. The following year, as part of the 'Who will care?'¹ agenda, social hubs within the community were developed across West Essex to identify where social isolation and loneliness was experienced. Once identified, the hubs would develop suitable solutions. The hubs aimed to involve local communities in supporting their older neighbours, alongside social events and outings designed for older people.

During the pilot, Harlow was identified as an area in West Essex where many older people experience loneliness and social isolation, but also as an area responsive to potential interventions and support. Launched in May 2016, the Senior Safe & Social project received a 3-year grant from the Big Lottery Fund reaching communities programme to reduce isolation and loneliness in older people across Harlow.

Now entering its third year, the project has secured funding to allow it to expand to more places across Harlow, and to increase the number of social events taking place. Currently there are 13 weekly clubs, which meet each week for 2 hours and take part in various activities (a new club opened during the process of the evaluation bringing the total up to 14). A map of the locations of Rainbow Service's weekly social clubs across Harlow can be

¹ [http://www.cpa.org.uk/cpa-lga-evidence/Essex_County_Council/EssexCountyCouncil\(2014\)-Whowillcare.pdf](http://www.cpa.org.uk/cpa-lga-evidence/Essex_County_Council/EssexCountyCouncil(2014)-Whowillcare.pdf)

seen in Figure 2. The map shows that the clubs have a good coverage across most areas of Harlow but is weaker to the East of Harlow.

The project also organises day trips for older people to places such as Clacton-on-Sea and Southend-on-Sea, River Cruises, afternoon teas and Christmas events. They also run Senior Safe & Social events in which organisations are invited to talk and give practical advice about how older people can keep safe and well.

Outcomes of the project:

- Older people in Harlow will report a decrease in feelings of loneliness, which will lead to a decrease in levels of anxiety.
 - People using the service will feel less lonely.
 - People using the service will report a decrease in their levels of anxiety.
- Older people in Harlow will report a decrease in social isolation and an improved quality of life.
 - People using the service will feel less isolated.
 - People using the service will report an increase in social activities.





Come and join our Club for Harlow Seniors!

Our Big Lottery funded project aims to reduce loneliness and social isolation for the older people in Harlow.

Kelly, Claire & Jenny work with communities to set up weekly social clubs across the town. Each club meets for 2 hours a week where we get to meet new people, make new friends, sit and chat, play games and enjoy refreshments.

Our existing weekly clubs are:

Monday	Harlow Playhouse 10.30am from 5th February	Desormeaux Bungalows 1.30pm from 5th February		
Tuesday	GPCA 10.00am	The Golden Swift 10.30am from 30th January	Hintons 1.00pm	The Shark 1.30pm from 6th February
Wednesday	Halling Hill 1.30pm	Lutton Hall Close 1.30pm	Summers Farm Close 1.30pm	
Thursday	The Wayre 10.00am	Katherines House 10.00am	Fountain Farm 1.30pm	
Friday	Netteswellbury Farm 10.00am from 9th February			

We also arrange a variety of events during the year including parties, day trips, river cruises and our famous Safe and Socials. **Come and join the fun, we look forward to seeing you. Call Kelly on 07793 007737**



kelly@rainbowservices.org.uk

www.rainbowservices.org.uk

Rainbow Services Registered Charity No. 1077228



Figure 1. Community builder project flyer

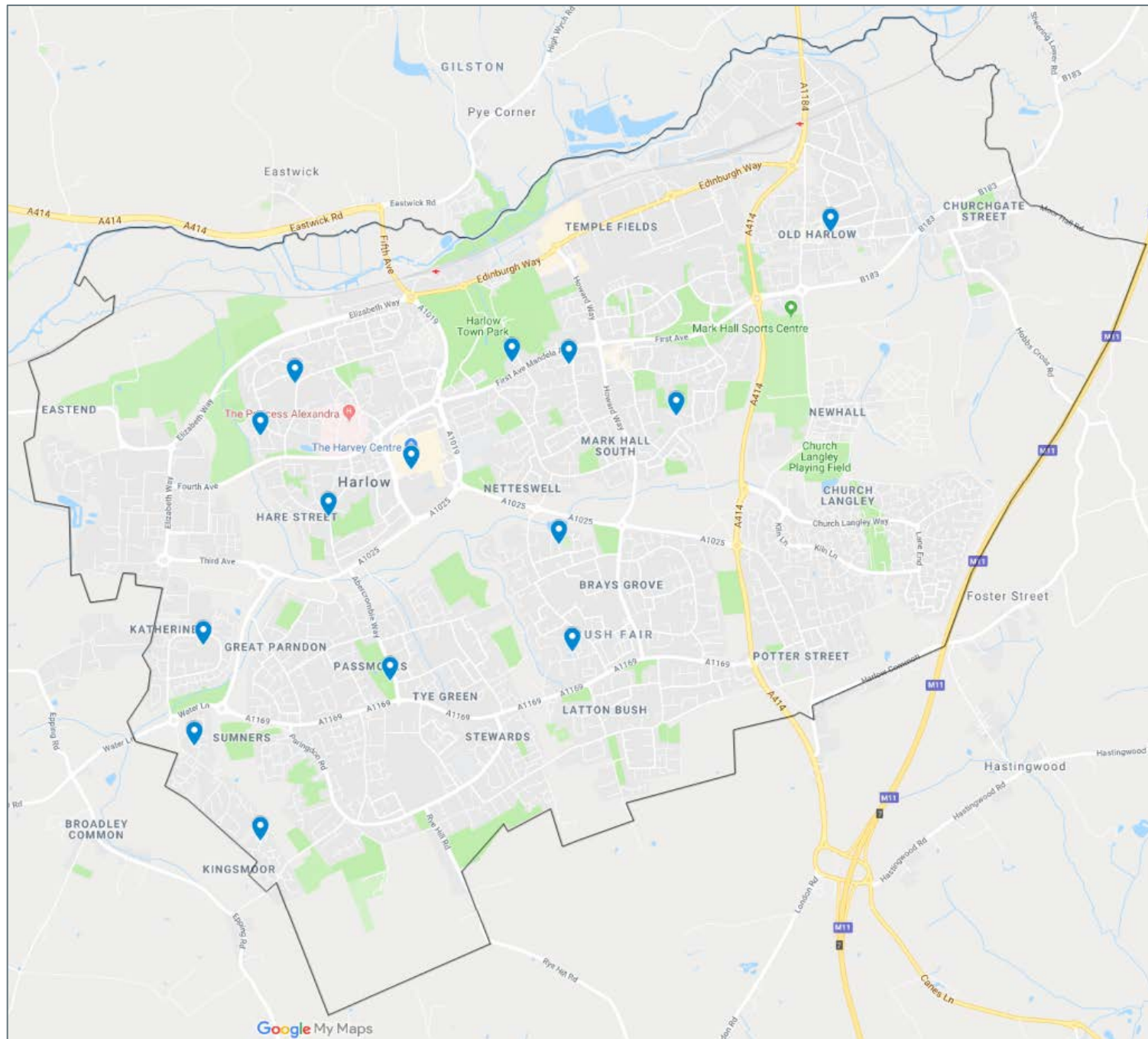


Figure 2. Map of Rainbow social club locations

1.2. About Harlow

Harlow New Town was built after World War II to ease overcrowding in London. The town was split into neighbourhoods, each self-supporting with their own shopping precincts, community facilities and a pub.

Presently, Harlow is the fourth smallest district in Essex in terms of total population numbers, accounting for just 6% of the total population in Essex. It has a lower proportion of over 65s compared to the county as a whole, although a 21% increase is expected between 2015 and 2025 equating to 2,800 more people (Essex County Council, 2016).

Deprivation scores of an area provide a picture of its social and economic status. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation are made up of a number of different domains including: income; employment; health and disability; education, skills and training and housing and services which impact the overall deprivation. The difference in deprivation between areas is a major determinant of health inequality: if deprivation inequalities decrease then health inequalities are likely to decrease also.

There are 54 Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs)² in Harlow, with none of them being amongst the most deprived 10% (or the most affluent 10%) in England. The distribution would suggest that there are a few affluent areas of Harlow but many that are relatively deprived. Harlow is ranked 101 out of 326 local authorities in England on overall deprivation (where 1 is the highest level of deprivation).

1.3. The ABCD approach

The Community Builder project utilised an Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach to identify the needs of the local population.

ABCD is an approach to sustainable community-driven development. ABCD builds on the assets that are found in the community and mobilizes individuals, associations, and institutions to come together to realise and develop their strengths.

ABCD is built on four foundations (Kretzmann, 2010; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Mathie & Cunningham, 2003):

- It focuses on community assets and strengths rather than problems and needs;
- It identifies and mobilises individual and community assets, skills and passions;
- It is community driven – ‘building communities from the inside out’ (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993);
- It is relationship driven.

² A Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA) is a geographic area of around 1500 people used for reporting small area statistics in England and Wales.

