Hastings Community Network – 21st January 2020

The Impact of Loneliness and Isolation for all in Hastings and St Leonards

"Thank you, HCN and HVA for a wonderful morning! I was very inspired leaving this event on Tuesday and will be passing information on to colleagues. I must admit, when leaving the White Rock Theatre, on a beautiful sunny morning to walk back to work along the prom, I was full of smiles and hellos for people and I believe it did cheer both them and myself up a great deal – connecting is so important!"

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Acknowledgements

Hastings Community Network (HCN) Executive Committee would like to thank all who made this event such a success.

Thank you to our inspirational Keynote Speaker, Andy Nazer, for setting the scene for the morning and to all who hosted the conversations which have informed this report and will shape future actions.

Thanks also to all who helped plan and facilitate the morning and to the team at The White Rock Theatre who were there to ensure things ran smoothly on the day.

To all who participated in the event, your experience and passion continue to ensure that HCN events are valuable and make a real difference to the experience of people living and working in Hastings and St Leonards.

Thank you!

The Impact of Loneliness and Isolation for all in Hastings and St Leonards

Introduction

HCN is an overarching network comprising of local voluntary community and faith groups, networks and forums. It offers communication channels between the voluntary and community sector and those who make decisions locally. We identify ways in which members can participate and influence decisions affecting the delivery of services.

HCN links with Hastings Borough Council, East Sussex County Council and is a member of the Local Strategic Partnership.

HCN events take place every 12 weeks and aim to create meaningful opportunities to share ideas, gain inspiration and collaborate in new and exciting ways. **These sessions are open to all and bring together participants from across voluntary, community, public and independent sectors.** HCN's are either:

- **Market place and "open-mic" sessions**, which are flexible and predominately unstructured. Offering a full morning of informal networking and relationship building. Follow this links to read more about the April event [Outcomes from the Open Mic networking event - April 2019](#) or
- **Themed sessions arranged around 'Hot Topics'** identified by HCN members and/or through feedback at previous events. Over the last year Hot Topics that have been explored include Social Prescribing, Ageing Well and Community Safety. To view outcomes from these events over the last year please follow the links below:
  - [Outcomes from the 'How Can Improving the Environment Benefit Our Health & Quality of Life'](#) October 2019
  - [Outcomes from the Ageing Well networking event - July 2019](#)
  - [Outcomes from the Social Prescribing event - January 2019](#)

Each event emphasises the connectivity between all 'Hot Topics' and encourages participants to think, and work across boundaries, build on shared resources and value local assets.

This report captures the activity, connections and next steps identified from the event held on 21st January 2020 at the White Rock Theatre in Hastings.

As with previous reports, it doesn't make recommendations, or draw conclusions, from what was shared making this a flexible resource to build and inform future work and agendas for further debate.

Overview of the Event

The January 2020 HCN brought together 68 representatives from across the community, voluntary, independent and public sectors to explore the 'Hot Topic'

The Impact of Loneliness and Isolation for all in Hastings and St Leonards

Of those that completed evaluation forms (37 completed on the day) around 20 participants had not attended an HCN event before.

42 different organisations and groups attended (listed in appendix 1). As identified in previous reports many of the paid workers and volunteers attending Hastings and St Leonards Locality Networking events are also local residents, adding value to the connections made and the quality and relevance of the information gathered.

Networking

All HCN events prioritise networking and information sharing with opportunities to build connections and increase collaborative working across sectors. Gains identified by participants included:

"The belief that there are many amazing people in this town doing amazing things"

"Good connections and conversations and new ideas about how to lessen the impact of isolation"

"More connections and avenues to explore for my projects"

"Thinking about working collaboratively with other organisations with a common goal"

"Meet lots of interesting people who are providing fantastic services that I hadn't heard of before"

Setting the scene

Steve Manwaring, Hastings Voluntary Action CEO and Tracey Rose in her role as HCN Executive Member, opened the event welcoming participants and describing how the theme for the day had been identified as a 'Hot Topic' by HCN members and through feedback from previous HCN events.

Teresa Flower, East Sussex County Council Locality Link Worker for Hastings and St Leonards, then introduced the agenda for the morning; stressing the importance of the networking and conversations that everyone would be participating in and the time that had been allocated to this throughout the morning.

Teresa then handed over to the Keynote Speaker for the morning Andy Nazer, Campaign Manager from the Campaign to End Loneliness.

Andy's inspiring and informative presentation can be viewed on the HCN pages of the HVA website

[The Impact of Loneliness and Isolation for all in Hastings and St Leonards](#)

More information about the Campaign to End Loneliness, and a link to the short film Andy showed "Let's Talk More" can be found by following this link
https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/

"It was an absolute pleasure to meet you all and lend my support to help make Hastings and St Leonards a more connected community"

(Andy Nazer from the Campaign to End Loneliness)

Conversations

The morning then progressed immediately into the conversation element of the morning. Introduced by Teresa this was loosely based around the theory of 'Open Space' which is underpinned by one law (The Law of Two feet) which states:
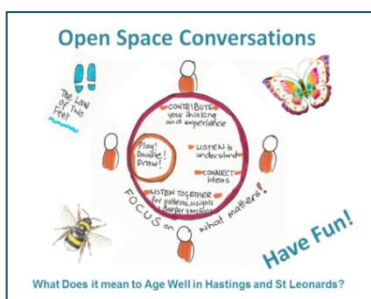
"If, during the course of the gathering, any person finds themselves in a situation where they are neither learning nor contributing, they must use their feet and go to some more productive place."

The conversations for the morning were identified in advance to save time on the day. This approach had proved successful at previous events and the venue was chosen as it seemed to lend itself to this style of engagement.

Conversation hosts were identified based on their areas of expertise and interests. Co-hosting, working across sectors, was actively encouraged. A meeting was held with hosts at the venue prior to the event to discuss themes and jointly agree practicalities of this element of the morning. Hosts decided their own conversation questions and what activities they would use on the day. The following conversations were hosted with more detail included later in this report.

