



# **MAKING CONNECTIONS** **WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS**

**Prepared for the Inner South-east  
Metropolitan Partnership**

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## Introduction

This document captures the proceedings from the afternoon workshop at the *Making Connections* event, held on 22 August 2019. The document summarises the discussion among workshop attendees about how social isolation and loneliness can be addressed in the Inner South-east Metropolitan Region. It is intended to inform the Inner South-east Metropolitan Partnership's strategic thinking about the implementation of a formal approach to combatting social isolation and loneliness in the Inner South-east Metropolitan Region.

## Background

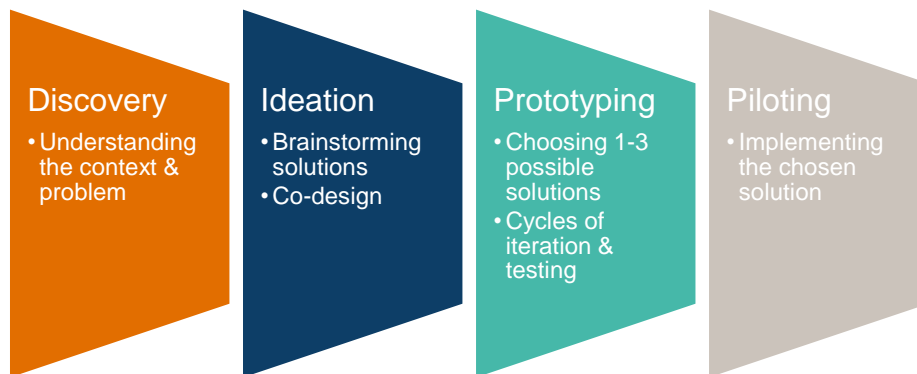
The *Making Connections* event was held on Thursday 22 August at the Hawthorn Arts Centre. Hosted by the Inner South-east Metropolitan Partnership, the event consisted of two parts: a morning conference and an afternoon workshop. The morning conference sought to explore social isolation and loneliness as an emerging physical and mental health issue, share the lived experience of people experiencing social isolation and loneliness, as well as present current research from leading experts in the field.

Insights from the morning conference were then incorporated into an afternoon workshop at which people with lived experience, service providers and government representatives undertook an ideation exercise to propose solutions to combatting social isolation and loneliness in the Inner South-east Region. In addition to ideating solutions, workshop attendees developed a series of principles that should be enforced when undertaking meaningful action to design and implement these solutions.

## Ideation

The workshop drew on a Human-centred Design process (see Figure 1) to reflect on insights from the morning conference and to begin thinking about possible solutions – ideation. To guide the process of turning reflection into ideation, workshop participants developed How Might We questions: open-ended questions that target an opportunity or challenge associated with the broader problem context. The series of How Might We questions developed in the workshop can be found in Attachment 1. How Might We questions.

**Figure 1. Human-centred Design Process**



## The Social Isolation and Loneliness Report

Preparation for the workshop was heavily informed by the Social Isolation and Loneliness Project. The project was an initiative delivered by the Inner South-east Metropolitan Partnership Working Group. Its aim was to capture and communicate the stories of people experiencing social isolation and loneliness within the Inner South-east Metropolitan Region. Thus, the Social Isolation and Loneliness Project provided the Discovery Phase (see Figure 1) that underpinned the ideation, with key insights and How Might We questions from the project shared at the morning conference. Key insights to inspire ideation were also drawn from other speakers and panellists at the morning conference.

## Key insights and priorities

Workshop participants shared their key insights from participating in the morning conference portion of the *Making Connections* event. The insights are grouped into the following themes:

- Social isolation and loneliness are **complex and nuanced**, including social, structural and psychological factors.
- Loneliness is always remedied by **people**, requiring emotional intelligence as well as the ability to extend gratitude and kindness.
- **Stigma** is a major barrier to overcoming social isolation and loneliness.
- **Social media and technological developments** are inevitable and should be harnessed as tools in designing solutions.
- **Transitions** in people's lives can act as a point of social isolation and loneliness, requiring skills and learning to support.
- **Affordability** is a major barrier to connecting to community.
- There is a need to **test and evaluate** approaches for overcoming social isolation and loneliness from the solution-consumer perspective.