A few benefits of taking an asset-based approach have been proposed for both individuals and communities. For those who engage, the possible benefits include more control over their lives and where they live; the ability to influence decisions which affect them and their communities; the opportunity to develop how they want to be engaged and to be seen as part of the solution, not the problem. This process may subsequently increase wellbeing through strengthening control, knowledge, self-esteem and social contacts (Glasgow Centre for Population Health, 2011).

Activities with individuals that are asset based, ensure that engagement is meaningful and empowering rather than tokenistic and consultative. Asset based working also attempts to engage with individuals who would not usually get involved (Glasgow Centre for Population Health, 2011).

An asset-based approach has become popular in the health and social care sector in the UK in recent years (Klee et al, 2014).

1.4. Social isolation and loneliness

Social isolation and loneliness are often used interchangeably, however whilst they are similar, they are distinct concepts.

Loneliness is a subjective feeling about the gap between a person's desired levels of social contact and their actual level of social contact. It refers to the perceived quality of the person's relationships. Loneliness is never desired and lessening these feelings can take a long time.

Social isolation is an objective measure of the number of contacts that people have. It is about the quantity and not quality of relationships. People may choose to have a small number of contacts.

Age UK (2018)

The statistics from the Campaign to End Loneliness reveal that in the UK:

- Over half (51%) of all people aged 75 and over live alone (ONS, 2010)
- Over 9 million people in the UK – almost a fifth of the population – report being always or often lonely, but almost two thirds feel uncomfortable admitting to it (British Red Cross and Co-Op, 2016)
- A higher percentage of women than men report feeling lonely some of the time or often (Beaumont, 2013)
- 17% of older people are in contact with family, friends and neighbours less than once a week and 11% are in contact less than once a month (Victor et al, 2003)

- Nearly half of older people (49% of 65+ UK) say that television or pets are their main form of company (Age UK, 2014).

Several studies have identified a number of loneliness risk factors in later life. A recent UK study reported that loneliness in later life is associated with being widowed, having low self-esteem, contacts with friends or family, social activity, well-being, and income comfort; and having unmet social care needs (Dahlberg and McKee, 2014).

Loneliness reduces older people's quality of life (Ekwall et al, 2005). Loneliness can affect more than just our emotional wellbeing; previous research has shown it can also affect health and wellbeing:

- Loneliness is as bad for you as smoking 15 cigarettes a day (Holt-Lunstad, 2010)
- Loneliness is worse for you than obesity (Holt-Lunstad, 2010)
- Lonely people are more likely to suffer from dementia, heart disease and depression (Valtorta et al, 2016; James et al, 2011; Cacioppo et al, 2006)
- Loneliness is likely to increase your risk of death by 29% (Holt-Lunstad, 2015)

There is a clear body of evidence that social isolation and loneliness are associated with poorer health outcomes, which in turn places increased pressure on local health and social care services. A survey of 1,000 GP practices found that nearly 90 per cent felt that some patients were coming because they were lonely, and 14 per cent estimated they were seeing six or more patients a day for this reason (Campaign to End Loneliness, 2013). When compared to people who are never lonely, older people who are lonely are on average:

- 1.8 times more likely to visit their GP;
- 1.6 times more likely to visit A&E;
- 1.3 times more likely to have emergency admissions;
- 3.5 times more likely to enter local authority-funded residential care (Social Finance, 2015).

Loneliness and isolation however, are thought to be changeable. Improvements in physical health and improved social relationships have been associated with reduced levels of loneliness, suggesting that loneliness may be decreased by interventions which target improving health status as well as social interventions which aim to build and support social embeddedness (Victor, 2013).

1.5. Loneliness map

Age UK have developed a loneliness heat map which shows relative loneliness in neighbourhoods across England. The relative risk of loneliness is based on the Census 2011 figures for the factors: marital status, self-reported health status, age, and household size. These four factors predict around 20% of the loneliness observed amongst older people 65 and over as represented in the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA).

The map of Harlow (Figure 3) shows there are several areas where older people are at risk of loneliness, with 9 areas of very high risk. Areas in the north, including the wards of Mark Hall and Netteswell appear to be areas of high risk for loneliness, while the east of Harlow seems to have a fairly low risk of loneliness. Certain residents of particular areas in Harlow are therefore of particular concern when it comes to engaging with loneliness. It is evident that Rainbow’s community builder project is timely, based on these findings.

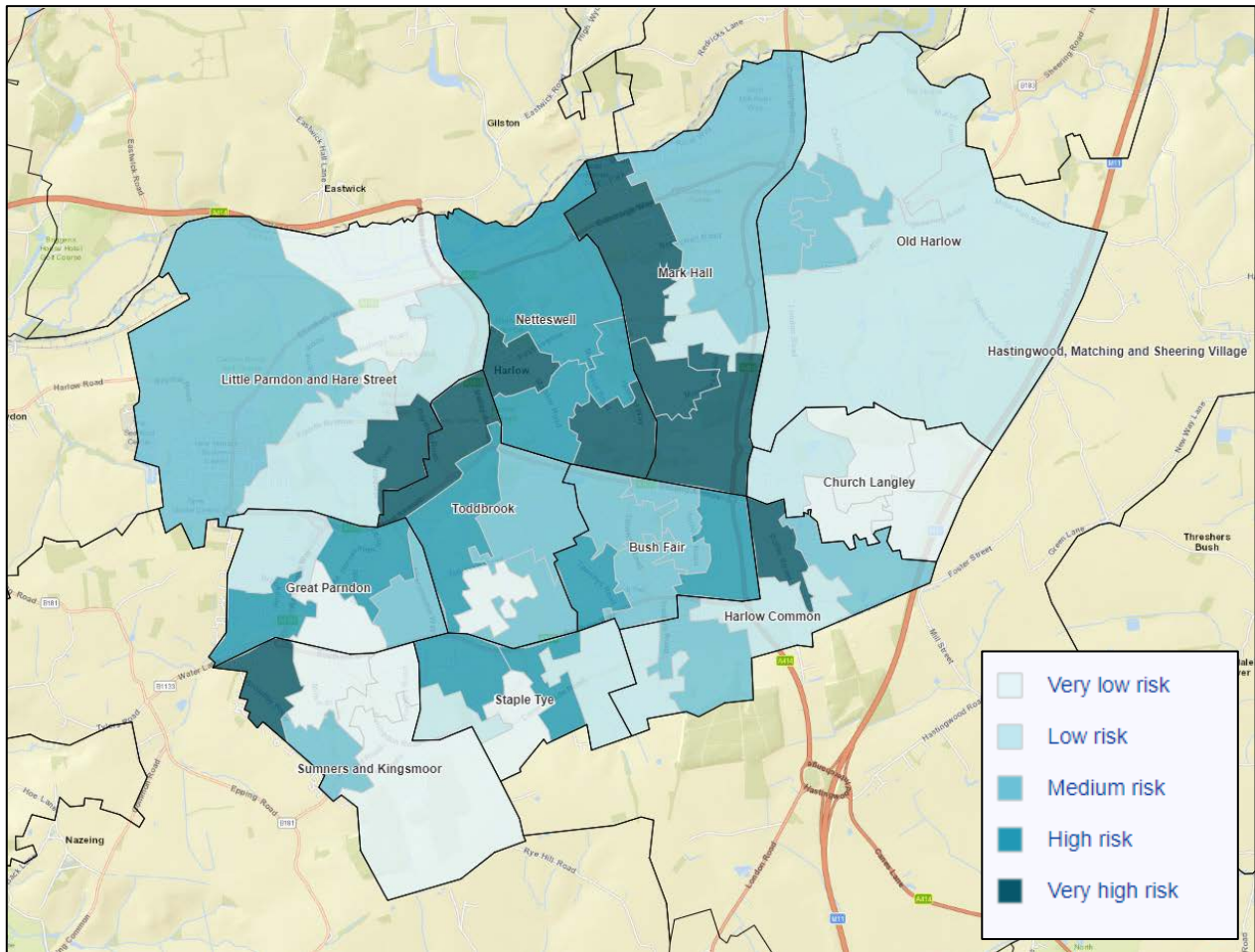
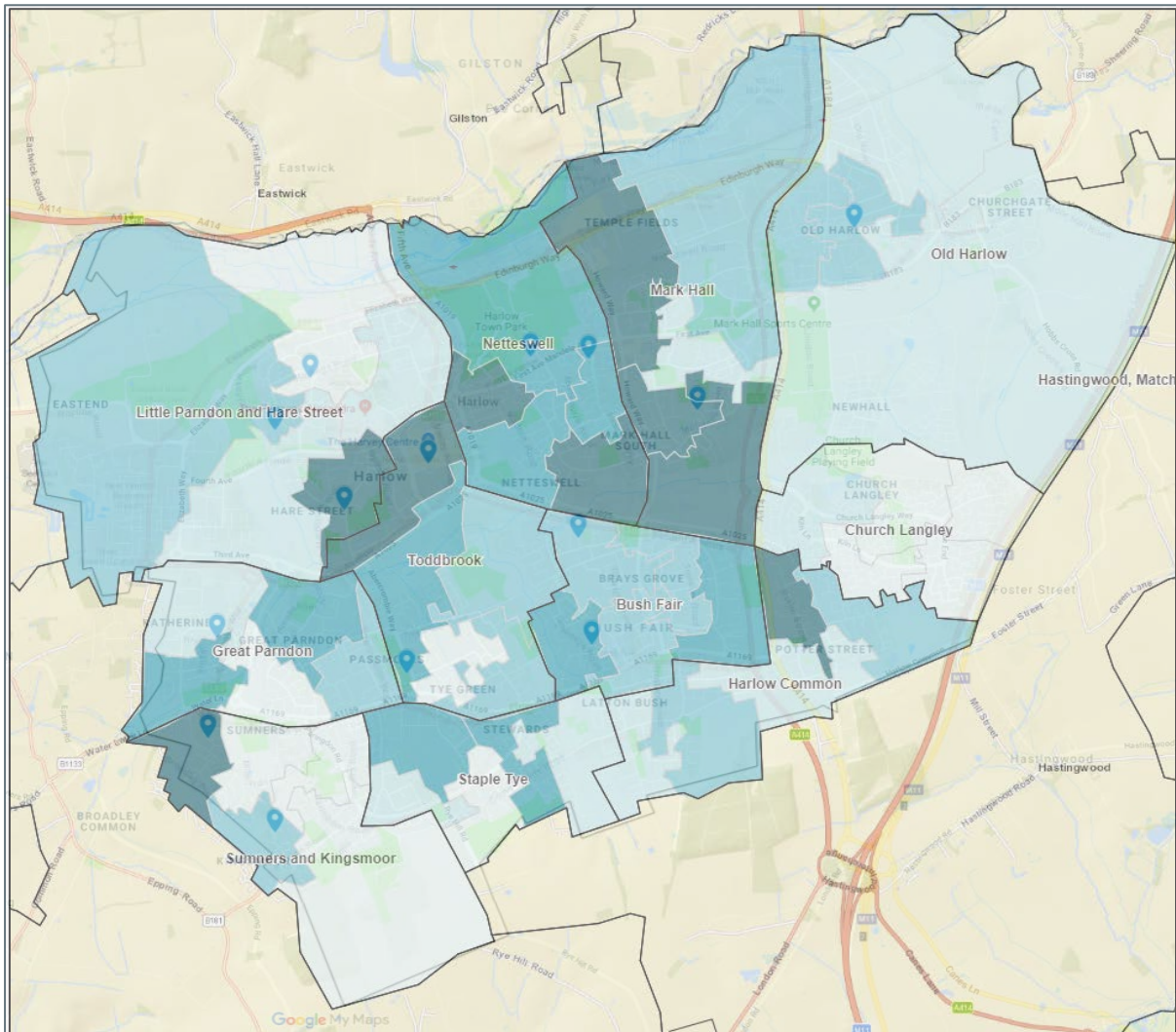