1. **Informal Carers: How can we reduce isolation for unpaid carers and those they care for?**
   Hosts: Jo Egan (Care for the Carers) and Julie skinner (Association of Carers)
2. **Older People: 300,000 people aged 65 or over in England have not had a conversation with family or friends for a month' (AGE UK findings 2019). How can we as partners work together to address loneliness?**
   Hosts: Debby Anderson (HVA) and Ruairi McCourt (Age UK East Sussex)
3. **Refugees and Asylum Seekers: Migration is often blamed for all the problems in the UK. How can we make those in the UK from other countries feel welcome?**
   Host: Marc Turczanski (HVA)
4. **Parents: I've got a new baby, why should I be lonely?**
   Hosts: Donna Meenan (ESCC) and Tracy Rose (FSN)
5. **Health: How can communities help us to redesign services to reduce social isolation for people living with long term health issues?**
   Hosts: Fran Johnson and Alison Walters (Macmillan), Martin Symons (St Michaels Hospice) and Martin Williams (ESCC)
6. **Mental Health: How do isolation and loneliness impact on an individual's mental health & emotional wellbeing?**
   Hosts: Jacy Kilvert (Mind), Catherine Lulham and Caroline Castle (Southdown)

7. **Housing Issues:** How could public sector services work more closely with the voluntary sector to reduce isolation and loneliness?
   Hosts: Jane Healey (HBC), Dave Perry (Seaview) and Kerry farmer (ESCC)

8. **Addiction and Recovery:** How does stigma cause isolation and loneliness and what can we do about it?
   Hosts: Kanna Inglestone (ESRA) and Jen Wells (ESCC)

9. **Employment:** How does your employment status impact feelings of isolation and loneliness?
   Hosts: Julie Abson (SCDA), Rosemary Millward (Southdown) and Sophie Parsons (Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust)

10. **Young People:** How can we work together to reduce isolation and loneliness in young people?
    Hosts: Alan Foster (HBC) and Su Barnicoat –Hill (HVA)

Feedback, next steps, closing remarks and evaluation

To bring the event to close participants were invited to:

- hear feedback from the conversation hosts (recorded below);
- receive updates on the previous networks
- consider planned next steps (recorded in full later in this report);
- complete evaluation forms which will inform future events and have contributed to this report:
- share information about projects and activities using 🔵ESCIS   www.escis.org.uk and
- book places on future events through the HVA events page: https://hastingsvoluntaryaction.org.uk/events

  o HCN Consultation on the HBC Budget, 23rd January 2020, 10 am – 12 noon at Jackson Hall
  o Volunteer Co-ordinators Forum, 12th February 2020, 9.30 am – 12.30 pm East Sussex College Hastings
  o Marketplace and Open Mic Event , Wednesday 8th April 2020, 9.30 am – 1.30 pm at East Sussex College Hastings

All slides from the morning can be seen on the HCN pages of the HVA website:

[The Impact of Loneliness and Isolation for all in Hastings and St Leonards](#)

The Conversations

The ten conversations were hosted throughout the morning (listed above). Feedback included:

"Fascinating conversations - clear that there were a lot of shared views - need to harness the energy"

"Great conversations that have generated connections, energy and fabulous ideas for future work"

This section of the report gives a brief overview of what the conversations highlighted. **Where indicated further information is recorded in Appendix 2**

Host input highlights some key themes from the conversations but, in the spirit of the event, we are leaving it for you to draw your own conclusions from what you experienced on the day, or what you read in this report and the accompanying appendices.

1. **Informal Carers: How can we reduce isolation for unpaid carers and those they care for? Hosts: Jo Egan (Care for the Carers) and Julie skinner (Association of Carers)**

   Host feedback: Jo and Julie shared some key points from the conversation which included:

   - It's important to recognise the person as a carer and not just as a relative and the impact this can have. Carers are often lonely and isolated and don't know there is support available from organisations such as Care for the Carers and Association of Carers.
   - Carers resist being called carers saying that they are husbands/wives/family, so it's not as simple as just having written information available for carers, because carers may not realise that the information is for them – there also need to be conversations with carers to help them to acknowledge their caring role and understand that there is support available. There is free carers awareness training available (from Care for the Carers) to help frontline staff/volunteers to have these conversations.
   - There needs to be a greater awareness of what services there are out there for carers – hospital workers and GP's often don't mention these. For example, Care for the Carers has a young carers counselling service in Hastings and Rother, but referrals have been low because young carers are so hidden – we need all local services to be identifying and referring hidden carers, such as young carers, to the support that's available.
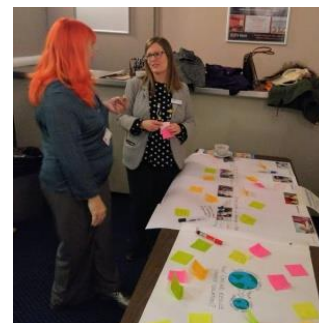
- Solution for some isolated carers – digital media, Skype calls etc.

Notes from this conversation activity are included in appendix 2.

2. **Older People:** **300,000 people aged 65 or over in England have not had a conversation with family or friends for a month' (AGE UK findings 2019). How can we as partners work together to address loneliness?** **Hosts: Debby Anderson (HVA) and Ruairi McCourt (Age UK East Sussex)**

Host feedback:

- How can partners work together to tackle loneliness and isolation
- There can be a stereotyping of how services for older people are
- There are more older people living in poverty which can cause isolation
- Solution – more community groups and centres
- Need affordable community transport
- Co-production with community to plug gaps in services
- Solution – Online conversations, social media to make connections

3. **Refugees and Asylum Seekers:** **Migration is often blamed for all the problems in the UK. How can we make those in the UK from other countries feel welcome?** **Host: Marc Turczanski (HVA)**

Host feedback:

It is more difficult to be a migrant now than ever. People can feel unwelcome. Asylum seekers need to know how to participate in communities. Community work alongside migrants needs to be friendlier – people need to see past labels and break down barriers.

- The need to make migrant communities feel part the wider local communities by encouraging them to participate in civic life through volunteering, work and/or other social activities
- Acknowledging that since the EU referendum opinions about migration are strongly divided across the whole of the UK. There is a need to "fact check" or even challenge some of the more controversial statements coming from authoritative sources including central government
- Helping those who have entered the UK as migrants subject to immigration control to understand their entitlements helping them make more informed decisions and to feel more part of civic life.