The key insights coupled with How Might We questions developed by participants (see Attachment 1. How Might We questions), were used to highlight four priorities for tackling social isolation and loneliness. There are:

1. Greater cross-service collaboration
2. Building community norms
3. Improving accessibility to clubs, services and active volunteering
4. Celebrating gratitude

In breakout groups, the participants then proceeded to ideate solutions within each of these priority areas (see Priority 1: Greater cross-service collaboration to Priority 4: Celebrating gratitude).

## Priority 1: Greater cross-service collaboration

How might we stimulate greater cross-service collaboration where the varied needs of individuals are at the centre of service provision?

Who might this benefit?



- Primary Health Networks
- Community health centres
- Local government
- State government
- Neighbourhood houses
- U3A and similar organisations
- Rotaries and probus clubs

How might we do it?<sup>1</sup>



- By increasing networking opportunities for service providers
- By using social media and technology platforms to increase awareness of what is available
- By using social prescription to connect people experiencing social isolation and loneliness to services
- By including social prescription into GP position descriptions
- By connecting health services with community organisations
- By working with the Royal District Nursing Service, Home and Community Care and Department of Health and Human Services
- By building on existing platforms and community directories held by local governments

What do we hope to achieve?



- Health services and community organisations have increased capacity to support people experiencing social isolation and loneliness

<sup>1</sup> A fundamental question that the group stumbled upon was who would act as the 'backbone' leading a networked approach to cross-service collaboration, especially as there are multiple local government areas within the Inner South-east Metropolitan Region.

## Priority 2: Building community norms

How might we build community capacity, behaviour and norms to look out for others?

Who might this benefit?



- Older people
- People experiencing homelessness
- The broader community
- The Victorian Police
- Emergency services
- Crisis service providers

How might we do it?



- By sharing stories and using storytelling in the Inner South-east Region regions to increase awareness and breakdown myths
- By leveraging on RUOK day
- By using local spaces to connect community members
- By building on existing local assets (such as adding welcome signs to neighbourhood watch networks and working with local libraries and cafes)
- By working to establish trust in the local community
- By bringing community together at pop-up art or music events, community gardens and using pets
- By leveraging on how work acts as a connector in community

What do we hope to achieve?



- Community response and not just a reliance on service providers or government
- Compassionate communities
- A place-based community response program
- Building community connection before a crisis



## Priority 3: Improving accessibility to clubs, services and active volunteering

### How might we harness volunteering opportunities?

#### Who might this benefit?



- People experiencing or at risk of loneliness
- Community organisations and their staff
- Services providers (by relieving the pressure on them)
- Broader community
- Other volunteers

#### How might we do it?



- Upskilling volunteers and community organisations to understand, identify and address social isolation and loneliness
- To undertake social prescription that actively connects people experiencing loneliness and social isolation to opportunities that interest them
- Endorsing live policy around inclusion and diversity
- Establishing a place, person or platform with information to connect people to opportunities
- By harnessing online volunteering opportunities and platforms (and learning from platforms such as “Crush the Mid-terms”)

#### What do we hope to achieve?



- A new culture of volunteering
- A strengths-based perspective of overcoming social isolation and loneliness
- A change in funder objectives to incentivise outcomes that improve social connection

## Priority 4: Celebrating gratitude

### How might we celebrate, share and reach with stories of gratitude?

#### Who might this benefit?



- Individuals
- Young people
- Parents (especially mothers with young children or babies)
- Neighbourhoods
- Workplaces
- Volunteers
- Professions that are expected to give (i.e. teachers, nurses, carers)

#### How might we do it?



- By aligning with existing movements (such as volunteering opportunities, carers and One Good Street)
- By using social media campaigns to showcase pathways of joy and gratefulness for others
- Through performance plans for CEOs that are embedded in gratitude
- By enlisting social leaders and influencers who can model desired behaviours
- By teaching children about showing gratitude

#### What do we hope to achieve?



- Culture change in the Inner South-east Metropolitan Region

## Principles for solution design

Following the ideation activity, workshop participants developed a series of principles that should underpin any action taken to address social isolation and loneliness. These principles are intended to guide future thinking about the type of approach best suited to designing solutions for overcoming social isolation and loneliness in the Inner South-east Region.