Figure 3. Predicted risk of loneliness for those aged 65 and over in Harlow. Source: <http://data.ageuk.org.uk/loneliness-maps/england-2016/Harlow/>

By overlaying the predicted risk of loneliness map, with the map showing the locations of the social groups, it is possible to see whether these are reaching the loneliest areas of Harlow (Figure 4).



This suggests that there are social groups in many of the very and high-risk areas of Harlow, but identifies potential gaps in Harlow Common, Staple Tye and Mark Hall.

1.6. Reducing Social Isolation

National health and social care policies and campaigns are increasingly recognising the importance of tackling social isolation and loneliness amongst older people. For example, in the UK 'The Campaign to End Loneliness' was launched in 2011 as a network of national, regional and local organisations working together to ensure that loneliness is acted upon as a public health priority at both national and local levels (Campaign to End Loneliness, 2011). Recently the Jo Cox Loneliness Commission has been raising awareness and has opened a national conversation about the scale and impact of loneliness in the UK. Building on this

work, and in recognition that loneliness is one of the greatest public health challenges of our time, last month the UK Government published the first loneliness strategy (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 2018).

The community can be a rich resource to support people’s capacity to make and maintain social connections as they age, as people who feel that they belong less strongly to their neighbourhood reported feeling lonely more often (ONS, 2018).

There have been arguments made for utilising an ABCD approach for reducing isolation and loneliness in older people (Klee et al., 2014). Age UK (2015) suggest that an ABCD approach is likely to be effective within a community as this approach is likely to deliver a range of services for older people that meet three key criteria:

- Being what local older people want
- Involving older people
- Being sustainable

These features closely link to the evidence around the types of interventions which can successfully help to reduce isolation and loneliness (Gardiner et al, 2018). Three key common characteristics of effective interventions were identified for addressing loneliness: adaptability, community development approach, and productive engagement (see figure 5).

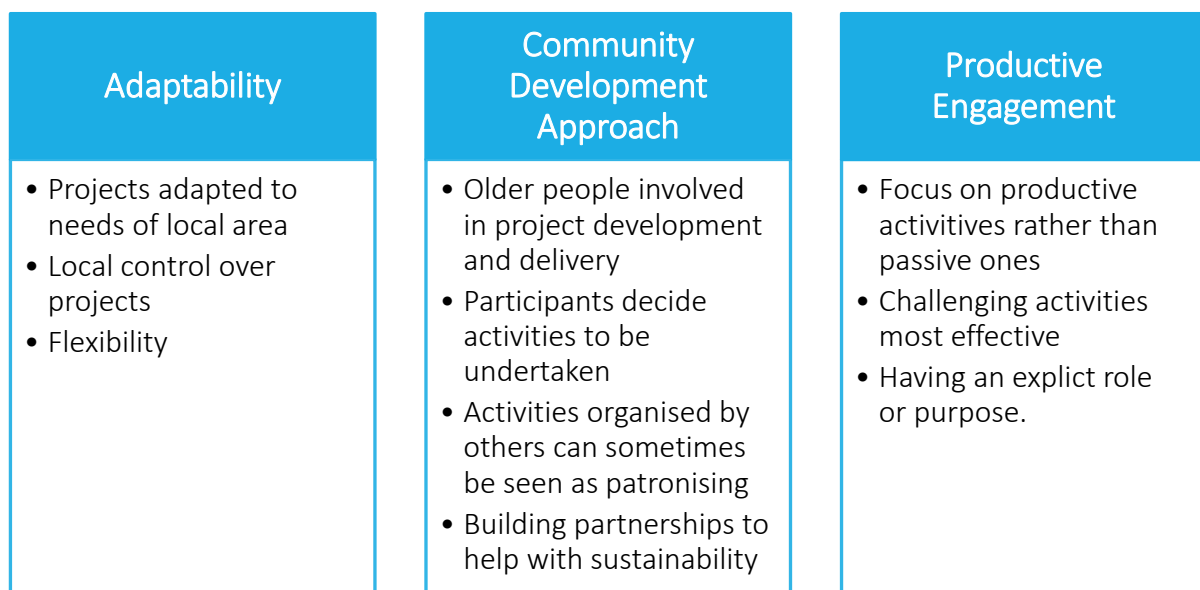


Figure 5. Adapted from (Gardiner, Geldenhuys, and Gott, 2018).

Many reviews have explored the effectiveness of interventions for reducing isolation and loneliness. Whilst Dickens et al (2011) found that group activities were more likely to be beneficial than one-to-one interventions, a subsequent review by Poscia et al (2018) found that both group and individual formats to be effective. They also found that participatory interventions and those including social activity and support were also more likely to be beneficial. As such, the community builder project usually brings groups of people together.

Thus, the focus of this evaluation will point to the ways group activities affect loneliness in Harlow.

1.7. Comparison with similar models

It has proven difficult to compare the Community Builder Project with other similar projects, as a crucial part of the ABCD approach is that they are community driven. Despite this, we have identified 'Time to Shine' which is a similar project and approach, and this section compares this to the community builder project.

Time to Shine (TTS) Leeds

Time to Shine selects partners across Leeds to deliver numerous projects that engage with socially isolated people. One of their projects similar to the community builder is Leeds Community Connect run by Rural Action Yorkshire. This was evaluated in 2016, allowing for a comparison of findings and lessons learnt (Horsfall, 2016).

Rural Action Yorkshire is working with local rural communities to ensure available assets are developed and strengthened to become a place where older people will come together on a regular basis. The first phase of the project was successful in Swillington, Scholes, Thorner and East Keswick. The next phase will set up new hubs in rural South Leeds, turning village halls into Community Hubs.