4. **Parents:** **I've got a new baby, why should I be lonely? Hosts: Donna Meenan (ESCC) and Tracy Rose (FSN)**

Host feedback:

- Using ESCIS, Tracey has undertaken a mapping exercise of the children's services in Hastings
- Difficulties for new parents can be just to get out of the door with a baby or young child or with more than 1 child.
- Parents are not prepared for the way they are feeling once they have their baby
- Some new parents worry that they are going to be judged because of their age/gender etc.
- Nurseries and groups can be expensive
- Solutions – Make people feel welcome in a new environment, buddy/peer support, live digital connections for when people cannot get out, join a group where the people have a common approach/skills/hobbies

Notes from this conversation activity are included in appendix 2

5. **Health: How can communities help us to redesign services to reduce social isolation for people living with long term health issues? Hosts: Fran Johnson and Alison Walters (Macmillan), Martin Symons (St Michaels Hospice) and Martin Williams (ESCC)**

Host feedback:

- **Normalise illness:** This is quite a big ask but something that we in the VCS try to avoid talking about in a negative way. So the point here is for all of us to mind our language, like 'living with' as opposed to 'suffering from. See the person/ the individual

- **Education/enabling people to know what is out there such as groups etc.:** This is
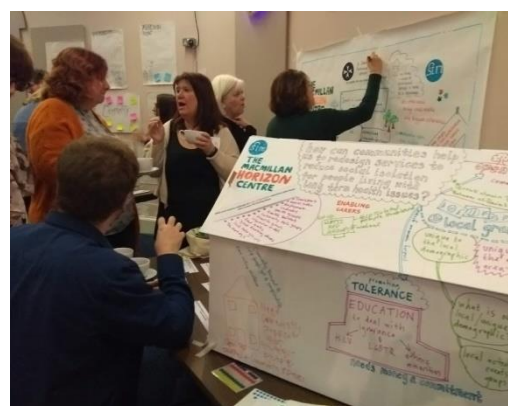
something that it seems we all struggle with. A service needs to be accessible and known about and a one stop shop. Often dynamic resources are just left to languish rather than being constantly updated when services close etc. They are only as good as how up to date the information remains.

- **Understanding how people want to live:** It would be good to know how community living will help people to have more connected lives in the future. For example self build community projects seem more appealing but this is linked to the wider design and town planning world.

Photographs of conversation activity and graphic recording are included in appendix 2.

6. **Mental Health: How do isolation and loneliness impact on an individual's mental health & emotional wellbeing? Hosts: Jacy Kilvert (Mind), Catherine Lulham and Caroline Castle (Southdown)**

Host feedback:

- **Questions bring more questions**: We explored the challenges in ascertaining a solution & recognised the need for a multi- service approach (because one thing does not work for all).
- **The first experience in a new group needs to be positive:** Isolation & Loneliness can be exacerbated if an individual has had a negative interaction with a group/ support service. Some individuals are unable to access opportunities to integrate with others due to anxiety that has developed as a result of previous negative experiences.
- **Tap into skills/hobbies and offer encouragement:** Our group suggested that individuals can tap into engagement opportunities and interaction with others through hobby groups in the community.
- **Bring back values – skill sharing/communication/talking/break down barriers:** We discussed the receding social value in making connections and conversing with others, how there needs to be more promotion of the benefits of talking to others face- to- face and the connection between this loneliness & isolation.

Notes from this conversation activity, and exploration of each of these bullet points, are included in appendix 2

7. **Housing Issues: How could public sector services work more closely with the voluntary sector to reduce isolation and loneliness? Hosts: Jane Healey (HBC), Dave Perry (Seaview) and Kerry farmer (ESCC)**

Host feedback:

- Social isolation and poor housing is linked
- If housing issues can be worked out together, the rest fall into place
- Intensive work is best
- Councils and the voluntary sector need to work together
- Statutory services need more information about what's out there
- Work need to be person-centred/really listen to people's needs
- Statutory/public/private services need to work together for better understanding of people's needs
- There should be an increased awareness of the role of the private sector in reducing isolation and loneliness
- Social Prescribing should play a bigger role to ensure that people are able to become less isolated - this can mean that their confidence grows and they are in a better position to deal with the other issues they face including housing
- Limited information sharing can cause issues - not all the info is available for support workers working with an individual

8. **Addiction and Recovery: How does stigma cause isolation and loneliness and what can we do about it? Hosts: Kanna Inglestone (ESRA) and Jen Wells (ESCC)**

Host feedback:

- Addressing stigma is foundational to tackling the isolation of people with addiction or in recovery.
- Systems must incorporate flexibility. Benefits cannot be cancelled or services withdrawn for one missed appointment or relapse – as this ignores the chaotic nature of clients lives and further isolates individuals.
- Care homes and older people's services need training to deal with addiction and its effects as a whole generation of life-long substance misusers enter the care system.

Notes from this conversation activity are included in appendix 2.

9. **Employment:** How does your employment status impact feelings of isolation and loneliness? **Hosts: Julie Abson (SCDA), Rosemary Millward (Southdown) and Sophie Parsons (Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust)**

Host feedback:

- Discussions around both isolation/loneliness experienced when unemployed and when in employment.
- Spoke about the increase of roles where people may be working from home or lone working and feeling disconnected or not supported by their colleagues. Work has become less sociable in some areas due to remote working/ use of computers. We also spoke about unsociable hours working and night shifts and the impact this can have on people's wellbeing.
- Discussion around unemployment, the stigma faced by people around this and loss of confidence that can build up quickly.
- Talked about the value for some people of volunteer roles to their wellbeing and confidence and feeling of connection. Importance of people feeling valued when they are unemployed and being supported to identify and use their skills, maybe in voluntary opportunities or finding paid work.
- Talked about the benefits that working can bring - financial independence and stability, sense of purpose, meaningful role, routine and structure, connection with people - social opportunities.

Notes from this conversation activity are included in appendix 2.

10. Young People: How can we work together to reduce isolation and loneliness in young people? Hosts: Alan Foster (HBC) and Su Barnicoat –Hill (HVA)
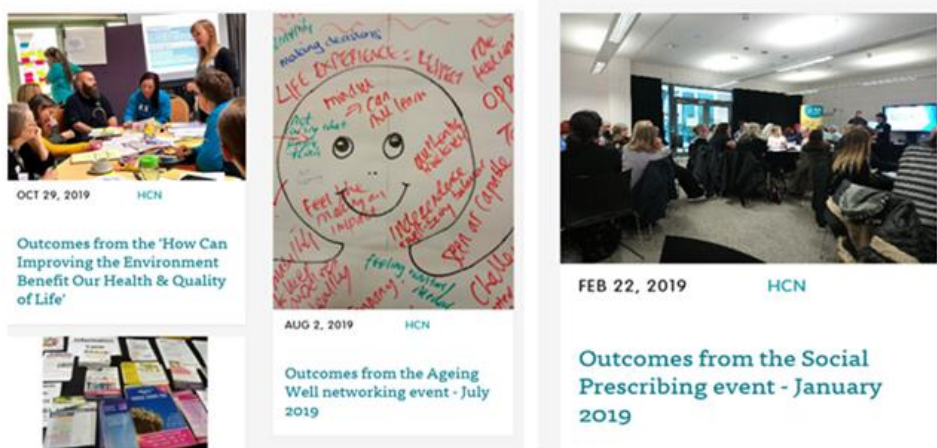
Host feedback:

- A way for young people to avoid isolation & loneliness is to encourage their involvement in the community. Although there are a lot of services/groups out there some young people are not confident about going to them - they need accurate and up to date info so they know what organisations can offer them.

