



HUB

Making it count: revisiting evaluation of tackling loneliness interventions

Tuesday 10 June, 2025

Aims of the session

- Revisit some previous sessions/work on evaluation as a focus for thinking about your own current approaches
- Explore the real-world challenges of evaluating loneliness interventions
- Think about how approaches/methods suggested can support your work and identify next steps
- Create space for shared learning and peer connection

Defining evaluation

“Process that typically involves collecting and using data to answer your own questions about the quality, value and direction of your work, to manage and improve what you do”

(National Lottery Community Fund)

A source of evidence



Why evaluate?

Using Credible, Reliable and Useful information to:

Make decisions

Plan activities and core
areas of work

Allocate funding
and resources

Be accountable

Beneficiaries Funders

Staff Volunteers

Wider public

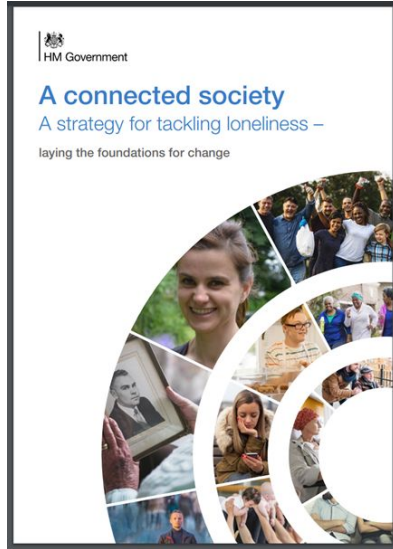
Build evidence base

What works in specific
contexts

Barriers and enablers

Gaps in
knowledge

➤ The original vision - 2018



- *'To tackle loneliness successfully, we need a deeper understanding of who is at highest risk and what is effective in preventing and reducing it. Part of the solution to this is to **collect more data on loneliness and measure it more consistently**'*
- **A recommended a package of measures:** a single, direct question of 'How often do you feel lonely?', and three questions known as the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) 3-item scale for adults
- ***To improve data comparability, government encourages charities and service providers who collect data on loneliness to adopt this package.** Government will continue to explore how the measure can be adopted more widely, and how this package could be aligned with outcome measures for charities and service providers.*

AND THEN (2023): <https://youtu.be/E-i2bLWNF90> ;
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exploring-interventions-to-tackle-loneliness/evaluation-of-interventions-to-tackle-loneliness>

Campaign to
EndLoneliness

➤ Evaluation practices: what were organisations/practitioners doing?

Varied use of loneliness measures



- Assessing individual or local need
- To measure and show impact
- Funder requirements

I think there is huge value in the quants [data]. And in those measures, as we build our body of data, to look for patterns, to look for evidence of change and the extent of change....

Non-use of measures

Use of alternative measures



Qualitative methods

Campaign to
EndLoneliness

Barriers to the use of loneliness measures

1. Capacity of organisations

'It's something we know, we need to do better, we just don't really know how to do it.'

2. Sensitivities of asking loneliness questions

'We don't ask people to register to attend...you know, people can literally just turn up and leave again without us ever knowing who they are.... So a big piece of work...is figuring out how we collect that data and, therefore, are able to evaluate our work without, I suppose, putting in place some of the barriers that we think are the reason people come to us rather than other groups.'

Barriers to the use of loneliness measures



3. Usefulness of the measures?

'The effects on older people can be so varied by their other circumstances... So, you know, their figures would have, theoretically should have gone up, they were in a better place. But actually, because they've been diagnosed with a long-term condition or somebody had died, a friend had died, something has happened, they've had to go into a nursing home, you know, all those other life things, then affected their score so much, that it kind of it meant it was really hard to see on paper what had changed'

3. Funder requirements

'I feel like I produce the same report year after year - I'd like to do a deep-dive after a couple of years into specific topics. I don't think anyone ever reads this at [the funder] - we never get any feedback. I'd be really interested in help to be more thoughtful about the service to inform design: for example, how many hours does it take for someone to become friends? ... not just produce the same information over and over again.'



Ways forward to support evaluation practice: Recommendations



- **Develop new guidance on evaluation of TL interventions with involvement of varied stakeholders**, ensuring that development of this guidance has buy-in from - and involvement of - a range of stakeholders.
- **Evaluations of TL interventions should be co-produced by funders/commissioners and delivery organisations** so that they are designed to be useful for both parties, delivery organisations have ownership of the process, understand the data they are collecting and are clear about what its uses will be.
- **Provide high quality training and support on how to use the recommended loneliness measures and a range of other evaluation methods** to encourage rigorous use of loneliness measures and/or a range of alternative evaluation methods.
- **Project funding should cover evaluation resourcing to enable high quality evaluation.** Delivery organisations will then be responsible for carrying out evaluation internally or working with outside evaluators to carry out evaluations to the agreed model.