Steered by local older people and supported by a team of volunteers, the Community Hubs offer a varied programme of activities where older people come together on a regular basis to socialise, learn and have fun. Activities are introduced by local people and change weekly. Activities include: Genealogy, Craft making, Bowls, Learning instruments, and weekly tea and biscuits

Findings:

- Most people did not know anyone in the group beforehand but had made friends there.
- Other social activities had been made available, such as other coffee mornings, fitness classes and day trips.
- The group was described as supportive and giving people confidence.
- The main thing was socialising, and beneficiaries said they would still go even if there were no activities.
- Participants noted they would like to see a wider variety of activities e.g. flower arranging & singing, which might attract more people to the groups.
- The church venue is free, and resources are provided by volunteers and participants.
- The groups are sustainable as all resources are from within the community.
- A potential challenge could be continuing to attract volunteers and new members who are socially inactive and isolated.

Lessons Learnt:

- Advertising was done by traditional methods such as leafleting, and posters in local shops. This however was seen as problematic when trying to reach people that are isolated.
- Lack of involvement with other community groups or other age groups in the community. Integrating into the community is suggested as a way of preventing groups from stagnating and improving sustainability. A livelier community network would prevent social isolation because of the ease of accessing community interactions and projects.
- The loose and informal structure is inviting, and the warm atmosphere makes people feel comfortable. The blurred lines between volunteer and beneficiary are part of the ABCD approach and gives people the opportunity to volunteer and develop self-esteem. The impact of the group could be enhanced by offering more challenging activities or encouraging independence, such as those based on: mobility, information, advice or technology.

Comparison

The approach used by 'Time to Shine' is similar to that of the Community Builder Project. Both projects are aimed at isolated older people, utilise an ABCD approach and involve social activities at community venues.

Both projects are supportive, friendly and social, and are place for making friends. The lessons learnt from the evaluation of Time to Shine involved the advertising methods, community involvement and challenging and informational activities. Below we compare these lessons learnt against the approach taken by the community builder project.

Leeds Community Connect	Community Builder Project
Traditional advertising methods were seen as problematic when trying to reach people that are isolated.	Uses alternative methods of advertising, including more face to face methods in local 'hot spots' e.g. bus stops. This method may still not target those disproportionately affected by loneliness.
Lack of involvement with other community groups or other age groups in the community.	Rainbow Services has good community connections and have also done some intergenerational work through the project.
Impact could be enhanced by offering more challenging activities or encouraging independence, such as those based on: mobility, information, advice or technology.	The senior safe & social events provide information and advice about how to keep safe and well. Additionally, signposting has been identified as an unintended outcome of the groups.

Overall the Community Builder project encompasses the lessons learnt from the Leeds Community Connect project. This is positive in showing the approach taken by Rainbow can be successful.

2. Methodology

The evaluation has been designed to determine the degree to which the initiative is successfully achieving its aims and how they are being achieved. The evaluation focused on both outcomes and process, to address whether the project is working and to understand why it produces specific results for future iterations. Data was collected from 13 of the social clubs. Whilst another one opened near the end of the evaluation, it was not yet fully established. Within this context, the evaluation had a number of objectives:

- *To identify why the model applied is working so well, and what are the reasons behind this.*
- *To explore whether the model could be applied to other demographics and locations.*
- *To identify other similar models within and outside of Essex.*
- *To assess the sustainability of the project.*
- *To identify outcomes of the project.*

2.1. Data collection

This evaluation comprised three key data collection approaches:

1. document analysis of key project related documents;
2. semi-structured interviews with project staff, volunteers, participants and partners to provide additional detail and context, and to clarify information from the documentary analysis stage, and;
3. observation of social groups ('socials') in action, to assist in the information gathering process.

Firstly, a wide-ranging desk-based review of existing project specific documentation was carried out. The documentation included:

- applications for external funding, mid and end of year reports;
- project plans and summary information;
- specific project related information including media coverage, and website information;
- monitoring evaluation forms.

Secondly, interviews were undertaken with staff and participants of all clubs. A total of 43 interviews were carried out: 4 with project staff, 10 with volunteers, 6 with partners (2 were also volunteers) and 25 with project participants. Interviews were semi-structured and offered the opportunity for interviewees to reflect on and share their experiences of involvement with the project, as well as their views on the strengths and challenges of the

approach taken. Interviews took place between May and August 2018. Interview topic guides are presented in Appendix A.

2.2. Ethics

Participation in the evaluation was voluntary and all participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage. Rainbow staff pointed out anyone who was unable to provide consent, for example, participants living with dementia. Participant information sheets and consent forms were provided by the researcher prior to participation.

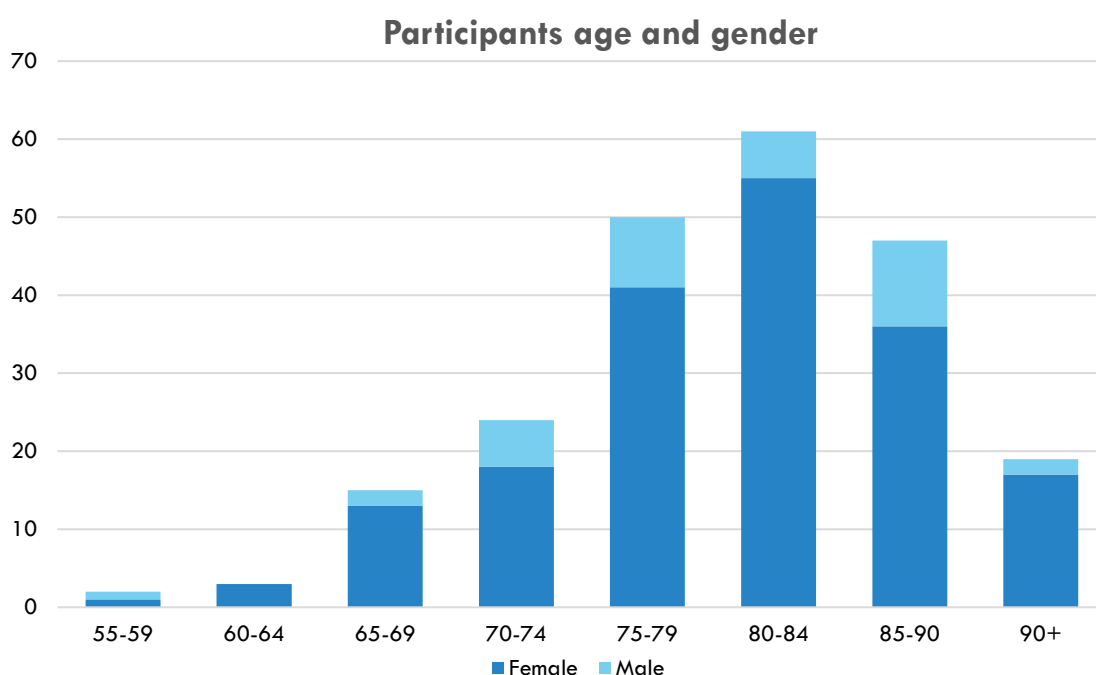
2.3. Data Analysis

The qualitative data were taped and transcribed and subjected to qualitative content analysis, by a qualitative researcher, who also conducted the interviews. This involved extracting concepts and broader themes from the interview transcripts and constant comparison between emerging themes and the raw data. Another qualitative researcher was asked to comment on detailed draft reports and to validate the connection between the analytic themes and the quotes used to 'ground' these interpretations. Any queries about interpretation were resolved by discussion, with agreement being reached in all instances.

3. Findings

3.1. Demographics

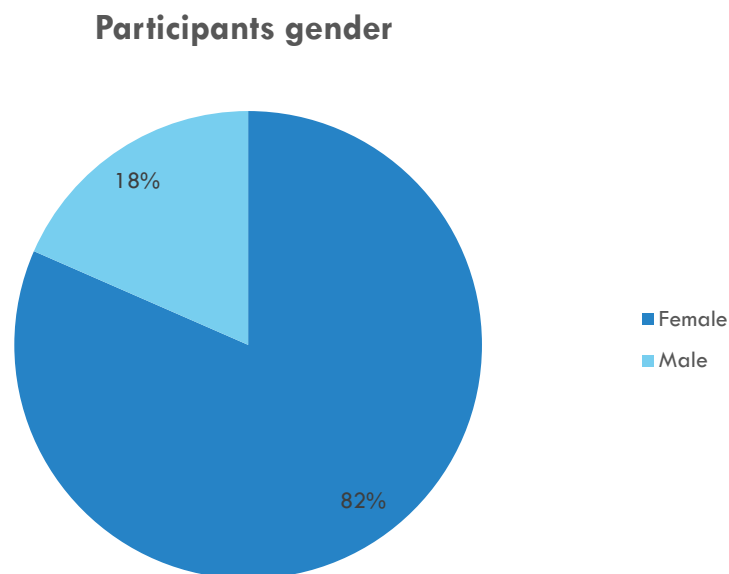
The data presented in this section are based on the database Rainbow Services hold about their club members. Some of these data may be inaccurate as the clubs have been running for several years now. There are 461 people on the database for Rainbow Services, all of



whom either attend their weekly social groups, and/or go on the day trips. There are 309 people who attend weekly social groups, and roughly half of these are regular attenders.