  - It is important to try different ways to engage with young people

- More use needs to be made of social media etc. it can be the best way to involve young people. Together with physical leaflets/posters left where young people go.

  - Are we using the right language to reach young people?

- There are benefits to inter-generational activities. Trust and understanding can be developed about the diversity of all ages when they are brought together.
- There is willingness locally for these things to happen. Everyone at the event could see value in young people becoming volunteers or activists in order to reduce loneliness and isolation.

Summary notes from this conversation activity are included in appendix 2.

Before moving on to next steps Steve shared an update on the outcomes to date from previous HCN events.

Updates from Previous HCN Events

OCT 29, 2019 HCN

Outcomes from the 'How Can Improving the Environment Benefit Our Health & Quality of Life'

AUG 2, 2019 HCN

Outcomes from the Ageing Well networking event - July 2019

FEB 22, 2019 HCN

Outcomes from the Social Prescribing event - January 2019

Outcomes from all HCN events can be viewed at:
https://hastingsvoluntaryaction.org.uk/hcn/news

Emphasis was placed on ensuring that:

- HCN participant's energy, passion and time was not wasted
- That the wealth of experience and knowledge in the room was utilised
- That cross cutting themes were identified and used to ensure a more joined up approach to meeting local needs and wants
- That community assets are recognised and valued
- That important issues, ideas and actions are not forgotten
- That HCN event's provide great opportunities for networking, but also encourage and support shared action.

Next Steps

These networking events are a vital way of keeping in touch, building new connections and "joining the dots" between people ideas and initiatives. They are truly cross sector and positively encourage dialogue. At the end of this morning some next steps were identified. These included:

- The HCN planning group will reflect on outcomes of today's event/ identify actions alongside key contributors

- An HCN report 'The impact of loneliness and isolation for all in Hastings and St Leonards' will be produced and shared widely

- The report will be freely available on the HCN pages of the HVA website

- The report will be presented to Executive Delivery Group (EDG) and the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

- Updates on progress will be shared at future HCN events and cross cutting themes highlighted

Participants were asked to identify what they would do as a result of the mornings networking and conversations on their evaluation forms. This is just a selection of what was shared:

"Sharing with colleagues, being more aware of others and what they need. Discussing more with contacts made today"

"Research further into some of the solutions to look at funding a project"

"Strengthen links with housing"

"Share information with rest of Trustees and expand ideas"

"Already 'made a date' for a follow up meeting and conversation about how to work better together"

"Strengthen and increase partnerships in the community and develop reciprocal relationships"

"Invite someone to talk at team meeting. Refer people to SCDA. Have conversation with clients on becoming a mum, caring responsibilities and how they imagine their retirement"

"Central Hall site/café in Hastings - communicate information about services I have learned about to my team. Find out about Social Prescribing"

"Following up contact at Southdown regarding Employability Project"

"Visiting HVA at Central Hall to find out more and signpost clients to our service and contact with Active Hastings about funding for new project – physical activity and employment"

"Share project/volunteer information with several organisations so people they work with can access our activities"

Appendices

Appendix 1: Organisations/services who attended on the day.

Organisation/Service	Organisation/Service
Active Hastings	Hastings Community Network (HCN)
Adult Social Care (ESCC)	Hastings and Rother Rainbow Alliance Trans Support Group
Age UK East Sussex	Hastings Voluntary Action (HVA)
Association of Carers	Macmillan
Campaign to End Loneliness	Mind in Brighton and Hove
Care for the Carers	People in Partnership
Counselling Plus	Public Health (ESCC)
DWP/ESCC	Quakers
East Sussex Health Care NHS Trust	Rother Voluntary Action
East Sussex County Council	RSPCA
East Sussex County Council (ASC)	Seaview Project
East Sussex County Council (Public Health)	Southdown Community Connectors
East Sussex Families and Carers	Southdown Work and Health
Education Futures Trust (EFT)	St Johns Homeless Service
ESRA	St Michaels Hospice
ETC Sussex	Sussex Community Development Association
Fellowship of Saint Nicholas (FSN)	Sussex Elder Abuse Recovery Service
Groundwork South/Hidden Hastings Heritage	Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
Hastings Seniors Forum	St Johns Ambulance
Hastings and Rother/Eastbourne, Hailsham and Seaford CCGs	Transition Town Hastings and St Leonards
Hastings Borough Council	Thyme to Transform

Appendix 2: Conversations – additional information

Conversation 1: Informal Carers: How can we reduce isolation for unpaid carers and those they care for?

7 Million Carers in the UK (1 in 10). There are 18,000 carers in Hastings & Rother. Unpaid Carers save the economy £132 Billion a Year.

ELDERLY CARERS: Need Respite & Support/Selfish Act to have Time Away/More Practical Support/Health Impact on Carer/Estranged Family Members Not Sharing the Caring Role/Support carers to identify as 'Carers' – they often don't see themselves as carers or prioritise their Needs.

YOUNG CARERS: 1 in 5 are Young Carers/Barriers faced in Identifying young carers/Worry on young shoulders/Isolation from peers/Respite & Befriending/Need for more groups to meet regularly. Often not identified – services need to refer to the support available e.g. East Sussex Young Carers, Care for the Carers, Teen Talk Counselling service in Hastings & Rother.

LGBTQ CARERS: Additional Barriers Faced – Concern about how Inclusive the Services are.

BAME CARERS:

Day Centre's closing down/don't understand culture/Help only from family/Do not admit they are 'Carers'.

WORKING CARERS: Too busy to socialise/won't admit to being lonely/Evening activities or weekends/Online 'Skype' interaction. Support the people being cared for to accept carers having time off – Rehearse the Difficult Conversations! /More resources available to carers-Support Groups, Activity Groups. Volunteers that can help out for a few hours so carers can have time off – to avoid Burn Out/

LONG-TERM CARERS: Activities where the Carer can come along with the person they care for – For free/Accessing local countryside and seaside/Online 'Skype' interaction. Carers often a husband, wife, daughter, so– they lose their identity. A volunteer help them re-define this relationship. Find a friend, neighbour or volunteer from a charity to give the unpaid carer a break.