The principles, as listed below, indicated that workshop participants valued a collaborative, human-centred approach that place lived experience at the heart of solution design.

### Principles

1. Adopt a positive framing and strengths-based, multi-sectoral approach to overcoming social isolation and loneliness.
2. Recognise that different people need different solutions and so, the solution beneficiaries need to be involved in implementing and governing the design process.
3. Include the most marginalised and disadvantaged in the community in order to put the people closest to the pain closer to the power.
4. Address the inequity of power to ensure authentic participation and the input of different voices in the design process.
5. Instil kindness and respect into the process by putting humanity first.
6. Prioritise hearing the stories of others involved in the process.
7. Build trust with, and between, stakeholders.
8. Build on and with local assets by collaborating, not competing.
9. Work towards a shared outcome.
10. Measure the impact of designed solutions so there is evidence of what works.

## Reflection

Throughout the workshop, it was evident that volunteering and life transitions were overarching themes influencing the ideation. Although volunteering was explicitly identified in the How Might We question selected for Priority 3, improving accessibility to clubs, services and active volunteering, workshop participants felt that volunteering was equally relevant to greater cross-service collaboration (Priority 1), building community norms (Priority 2), and celebrating gratitude (Priority 4).

The impact of life transitions on a person's experience of social isolation or loneliness was a key finding highlighted at the beginning of the workshop (see Key insights and priorities) and was revisited when developing How Might We questions (see Attachment 1. How Might We questions). Workshop participants felt that transitions in people's lives can act as a point of social isolation and loneliness, and as such, requires skills and learning to support.

The significance that workshop participants associated with volunteering and life transitions mirrors findings in the Social Isolation and Loneliness Report. Volunteering was discussed by community members who participated in consultations for the Social Isolation and Loneliness Project. Community members identified volunteering as a source of community connectedness, especially following a period of social isolation. Therefore, volunteering acted as an enabler to overcome social isolation and loneliness.

Similarly, gaps in servicing life transitions was one of the four key insights proposed in the Social Isolation and Loneliness Report. The report recognised that the main causes of social isolation and loneliness identified in its community consultations were associated with significant transitions in a person's life. This included graduating high school, graduating university, having your first child and entering into retirement.

## Summary

The *Making Connections* workshop identified four priorities for addressing social isolation and loneliness in the Inner South-east Metropolitan Region. These are greater cross-service collaboration, building community norms, improving accessibility to clubs, services and active volunteering, and celebrating gratitude. Through a process of ideation, a series of prospective solutions targeting each priority was developed and principles to underpin their implementation were established. The principles indicated that the people with lived experience, service providers and government representatives engaged in the workshop valued working collaboratively to draw on the insights of lived experience and service providers to combat social isolation and loneliness in the Inner South East Metropolitan Region.

## Attachment 1. How Might We questions

How Might We questions were developed during the workshop and were considered alongside How Might We questions posed in the Social Isolation and Loneliness Report in order to identify the four priorities that frame these workshop proceedings:

- How might we conceptualise and alleviate loneliness in the modern (and future) world with more travel and transitions?
- How might we build community capacity, behaviour and norms to look out for others?
- How might we build resilience and personal resources for people to traverse life milestones, dilemmas and transitions?
- How might we reduce stigma and normalise loneliness?
- How might we celebrate, share and reach with stories of gratitude (both big and small)?
- How might we design physical spaces to facilitate social connections and wellbeing?
- How might we take global do's and don'ts and locally bring them to life through all levels of the system to address root causes of social isolation and loneliness?
- How might we address loneliness using a health promote framework?
- How might we connect health and human services and community/groups/sectors to support individuals experiencing social isolation and loneliness?
- How might we systemically refer and connect services and community groups (e.g. U3A)?
- How might we activate volunteering to address loneliness in a way that benefits the volunteers and the person being helped?
- How might we upskill and build the capacity of volunteers and community organisations to support and welcome lonely people (and those at risk)?
- How might we Increase the number and diversity of opportunities for purposeful activities for people to engage in?