Of those who chose to supply data on their age (n=221), their ages range from between 57 and 99, with a mean average age of 80 years old.

Participants' gender data are available for all 461 people involved in the project. Of these a large majority, 376 (82%) are female.

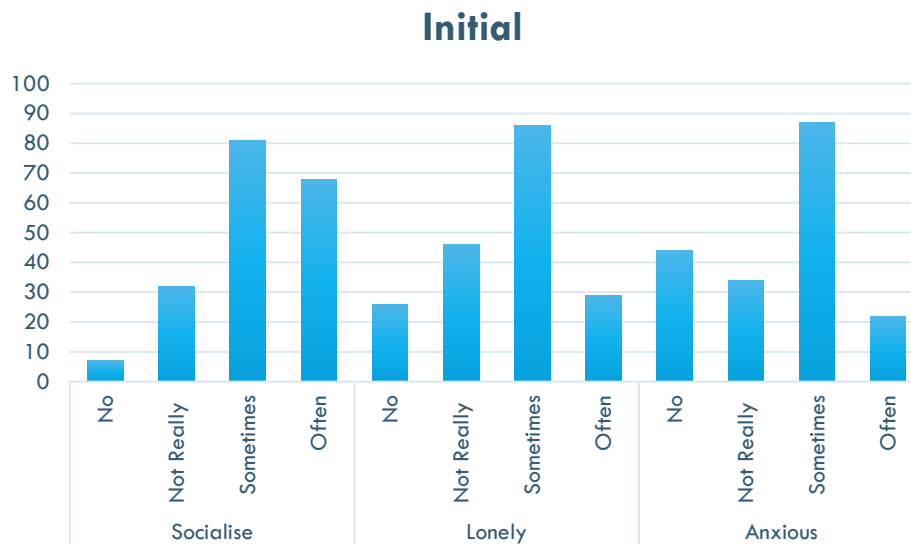


The age and gender findings are in line with current national statistics on ageing populations. The findings demonstrate that as the majority of the participants are women, the project potentially appeals to more people living alone, who may have been widowed and are retired. It is important to consider, based on these statistics, the gendered aspects of social events and socialising, to establish if the gender gap is reflective of the expected age-gender populations, or if there are social barriers to male attendance at the project's social events.

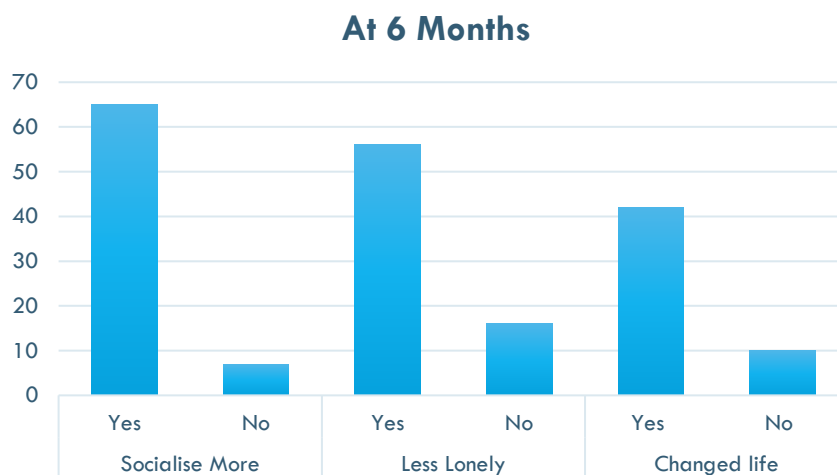
3.2. Monitoring and Evaluation

Rainbow Services have designed a bespoke monitoring form to help track the progress of the project's participants and whether the social groups have helped to reduce social isolation, loneliness and anxiety. Some participants are asked to take part in the evaluation process by completing the form when they initially attend, after 6 months and again after a year of participation.

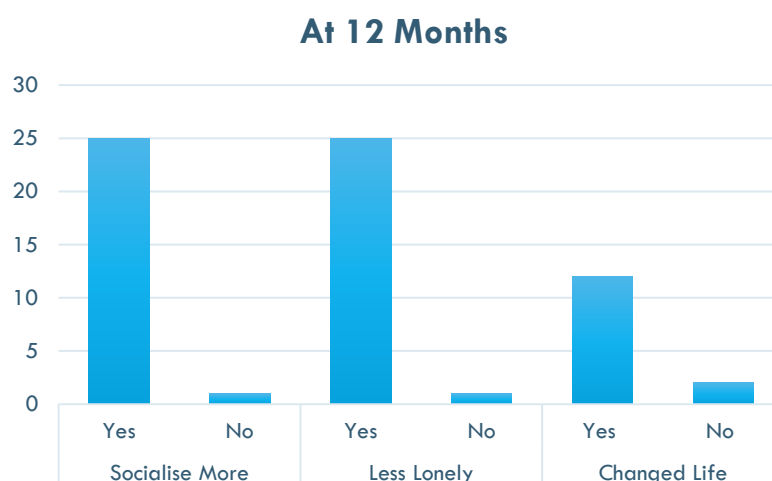
Rainbow Services score the three factors and suggest a score of 8 or above indicates loneliness and social isolation in an increasing scale. When initially asked, 75 out of 187 (40%) had a score above 8, indicating that they suffered from isolation or loneliness.



After 6 months 72 participants had completed the monitoring form. At this point, 90% said they socialise more since coming to the club, 78% felt less lonely since joining the club, and 81% felt that being part of the project had changed their life for the better.



At 12 months, 26 participants had completed the monitoring form. Of these 96% said they socialise more since coming to the club, 96% felt less lonely since joining the club, and 81% felt that being part of the project had changed their life for the better.



From the review of the monitoring and evaluation forms, a large majority of participants self-report that the project has had a positive impact in that they socialise more, feel less lonely and their lives have changed for the better.

3.3. Outcome Evaluation

This section looks at the effectiveness of the project in producing change. Those who attended the project described why they attend the social groups, what they enjoy about going, and what benefits they get from attending, and the difference it has made for them. Themes emerging from the participant narratives are presented below and illustrated with quotes.

Meeting different needs

Each of the social groups were observed to be different and designed around the needs of the participants. Ten of the 13 clubs were observed playing games such as bingo, hoy³, balloon tennis⁴ and taking part in quizzes. Three of the groups enjoy having the opportunity to chat about various subjects. It was seen as beneficial that the groups are different, so that people can choose what they want to do, and attend more than one group if they like:

“everybody seems in the same frame of mind, they just want a chat and [to] be happy. I think sometimes people just want to talk you know, they don't want to do... some clubs do quizzes and all that sort of thing, but I think here they just want to talk which is good, it's the healing thing, isn't it to talk?” Fountain Farm participant

“it's quite sort of diverse... when they are so different, and the different needs can be met and some of the people go to more than one group to have different needs met ... but I think it's because they're designed around the groups, aren't they, so that the

³ Hoy is a bingo like game where players try to match all their cards on their sheet to the cards the dealer turns over to become a winner.

⁴ Balloon tennis is an easy, social game, that's suitable across different levels of ability. It involves using an object to hit a balloon across the room between participants.

groups that do want to play a game, they play a game, the group that don't, don't. I mean this group if I wanted to play games they would be up and go they wouldn't want it. They like a chat which if they're behind their doors they don't get..." Volunteer

One volunteer made it clear that they go along with what the group want and that the members have ownership over the group and the activities they do:

"...every group will be individual you'll find that. Some people like this, some like that, but you go with the flow, what the group likes, it's their group, they're the members..."
Volunteer

It is clear that flexibility, an informal quality to meetings and suiting different 'tastes' is important to people, encouraging their attendance at the projects clubs. The model of changing events to fit people's wishes appears to suit the users. Participants also suggest day trips and outings that they want to do, so they are also designed around the needs of the participants.

Anticipation of going

Many of the participants were seen to arrive early for the clubs and wait outside, often they expressed that they look forward to the club and prioritised it over doing other things:

"I think as you get older you put everything into a pattern and Thursday morning is scheduled for me to come here." Katherine's House participant

"I really do I really mean it when I say I wish everyday was Thursday." Katherine's House participant

These findings indicate that not only do participants have the availability of time, they also make more of the social clubs than the two hours, coming early and planning ahead. Some also mentioned going for lunch after or before the club, therefore extending their period of social interaction.

Inclusive to all

Many participants mentioned how friendly and welcoming the clubs are to everyone who attends, and it was one of the things people really valued about the clubs.