DEMENTIA CARER: 670,000 Caring for someone with Dementia. Not qualified to care!!/Recognise the complexity of the Guilt Cycle – and the decision to allow support to happen – Create the environment/Course or activity – Start/End dates – All beginners or at the same stage?/Guilt.

END OF LIFE CARERS: Grief – Repercussions/PTSD/Talk about death and dying – reduce the stigma.

Conversation 4: Parents: I've got a new baby, why should I be lonely?

Information gathered from conversation activity

CURRENT ACTIVITY

HOLLINGTON:

Mummy Fit/Baby Ballet – Charge/Totz Club, Hastings Centre/Park Road Toddler Group.

ST LEONARDS:

Park Road Toddler Group/Smarties Toddler Group, St Mathews Church – Charge/ Starlings @Park Road - Free.

HASTINGS TOWN/OLD TOWN:

Baby Sing, Sign & Sensory – Charge/Wriggle Tots Parent & Toddler – Charge/ Family Rhymetime & Storytime, Hastings Library/ Tots & Me, Parent & Toddler Group, Trinity Church, Fridays, 10 – 11.30am.

ORE:

In2Play, The Bridge & Adventure Playground/Starlings Music Group - Free/Calvert Parent & Toddler Group.

BARRIERS & SOLUTIONS – For Parents

BARRIERS:

Depression/Poverty/Lack of Peer Support/Being On Your Own/Groups Can Be 'Cliquey'/Gender Heavy/Social Snobbery/Environment/New to the Area/Stigma of Being Single Parent/Cultural Issues/Stigma/PTSD/Dynamics Within a Group/Being Judged/Competitive/More than One Baby.

SOLUTIONS:

Start a Conversation/Be Brave/Mentoring/Coaching/Join a Group Either Virtually/Face to Face or Both/Sharing Skills – M/F etc. /Find a Hobby/Men Sheds/Slow, Small Steps – Be Persistent/Find Someone to Go With You – Tap Into/Welcoming Environment/Bags of Taste/Be Observant/Listen/Learn From Others/Do not Necessarily Put Same Groups Together – Mix Them Up.

IDEAS FOR PARENTS

Set Up a 'Knitting Natter' Group or 'Friends for Food' or 'Chicks n Chatter' – Café's!

Look for Parents who have Different Age Children.

Buddy.

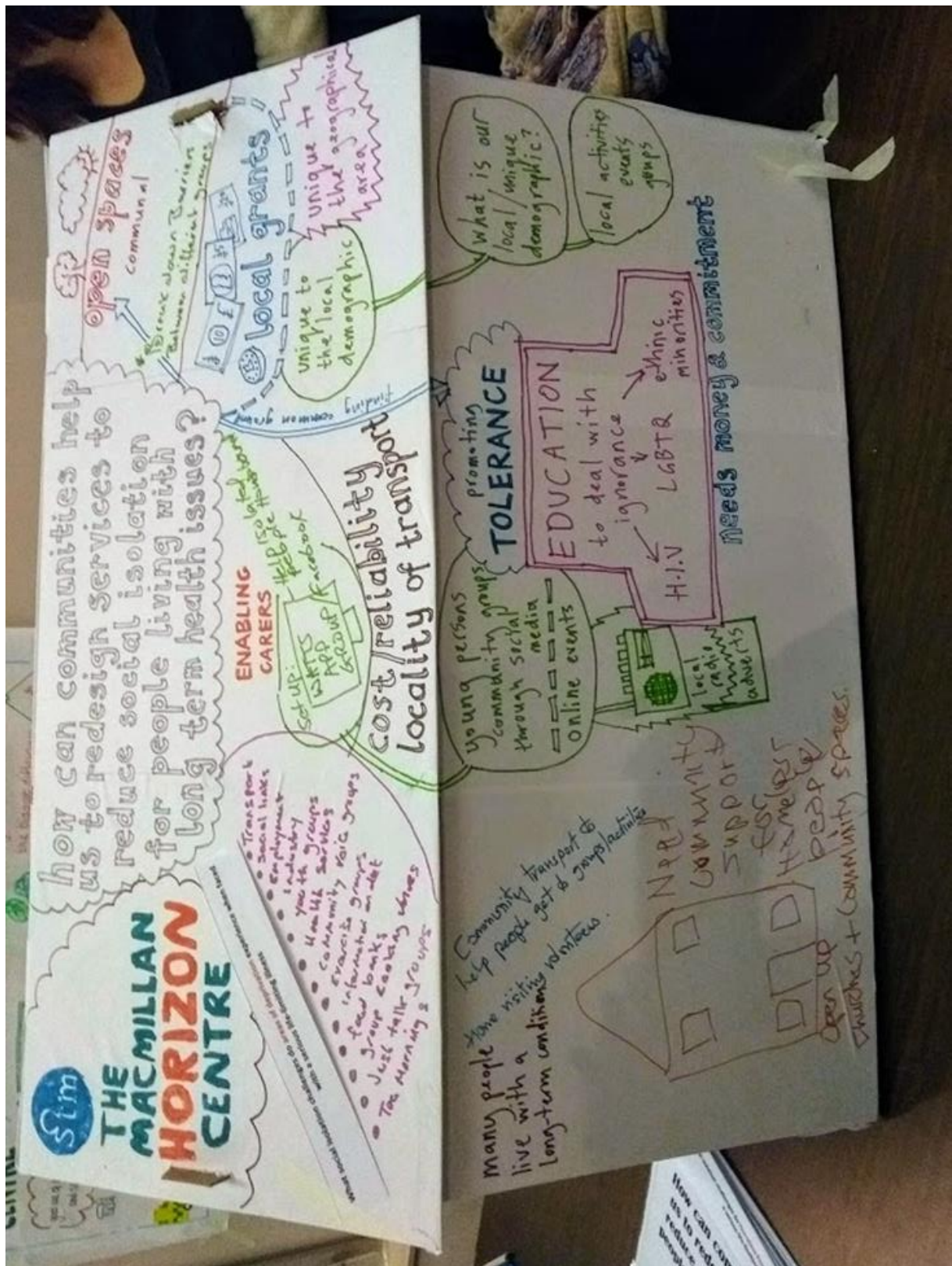Cooking Themes.

Including Pebsham Walk Together.