"Nobody ever walks into that room and sits down on the chair and nobody's spoken to them. I think somebody speaks to you as soon as you enter that room and... you can feel the love and that in there as well, and the enjoyment of being there." GPCA participant

"Feel like a family..." Latton Hall Close participant

The volunteers did their best to try and ensure everyone had a good time and enjoyed themselves. Some were particularly aware that members may experience physical impairments like hearing, sight, cognitive impairments including memory and communication barriers which could impact their experience of the social groups.

“It’s like we’ve got the lady there who’s deaf. So, she could be sitting here in a group of people but feel isolated, and so it’s trying to be aware that having people around you doesn’t stop you being isolated... but it’s very noisy around her so she can’t follow [the conversation], so normally we have a chat.” Volunteer

It can be difficult for people to join a new club, especially if they are lonely or isolated, and they may have a preconceived idea about what the club is like. It is therefore essential to show both new and current participants that the social clubs are welcoming and inclusive with a positive atmosphere to encourage attendance.

Socialising

The extent to which participants explicitly attended the socials because of loneliness varied with some people describing the many activities they do during the week, whilst others rarely had social interaction. Despite this, during interviews people expressed the desire to meet new people, to see people in the town who they may have lost contact with.



“... I live just over there... so I sort of see everyone coming and going but... I hadn’t bonded until I came to these meetings. And like I said I’ve never bonded with a lot of people before I came here, but as soon as I started, you know, they said ‘come to the meeting’ so I gradually came and got used to it and it was good.” Katherine’s House participant

It also makes participants feel like they are part of the wider community, giving them meaning and purpose in their lives making them happier, feel more in control and get more out of what they do.

“It’s life and we have to fight our way through, but that’s how we feel, we have to fight for things, it’s not how it should be. Here we feel important, they feel part of something, they feel... worth something, and they are, and we are.” Fountain Farm participant

Along with the benefits of seeing people regularly at the social group, some participants also mentioned that they may bump into other members whilst out and about and whereas before they would have just said hello, they can now stop and have a conversation.

“We’ve seen one or two, we pass them round and about here, and maybe say ‘good morning’ or whatever but now we say, ‘how are you?’ and that sort of thing and have a chat maybe. So they’ve probably lived around you the whole time, but you didn’t know...” The Golden Swift participant

One participant mentioned the benefits of going out as part of the group, rather than on their own, suggesting that it opens up more opportunities for going out.

“Not many of us have got husbands so it’s, getting out and getting around. I mean when you go out singularly there’s not a lot of places you can go, but when you go out in groups it’s a different thing. If you get anything wrong or get lost it’s a laugh but when you’re on your own it’s a worry.” Desormeaux Bungalows participant

A social space is provided by the community builder project, offering people a platform for meeting others in an environment where there are shared interests and a desire to meet others. It also gives people the opportunity to develop their social network and to feel part of the community.

Case study

Rose* lost her husband and was having lots of problems at home after moving in with a family member. She didn't go out much and was visited by a Community Agent who encouraged her to attend an upcoming Silver Sunday event. That was the first Rainbow event Rose attended, and she didn't know anybody but found everyone friendly and welcoming. After enjoying herself there she 'didn't know where else to go'. A while later, whilst at bingo, she discovered that the weekly socials run at the same venue on the following day. She started going along the following week because she wanted to get out and about, know people, and to 'get into life again'. At the time she was feeling 'right down'.

The club was run by two staff members and they were very supportive about the loss of her husband, 'they were most marvellous, helped me over my husband's death and they did everything they could to get me to join in with everybody'. She enjoys attending the group because everyone is so friendly, and they never hear anyone saying nasty things about anyone else, 'whereas normally when you get a group of people there is a bit of back biting'.

Rose enjoys talking to the other participants and says, 'if you're living on your own, it's the best place to be coming'. The group is friendly and welcoming, and 'somebody speaks to you as soon as you enter that room... you can feel the love... and the enjoyment of being there'. She feels that the groups help her because 'you can't be miserable whilst you're here, you can't, and it's nice because it sets you up again for the next week'.

There is a coffee morning at her supported housing facility, but it clashes with the Rainbow club, so she chooses to go to the Rainbow club to meet new people. She does attend other clubs, such as a bereavement club, but finds this one the friendliest and most helpful one because of the amount of support and advice she has got. Before going she didn't go out on coach trips or anything on her own but has enjoyed the outings organised by Rainbow and feels that the club has given her more confidence to go out and to join in other things.

**pseudonyms have been given to protect confidentiality*

The benefits of volunteering

The volunteers mentioned what they get from volunteering for the project, such as making a difference to people's lives.

"I like meeting people I like to see smiling faces, and I think if I can make them happy, they go away laughing then I've done my job right." Volunteer

It also gives the volunteers the opportunity for making friendships.

"I've made a lot of good friends and we have a social side with friends outside the clubs as well as in the club now. We go out quite a bit, we do club dinners, and it keeps them motivated."

At weekends I say 'we're going out do you want to join us?' and if they want to come they can. They say that's when they find it's most lonely... because in the week they might be doing things." Volunteer

Some of the volunteers put their interest in the project down to a feeling of belonging and being part of something.

"Well I feel like I am part of a team, a belonging you know... and you feel valued. And... you know, everybody likes to be valued." Volunteer

They also enjoy listening to the stories of the past, and what the participants' have been through in their lives.

"I like listening, because mostly they are elderly people, they're elder than me. Quite interesting to hear their stories of their lives, and what they've been working at." Volunteer

"I like listening to their stories as well, some of those guys have been through so much... The things these guys have been through, it makes you proud to be able to give something back to them." Partner

The volunteers felt they benefitted by their involvement in the project, as they felt like they were making a difference, were involved in something, and could also make friends.

3.3.1. Unintended outcomes

During the evaluation it became evident that there were some outcomes that were not expected as part of the project. This section describes these additional outcomes.

Signposting

During the observations several of the groups were seen sharing information between participants, and to give advice about problems or information on how they could arrange support. The discussions were often quite frank and open, which suggested people were happy to discuss their problems with each other, and often open up about problems they are having. One group were observed to be discussing their options for pre-planning and paying for their own funerals after one of the participants raised concerns about leaving her family to do this. Others were seen discussing health issues and how to access support, and financial help.

"It's a bit uplifting really you can help other people if they've got a problem and you can help solve it... we're very caring group." Katherine's House participant

“If you’re on your own and you’ve got a little problem or your worrying about something you can talk to the others about it and... share it. Yes, because we’re all in the same position, aren’t we? We’re nearly all, I imagine most of us are all widows, aren’t we?” A conversation between two participants from The Shark.

“I know what it is like to sit indoors and feel like you are on your own in the world. And you know, just to pass information along about, especially these are more communal, they are sort of in areas where people live. So, information, local information is very very good. I unfortunately can’t be using a computer now, so I’m limited to what I can find out. I can’t go on Facebook and find out things.” Volunteer

Rainbow Services also has strong connections with the Community Agents based in Harlow, so if someone raises a concern or asks about support, they can refer them to help and advice about independent living.

Beyond volunteering

The volunteers were concerned for the wellbeing of the people who attend their groups. Some mentioned that they had exchanged phone numbers and would check in on participants if they don’t attend the club to check that they are ok.

“Because a lot of these guys live nearby me so I actually just, if I don’t see some of them I knock on their door and I can just check that they are ok. So, it’s a great way of just connecting our community together, which doesn’t always happen everywhere.” Volunteer

“...and I know they are ok, because I see them. And they all give me their phone numbers, and if they’re not coming they’ll ring up... because otherwise I think ‘oh they’ve not come’, but at least I know they are ok... Because you do worry where they are, especially if they haven’t been feeling right, and you think ‘oh somethings happened to them.’” Volunteer

The volunteers provided a surveillance role, in checking how the older person was feeling, noticing any decline in their health and checking they were ok if they failed to attend the club.

Conclusion

The findings from the outcome evaluation indicate that the social groups Rainbow Services offer are informal, flexible and friendly. People did not necessarily realise they were ‘missing’ social aspects of their lives until they came to the clubs; now that they attend socials, people genuinely look forward to going each week. It helps people to feel part of something and to build their social network, as many of them live alone and/or are widowed.

The socials also provide the opportunity to speak to others about their problems, and to receive information and advice (signposting). Participants experienced positive social

engagement and the community builder project has impacted in important ways in the lives of the older people it supports.

3.4. Process Evaluation

This part of the evaluation looks at who attends the group and whether it's reaching the target audience, the activities and other important factors.

Feelings of loneliness and isolation

As the clubs are targeted at people who are feeling lonely and isolated, some of the participants opened up about these feelings and the negative impacts they can have.

"even in these bungalows [in a social housing complex] you can feel a bit isolated you know." Fountain Farm participant

"there's times like [in the] evening when you feel lonely and because there's nobody there, but then you have to find something to occupy you to take it off [your mind] and you learn to deal with it. Some people can't and then if they're in that depth of loneliness they get depressed..." Fountain Farm participant

"I must admit the first week I bottled out, I got to my front door and I thought I can't go I don't know anybody and I'm going on my own..." Hintons participant

"But these clubs, if there are others like me it keeps them going, it keeps me going... Unless you're lonely you don't know what loneliness is." The Wayre participant

Many of the participants mentioned that they were lonely after being widowed, particularly as many had been in long term relationships and had been used to having someone around or having company. The social groups give people the opportunity to get out and to chat and socialise with others.

"To meet people, as I say, to get out and about because looking after hubby when he was disabled, before he passed away I didn't get chance to get out and meet people. So here, you know, I've really enjoyed myself." Fountain Farm participant

"And when you've been with a partner, well then when you're on your own, you don't know what to do. I lost my husband 2 years ago, but it's still sad." Desormeaux Bungalows participants

"A lot of them are widows, and they've had a partner for so many years and they're not there anymore... they come along, have a good chat and go away happy and that's all they want." Volunteer

Some of the participants however, mentioned the number of activities they have throughout the week, and they had remained socially active during older age. Some were members of

other groups such as carers meetings, bereavement groups, those with a hearing impairment, and the University of the Third Age (U3A). One of the Community Builders recognised the benefits of bringing these people together.

“Not everyone that comes to the club is lonely and isolated, but you’re sort of pairing up some that are with those who aren’t... It’s a friendship group, someone that’s there for them if they need someone.” Community Builder

The Rainbow staff also recognise that participants have to be fairly mobile and independent to attend the groups, and therefore they are unable to target all the older people in Harlow who may be lonely or isolated.

“We are reaching more and more people...but there’s so many more... But capacity is as we’re at, at the moment, we can’t do any more. So we’re confident we are reaching [people] although we know there are so many people we are not.” Community Builder

Not only is loneliness a component that impacts attendance numbers, it is also a feeling that many participants experienced. For many they had experienced a trigger which can cause isolation or loneliness such as getting older or weaker, the deaths of spouses and friends, and because of disability or illness. The clubs offer people a ‘reason’ to leave the house and also provides a space for meeting other people. Such a space might ordinarily not be available as cuts to services has reduced other sources of potential support.

Proximity from home

People often described that it was close for them to attend the group, and therefore they find it easier to go. This was felt to be an important factor, as many of the attendees relied on public transport to get to the group. A few people described how it’s easy to get the bus into the centre of Harlow but getting between the different neighbourhoods can be more difficult. This may explain why Harlow Playhouse was the biggest of the social groups, as it is easily accessible.

“I wanted to join because they have quite a lot of social activities, but... where the others are is a job to park and that. So, when it was here, I thought I can get the bus to here, so I came here.” Playhouse participant

“Some of those ladies don’t get to go out as much or as often, because of transport and mobility and confidence as well. But even in the winter they can manage the little walk from their house to here. So, it’s quite a good thing for them in the winter when a lot of them don’t go out because of the cold and slipping over and things like that. They’ll make it to a club like this, any area, because they can.” Partner

Whilst pubs were often easily accessible due to the design of the neighbourhoods in Harlow, one volunteer said there were barriers to some of the older women going.

“...being of older school and the majority of women, we don’t like to walk in pubs by ourselves. So, we tend to congregate outside first and then come in together. Because, well it’s just the way we are. You know, that is the only downfall, but its lovely and local. And we get a lovely welcome...” Volunteer

The distance of the groups from people’s homes was important. Location is therefore an important consideration when deciding to open new social groups, to help encourage attendance. However, these need to be carefully chosen as to not deter anyone from attending.

Recruitment of volunteers

The volunteers are essential to the running of the project. A total of 10 volunteers were interviewed about their involvement in the project, why they volunteer, how they are supported by the staff team, and the benefits of the social groups.

Many of the volunteers are retired themselves and volunteer to pass their time, as a way of giving back to the community, and because they enjoy doing it. Some of the volunteers had started volunteering on the community builder project whilst looking into other volunteering opportunities, others had heard about the opportunity from the Volunteer Centre Harlow, whilst some had seen adverts. All expressed how much they enjoyed their role.

“...it's nice to do something because you want to do it not because you're being paid to do it is something I enjoy and what they're doing, I like a good chat, the ladies have a good chat...” Volunteer

“Well I had time to do things, so I wanted to put back into the system to do a little bit of volunteer work. It was a bit selfish as well really, because naturally it gives me a bit of interest and gets me out...” Volunteer

Most of the volunteers are retired, this could be a point in their lives when they themselves are at risk of becoming isolated, and as such, volunteering and increased involvement in the community could prevent this from being a trigger.

Supporting volunteers

All of the volunteers said they felt well supported by the Rainbow staff members. If they had any problems or needed advice for signposting they could ask the Rainbow team.

“if I've got any issues I just get straight in touch with them and they come back with a load of help or advice. We've had a lot of serious health issues and I can let them know... if it's something I haven't got the expertise [in], or if I need the advice, they are there with it.” Volunteer

Despite this some of the clubs run independently, with little input from Rainbow Service. However, they are available if they require any advice or support.

Case Study

Lucy* had taken early retirement and found out about the project from a friend. She said, 'really it's nice to do something because you want to do it not because you're being paid to do it'. Lucy gets on well with the group and has formed a 'genuine friendship' with some members. She feels that she has got 'certain knowledge from the job I used to do that at times is useful, so I can give something back knowledge wise, as well as company wise'. But says that she has also learnt things and sees it as a 'backwards and forwards equal relationship'.

She feels that if she hadn't volunteered, she'd probably have come to the club as a member.

She explains that the group are very diverse, but they care about each other and when they talk about things people tend to be open and honest. There are no topics off limits and they like to have a laugh and a joke, but if someone needs support they are all happy to give it.

Lucy knows the Rainbow team will support her if she has any issues, and as the group have had a lot of serious health issues, has contacted them for help and advice.

**pseudonyms have been given to protect confidentiality*

All of the volunteers said how much they enjoyed being involved in the project and the difference they can see it making. They had gone into volunteering for different reasons, such as having more time, giving back to the community, and to meet new people. The sustainability of the project relies heavily on the need to recruit volunteers for the project, who can run the groups independently. This provides the staff of Rainbow more time to look at setting up new clubs and to organise day trips.

Partnerships

The project utilises its connections with other voluntary organisations in Harlow. Rainbow Services is well connected with other local voluntary organisations, as it also coordinates Harlow Voluntary Sector Forum. It provides local organisations with a place to refer older people to if they are lonely or isolated.

"... other than money, social isolation is probably the second biggest problem I come up against, so it is massive... But it's been reduced since these clubs, we've really noticed the reduction in the amount of referrals that come in for social isolation. Because word of mouth gets around, a lot of them are based in the sheltered accommodation areas... Most people that are in the sheltered accommodation are

single, widowed, they are all over 65 anyway, a lot have medical needs, health needs”.
Partner

Rainbow Services also work with partners to get venues, donations, and for support for big events and day trips.

“it's not always about what we can give them monetary wise, it's about the involvement as well, so I would go and wait tables at their lunch club or I'll come out... to something like this.” Partner

The outward facing nature of the project has raised the profile of Rainbow Services within the community, allowing for more partnerships to take place.

“...when people think of Rainbow they think about the older people's [project].”
Community Builder

3.5. Sustainability and the future

Some of the social clubs run independently, with little input from the Rainbow team. This relies heavily on the need to recruit volunteers for the project, who can sustain the groups independently. This shows that with a reliable volunteer the clubs are able to run with little support. However, some of the volunteers said they needed the advice from the Rainbow team if they had any problems or to help them signpost. A few of the volunteers did mention that they would carry on, even if Rainbow Services were unable to support them through the project. Despite this, the project is not just about the clubs, the participants spoke fondly of the day trips, afternoon teas, Christmas lunches and Senior Safe & Social events, all of which are organised by the Rainbow staff members.

“...we went at Christmas, for Christmas dinner. And they had school children come and they all sang Christmas carols, that was so lovely, it was up the rugby club they held it. It was really nice. So at least they do different things you know you don't just come here, they do different outings.” Fountain Farm participant

The evaluation also looked at whether the model could be applied to other demographics and geographical locations. Most people agreed that it could work anywhere in the country, given the right venue and volunteers.

“It's such a simple model that could be replicated anywhere in the country. You find a free space, and a couple of volunteers who are willing to give up a couple of hours a week. And that's it, it's just as simple.” Community Builder

“It could work in every town- if there was the funding, it could work. And obviously the people who would donate their time...” Volunteer

Some people also mentioned that there are other opportunities to expand on the work.