For Single Parents Join Gingerbread or any other 'Single Parent Support Group' – there are support groups Nationwide.
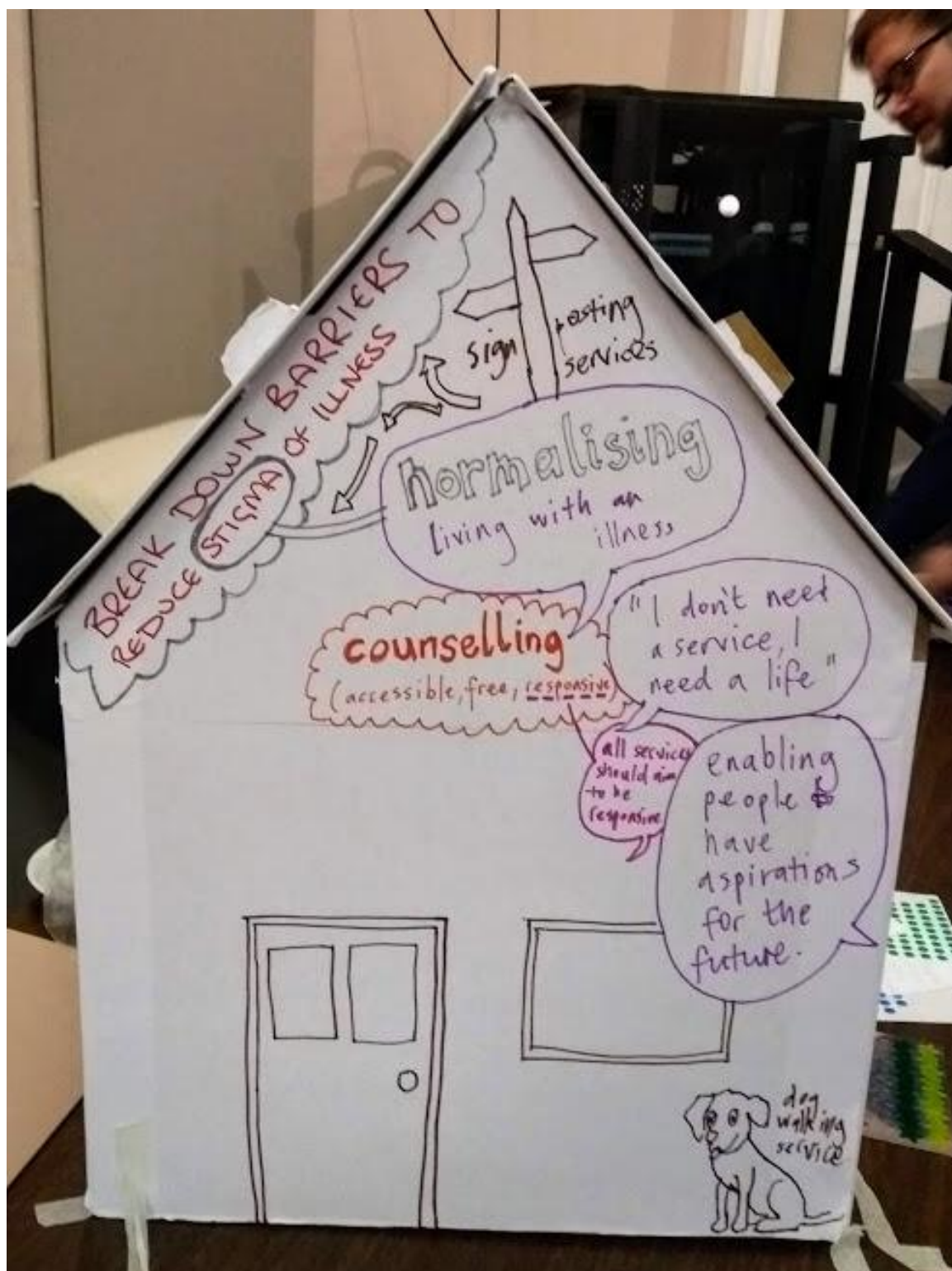
Live Digital Connectivity Intergenerational.

Prem Groups – Revisit the Hospital – Speak to Parents – See the Future.

Conversation 6: Mental Health: How do isolation and loneliness impact on an individual's mental health & emotional wellbeing?

The following information expands on bullet points from Host feedback earlier in this report.

- **Questions bring more questions:** We explored the challenges in ascertaining a solution & recognised the need for a multi- service approach (because one thing does not work for all). We found in our group that we naturally gravitated toward providing suggestions & solutions to individual loneliness and isolation. Our question was 'how do isolation and loneliness impact on an individual's mental health & emotional wellbeing?' This seemed to generate solutions that in themselves had barriers in terms of funding/ resources and knowledge. For example: Social Media – how do individuals use this platform properly so as not to impact on other types of communication (non- verbal, face- to- face, over the phone)? How do people access news to interact with their community if they're not online? 'Public Living Rooms' / 'Buddy Benches' – where do we facilitate these (& would there be a cost)? Would they need to be overseen for safeguarding purposes?

- **The first experience in a new group needs to be positive**: Isolation & Loneliness can be exacerbated if an individual has had a negative interaction with a group/ support service. Some individuals are unable to access opportunities to integrate with others due to anxiety that has developed as a result of previous negative experiences. We also discussed the importance of Social Prescribing in providing 1:1 person- centred support and suggesting groups suitable to clients' interests & needs.

- **Tap into skills/hobbies and offer encouragement**: Our group suggested that individuals can tap into engagement opportunities and interaction with others through hobby groups in the community. Again, we found that there could be barriers to this such as financial restrictions and mental health (some individuals would struggle to attend due to anxiety, etc.)

- **Bring back values – skill sharing/communication/talking/break down barriers:** We discussed as a group the receding social value in making connections and conversing with others. We explained that there needs to be more promotion of the benefits of talking to others face- to- face and the connection between this loneliness & isolation. We had a short discussion about the value of the community centre in historically bringing members of the community together but there were questions around the financial capacity for this and whom they would be led by. We spoke about the benefits of using these spaces to bring representatives from a wide variety of organisations together so individuals can access holistic support in a timely manner (a place where more than one problem at a time can be addressed); we know that mental ill health is not a standalone issue and there are many contributing factors.