“We’re looking at [expanding into] West [Essex] older people, and we’re looking at other age groups for Harlow as we’ve done some intergenerational stuff which has worked really well... so we know there is a lot more that can be done.” Community Builder

As well as these areas, it was also mentioned that other demographics who are at risk of loneliness and isolation could also benefit from a group, where they could talk to others who are in the same situation as them.

“Rainbow have got no end of stuff they could do as a charity along those lines and others. I think it could be adapted, at the end of the day its tea, coffee, chat and some sort of fun and games and maybe music. That works for any people really... a group that’s going to be available... [and] want [to go].” Partner

If Rainbow Services were to look into working with other age groups where people are at risk of isolation of loneliness, these may include:

- young new mums (aged 18 – 24)
- individuals with mobility limitations
- individuals with health issues
- individuals recently divorced or separated (within the last two years)
- individuals living without children at home (‘empty nesters’) and retirees
- individuals recently bereaved (within the last six months to two years) (British Red Cross and Co-Op, 2016).

4. Conclusion

The overall conclusion is given in terms of the outcomes of the evaluation. These are outlined below.

To identify why the model applied is working so well, and what are the reasons behind this

The social groups run by Rainbow Services are designed around the participants- giving them control over what they do, this means that they meet the needs of the participants. They also provide a source of emotional and informational support, but importantly also give rise to the opportunity for social interaction which may help to promote mental well-being. The feeling of 'neighbourhood' or 'community' gives an older person a sense of place and belonging which, in turn, might alleviate feelings of loneliness and social isolation. It is encouraging to see that there appears to be a genuine appetite for rekindling the sense of community in Harlow that people often assume has gone.

Volunteers' involvement in the local community typically represents a reciprocal exchange. This gives the volunteer the opportunity to socialise, maintain a sense of social validation and usefulness through giving back to the community, and to get to listen to the stories the older people tell and the information they can share. The volunteers may also play a surveillance role for older individuals who attend their clubs; for example, noticing a decline in the physical ability of the older person, or checking everything's ok if they don't attend the club.

Regional and geographical factors do influence and come to bear on people's social worlds and the ways people use services. Locality alongside age and gender are likely to play a role in Rainbows' project being widely used and popular. Yet, the positive findings of Rainbows' model is in line with other programmes in different regions (Horsfall, 2016). Thus, while the project's success will be influenced by geographical factors amongst others, the literature suggests this is not a primary reason for the project's success. Method, people's needs and wishes, and the projects activities appear to be more significant than regional features.

To explore whether the model could be applied to other demographics and locations.

It was felt that all across the country there would be older people feeling lonely and isolated, and that the model could be applied to other locations. When applying elsewhere, careful consideration would need to be taken to the locations of the groups and the selection of volunteers. The community builders also need to have good connections with the local community, and an awareness of other local organisations both for partnership working and to provide the signposting role that supports participants.

There was recognition that loneliness and isolation does not just affect older people. People suggested that other age groups such as young mums and 'empty nesters' could also benefit from socialising with others going through a similar experience. Whilst these groups would also rely on a convenient community location and friendly volunteers, careful considerations would need to be around timings as some people may work or have other commitments.

To identify other similar models within and outside of Essex.

It has been difficult to identify other similar models, as an important aspect of ABCD is that it is designed around the assets of the local population. As a result, projects which focus on reducing isolation and loneliness in older people do so in different ways.

The approach used by Time to Shine is similar to that of the Community Builder Project. Both projects are aimed at isolated older people, utilise an ABCD approach and involve social activities at community venues.

Both projects are supportive, friendly and social. The lessons learnt from the evaluation of the Time to Shine involved the advertising methods, community involvement and challenging and informational activities. Overall the community builder project encompasses the lessons learnt from the Leeds Community Connect project.

To assess the sustainability of the project.

The sustainability of the clubs has been evidenced by the ones that already run independently by volunteers. These volunteers have the confidence to run the club with little input from the Rainbow Services team. Despite this, the volunteers know that they have that support should they need information or advice. Any new groups would likely need an external force with partnerships to support the groups, to increase participation and to initially support the volunteers.

The outings and events which are organised by Rainbow as part of the project, require a lot of time to organise, and would therefore rely on an organisation such as Rainbow Services overseeing. These have been very popular with the club members, who would miss these if they became no longer available.

To identify outcomes of the project.

The outcomes the evaluation has measured are soft outcomes, which are based on changing attitudes or behaviours. The qualitative element of the evaluation helped to identify these outcomes, which is important as they provide detail on the difference the project has made to the people who attend. The monitoring forms designed by Rainbow Services, represent this change in a numerical format, whilst the attendance data shows the broad picture of the number of people that the club is supporting.

5. Suggestions

From the findings of the evaluation, we have come up with some suggestions for the future of the project.

- Learning from the Time to Shine project found that conventional methods of advertising do not reach those that are disproportionately affected by loneliness. This was also evidenced in our evaluation findings; therefore, the project should consider how to reach people who are disproportionally affected by loneliness.
- There is lots of evidence that volunteering benefits the volunteer, as well as the person being helped, the project should continue to build opportunities to prevent loneliness through volunteering.
- It was evident in the evaluation that Rainbow Services are running at capacity for the project. Existing volunteers could take on a mentoring role and share best practice with new volunteers and groups, to help improve sustainability and reduce the pressure on Rainbow Services.
- Intergenerational programmes recognise older people as valuable assets in the community and promote the transfer of knowledge to the next generation. Rainbow Services should continue to expand intergenerational work to promote the social capital of both older and younger generations to foster knowledge and understanding, and to reduce the stigma around loneliness and older people.
- The evaluation has identified that there may be the opportunity for Rainbow Services to obtain referral data from the Community Agents. This would indicate how many of their clients who have been identified as lonely are/could benefit from the project.

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7. Appendices

Appendix A

Possible questions for staff

- Tell me a bit about who you are and how you came to be involved in the community builder project?
- How did you set up the groups?
- Were there any challenges setting up the groups?
- What do you feel are the benefits of the group?
- And do you think there are any downsides?
- Are there any factors that make it difficult for people to attend the groups?
- Are the activities being performed as planned?
- Is the project reaching the intended target population?
- Is the project reaching the intended number of participants?
- How satisfied are the participants with their involvement in this project?
- How should the planned activities be modified to work better?
- What changes were expected?
- Are the activities leading to the expected outcomes?
- Are there any unexpected outcomes?
- What does isolation mean to you and what are the ways it impacts people most?
- Did the project meet the needs that led to this project? Do those needs still exist?
- Are there any other related needs that have arisen that the project did not address?
- Did you experience any changes as a result of the project? Are the changes positive?
- What lessons can we learn from the way in which the project is unfolding?
- What could be the long-term impacts of this work?
- What could have been done differently to complete the project more effectively?
- What key changes should be made to the project to enhance achievement of objectives?
- What outcomes should be considered if an organisation wants to repeat this or conduct a similar project?
- What are the effects of the project on Rainbow Services? (e.g., organisational pride, enhanced networking, and partnerships)?

Possible questions for volunteers

- Tell me a bit about who yourself, and how you came to be involved in the community builder project?
- Why did you want to volunteer?
- What did you want to get out of volunteering?
- What do you get out of volunteering and is it as you expected?
- How/are you supported by staff?
- What do you feel are the benefits of the group?
- And do you think there are any downsides?
- What have you enjoyed most/ least about your volunteering?

- Would you encourage others to volunteer?
- What does 'community' mean to you?
- What does isolation mean to you and what are the ways it impacts people most?

Possible questions for participants

- How did you hear about the group and what made you want to attend?
- How long have you been coming?
- Do you like coming to the group?
- Have you been to any other community groups similar to this? If so, what makes this one different?
- What did you hope to gain from coming?
- Has attending the group allowed you to pursue new activities?
- Has attending the group encouraged you to do other things outside of the group?
- Is there anything that makes it difficult for you to attend the groups?
- Is there anything you would like to change/improve?
- Would you encourage others to attend the groups?
- Have you made friends coming to the group?
- Do you have any other comments regarding your expectations or experience of the group?

Possible questions for partners

- Tell me a bit about who you are and what your role is.
- How did you get involved in the Community Builder project?
- How does your organisation/you support the project?
- How does the project meet your organisations objectives/priorities?
- What were your expectations?
- Has there been any change in your service in relation to the project?
 - Are the changes positive or negative?
 - Do you record these changes (i.e. increased referrals)?
 - If not, can you give me a sense of how you think things have changed?
- Has the outcome surprised you?
- Have the benefits outweighed any disadvantages? (i.e. increased demand but have a low capacity to deal with it)
- The project targets loneliness and isolation, - how do you think it's impacted this? Have you noticed any specific changes?
- Would you change anything about the project?
- What could be the long-term impacts of this work?
- Have you enjoyed being part of the project?
- Has the project affected you personally?
- Do you think the model could be applied to other demographics or geographical locations?