Further notes from the conversation:

- Time to talk- It was agreed that we do all need to make time to talk to each other and create spaces that are for this purpose
- Are there too many options? – finding a group or activity that fits, maybe there is too much choice and confusion around finding the right activity
- Social media – what kind of connections are we making and are they meaningful?
- Too many forms to complete – can be a barrier to attending activities and making connections
- Give people the opportunity to share their story/ history / experiences – lived experience is a really valuable resource to enable people to feel connected , break down barriers and encourage people to feel included
- How do we promote the benefits of making connections? – we know the value of making and keeping connected with others but how do we communicate this to people who don't recognise this is an important part of wellbeing
- Switching off – Prioritise our time so that we do switch off and encourage our connections with what we enjoy
- Public Living rooms- it would be good to be able to use the (green space) in Priory meadow shopping centre to have a public living room event
- Tap into a hobby – join a community group and its important that the first experience of joining an activity or community group is positive as first impressions really count
- Trust is important- being able to build trust within sessions and activities is vital for real connections to take place
- Do social media stop us connecting with others? – How do we use this effectively?
- Virtual groups – bringing lonely people together for lunch – aspect of social prescribing?
- Gaming takes away from physical activity – how much time do we spend online when we actually say we have no time for an activity
- How do we bring value back? – skill sharing – making social connections accessing a local community centre , valuing our social interactions as important and crucial for our wellbeing
- The issues with social media and learning non-verbal communication – we need to encourage our young people to learn about basic communication in a face to face way , reading body language and being socially aware
- instant gratification – drop in support where individuals are at with immediate responses and benefits deliver support / activities where young people are – outreach
- Too many steps to access services –immediate services when needed an isolated person will most likely give up if it is too time consuming and intrusive to get the service they require
- Everything is online – traditional meet up face to face groups are going online - apps for various groups – book clubs etc.
- Are statutory spaces open to other services/organisations? Sharing spaces so that when someone visits one service they have immediate access to other services and

activities at one time in one go – multi agency services in one building

We asked people to write on leaves activities/ ideas that would reduce isolation and loneliness

- Conservation activities contributing to employability skills
- Games Nights and days
- Use social media to positively make connections
- Join a group
- Tea dances
- Dinner clubs – taking it in turns to cook / host
- Time Banks
- Chatting Benches
- Use GP practices to advertise places that offer chances to get together
- Hastings Country Park as a resource for restoring health & wellbeing in an outdoor space
- Getting Outside Being in nature, connecting with nature
- Share your passion with others – Fun Palaces
  Digital Lunches – Pot Luck (Andrew's article)
- Virtual groups
- Storytelling opportunities
- Buddy Benches
- Public Living Rooms (Camaros)
- Read aloud groups
- Book or comic clubs for more introverted people
- Lunch clubs (with transport for older people)

Conversation 8: Addiction and Recovery: How does stigma cause isolation and loneliness and what can we do about it?

Information from conversation activity:

SOLUTIONS AND COLLABORATIVE OPPORTUNITIES TO RESOLVE STIGMA IN ADDICTION & RECOVERY:

Non-alcohol venues/Friendship/Evening Activities/Using 'Lived Experience'/Visible support/Better transport/Dog walking/Exercise/Short activities completed = confidence/Cup of Tea – Meet up/Drop-in/Self-Referral/Information!/Training/Buddy System/Find clients and build a relationship and trust/Non-judgemental atmosphere/Myth busting/Community Centres like The Pelham, Bexhill/No end date to help/Monday meet-ups/Person-first – Addiction Second/Diversity in addiction/Gym/Get referrals from existing clients/More individual support/One to Ones/Social groups/Shared Interests/Fishing/Gardeni8ng/Allotment/Film Night/Volunteering/Mentoring/Grace – Understanding/Informed/Entrepreneurship/Pet Therapy/Guided Walks/ Good Hub that Encourages Community/Signposting – Online – Patrons – Agencies/Building Social Capital/Not going back to the start of the referral process if they miss their appointment/Chaotic nature of the problem – System must include flexibility/A Service that doesn't drop you if you 'Break the Rules'!

EFFECTS OF STIGMA:

Older population coming through the system/Unemployment/Avoiding temptation – isolation/Embarrassment/Depression/Lack of confidence/Shame/Boredom/Increases isolation/Nothing to Look forward to/Lack confidence to access help/Anti-social perception/Decline in physical health/Cultural expectations around drinking/Lack of stability/Stigma for older people/Lack of Confidence the client will stick with the Service/Social Anxiety/Trauma – lack of support & appropriate support/Want to encourage new friendships but often can disrupt recovery/Care Homes cannot deal with addiction.

CAUSES OF STIGMA:

Older People see help as a sign of weakness/Failure to understand the role of mental Health/Lack of understanding of causes of addiction/Lack of knowledge or experience/Alcoholics vs drug addicts/Homelessness/Fear/Difficult to navigate multiple services/Criminal Justice System/Trauma/Introverts/Cultural heritage/Mental Health Issues/People don't want to bump into old friends so don't access service/Portrayal on TV and media/Services can exclude the very people who need the service i.e. people who are drinking are excluded from accessing.

Conversation 9: Employment: How does your employment status impact feelings of isolation and loneliness?

Information from conversation activity:

UNEMPLOYMENT:

Unemployment – Feeling Not Contributing to Society/Dwindling Confidence/Poverty/Trapped in a Cycle/Scared of Losing Benefits/Anxiety about Returning to Work Fears/Job Centre for 'Signing On' to Benefits can be Intimidating & Anxiety Provoking – Fear – Stigma. Stigma around Unemployment – Impact on Wellbeing & Confidence/Difficulty Seeing Yourself in a Work Role/Stuck in 'Sick' Role Waiting to be 'Fixed'/Putting Life on Hold.

VOLUNTEERING ROLE:

Volunteering – can help reduce feelings of loneliness – feeling connected & linked in/Volunteering feels judged because not paid employee/Experiences can help others/Volunteering is a gentle step to getting a Reference to support Job Applications – Connecting People.

CHALLENGES – IN WORK:

'Agile' workers – work from home – not see people – instant loneliness and Disconnection from a Team – Miss colleagues – Less Support/Hot Desking & Lone Working – cab be Isolating/Job Insecurity & Frequent Changes – can be Isolating – Uncertainty/Work Environments – Not Always Conducive to Socialising/Night Shift Workers can be Isolated/Out of Routine of General Society/Work with people who make you feel lonely/Isolation from In Work Practices/Tech if Out of Work E.g. Maternity Leave or Long Term Sickness/Reminder to Put your Phone Down for 5 minutes - Look around you and say 'Hello' to someone near you/Working Carers going straight from Work to Care at Home - Lack Social Interaction/Importance of work/Life Balance/Stress of feeling Others Cope when You Struggle/Interpreting Needs.

BENEFITS OF WORK:

Financial Independence/Feeling Connected & Linked In to Society/Sense of Purpose and Meaning/Job Centre can Signpost & help to Link In to Community to help reduce social isolation/Being In Work can Increase Confidence and Reduce Isolation & Loneliness/Work has a Big Social Aspect/Courses – Volunteering – Employment – Confidence Up – Loneliness Down!

RETIREMENT:

Social Life could have Revolved Around Work/Loss of Work Role/Loss of Sense of Purpose/Increase Feelings of Loneliness & Isolation.

COMMUNITY:

Building Trust with Agencies and Clients/Sharing Resources – Public/Private Sector/Having Good Awareness of Services that are Available/Important to Share Information about People's Personal Situation to Provide Support/Virtual Lunch – Online Approach to Loneliness – Working with Groups in Finland/Overcoming Barriers to Accessing Services/Empowerment – Active Engagement – Voluntary Work/Social Prescribing/More Funding & Resources/Project in Sweden? Housing for People who Cannot Afford/Sustain Tenancies – Treated as Part of the Community/Modelling on Proven Supports. Young People – Link Up with Young Adult Carers. Peer, Support, Advice and Guidance for young people/Teen-Talk for Young Carers/Important to Share Information about People's Personal Situation to Provide Support.

Rough Sleepers – How to Make Contacts With Rough Sleepers? Rough Sleepers Need Long Term Support Before & After Finding Somewhere to Live. Being Re-Housed for Rough Sleepers is Daunting and Re-Housing Process Happens at Client's Own Pace.

Conversation 10: Young People: How can we work together to reduce isolation and loneliness in young people?

Summary notes provided by conversation hosts:

The table was set with plasticine, wool, flags and pens to encourage participants to create a map of services and activities. With the idea being to promote conversations about gaps and ideas on how organisations can better support young people to not be lonely or isolated.
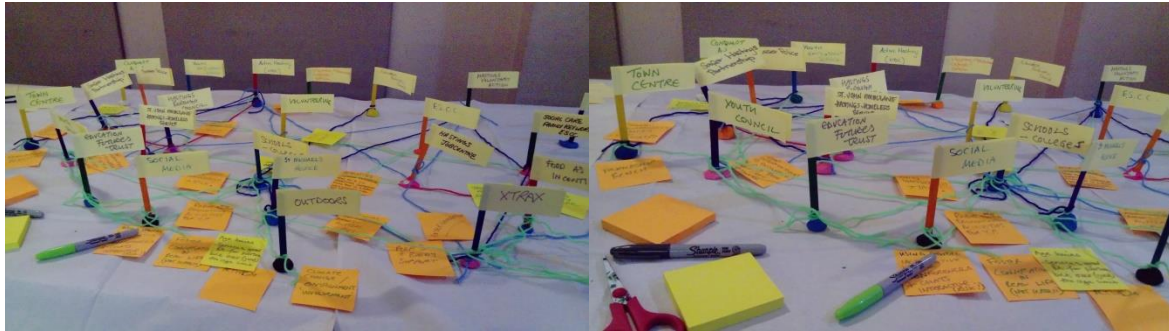
Themes of conversations included:
1) Getting young people involved in volunteering and the benefits of inter-generational activities.
2) Importance of appropriate information about services to encourage trust in those services and activities.
3) Building links between services and supports.
4) Buddying and peer support.

The map at the end of the session illustrated many connections between organisations, services, assets and activities.

St Michael's Hospice	Hastings Jobcentre
East Sussex County Council (ESCC)	Schools / Colleges
Social Care Family Network (ESCC)	Xtrax
Hastings Borough Council (HBC)	The outdoors
Active Hastings (HBC)	Troubled Families Employment Advisor
Education Futures Trust	Young People in Care
Foster Carer	Using Digital technologies in creative way to link people via conferences & chats (risk an issue?)
Alcohol & Drug support	
Hastings Voluntary Action (HVA)	Early Intervention – talking
Sussex Police	HCN events
Housing Associations – Optivo / Orbit	Recruiting and retaining young volunteers – CV's, improving confidence, being part of a team, intergenerational benefits both ways
Youth Employment Service	
Conquest A&E	
Safer Hastings Partnership	Peer and buddy support
Town Centre	Young People with autism and additional needs etc.
Hollington Youth Centre	
Youth Council (Hastings Borough Council)	Encourage activism
St Johns Ambulance Homeless Service	Climate Change and Environmental involvement
Volunteering	Fostering conversations in 'real life' (not just social media)
Identify & support young carers - counselling through Care for the Carers	
Social Media	Using the media/radio to promote services and supports for young people
Good information to encourage young people to take part and get involved	
	Using food as incentive to engage
'Friendship' (chatty) benches	Street Games via Active Hastings (free food, holiday clubs, outreach sessions)
Safe community spaces – with activities?	
Intensive buddy support (flexibility around age – needs led)	Motivate clubs
	Scout & Guides, The Princes Trust etc.

Appendix 4: Hot Topics

These ideas for future hot topics were recorded on the evaluation forms that were completed on the day.

- How to reach those hard to reach people.
- Linking more with private sector i.e. Oli Deliverydinners that deliver fuel to older people in rural communities
- Jobs!! Inward investment.
- Anything to do with mental health and wellbeing
- The Digital Age. Long term health conditions. Relationships throughout life – divorce, bereavement etc.
- Normalising conversations about death and dying.
- Volunteering opportunities – accessibility. What's available? Building the sector to support everyone.
- Engaging employers in the community including paid work opportunities arising from volunteer work.
- Housing solutions.
- Parental opportunities.
- Regeneration and the physical environment. Climate change and its impact.
- Connecting in a digital age, managing our digital age. Long conversations vs soundbites, love it or hate it, it's here to stay.
- Funding – what funding/help do organisations need and what funding or help can others provide? Invite work coaches from Job Centre so they can explain their role
- Children and young people.
- Housing.
- Poverty and its effects.
- Homelessness. Drug & alcohol abuse. Keeping fit for services/disabled services.
- Lack of resources re interpreting – especially for people whose first language is BSL. What's available in Hastings area?
- Use of social media by charities.
- Dementia and carer support. BAME and Mental recovery.
- Climate change – low carbon organisational service development in public and private sectors to be fit for the future. Wellbeing at work and psychological literacy. Psychology of change – comfortable with uncertainty.
- Local transport needs.

Appendix 5: Contact Details of Organisers

Name	Organisation and Role	Contact
Steve Manwaring	Chief Executive HVA and Member of HCN Executive	Email: steve@hastingsvoluntaryaction.org.uk
Tracey Rose	Chief Executive FSN and Member of HCN Executive	Email: trose@fsncharity.co.uk
Kim Kelly	Events Administrator - Hastings Voluntary Action (HVA)	Email: events@hastingsvoluntaryaction.org.uk