Recommendations

- Review the ONS recommended loneliness measures to reassess their suitability for evaluating TL interventions
- Explore the potential of linking data from evaluation of TL interventions to national healthcare and other datasets

Breakout rooms (10 mins)

- *What challenges have you faced when evaluating loneliness interventions?*
- *Have you found any approaches or workarounds that helped to meet evaluation needs within the constraints you face?*

The evaluation process

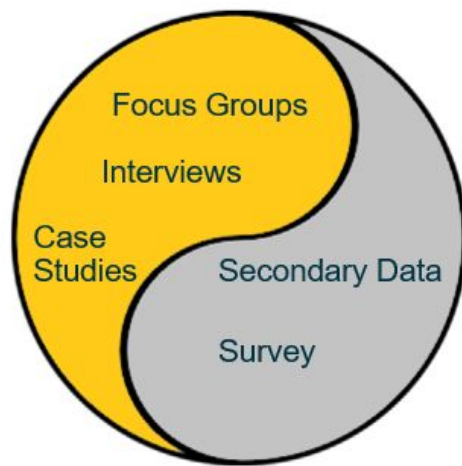
- Design and data collection <https://youtu.be/w3VGVEMGREa>
- Analysis and dissemination <https://youtu.be/Z01k00FV2sg>
<https://tacklinglonelinesshub.org/loneliness-evaluation-analysis-and-dissemination/>

No one size fits all

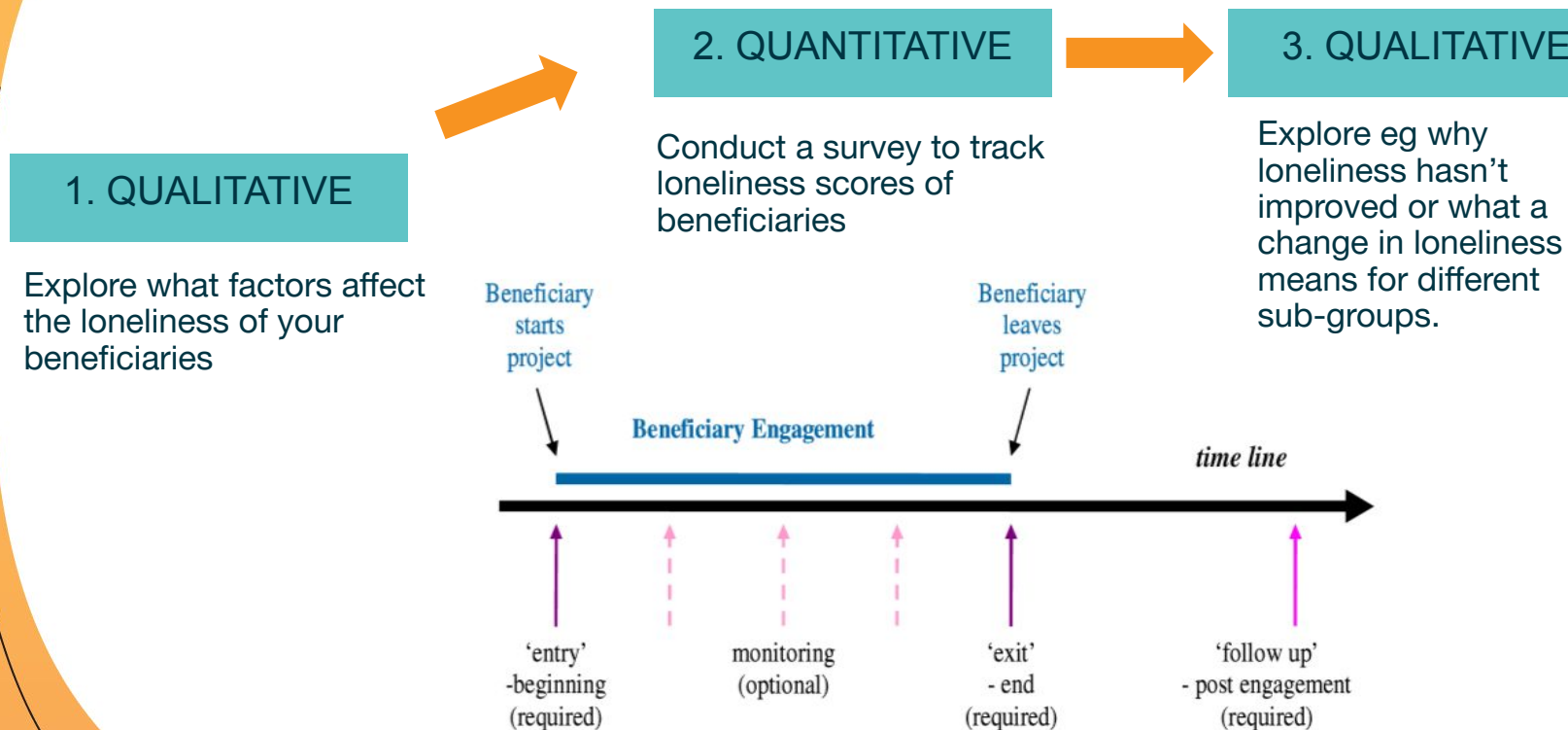
- Be thoughtful and deliver high quality, useful evaluation
- Your project or programme - what difference do you hope to make, to who, in what context - sometimes called **theory of change or logic model**
- Primary **purpose** of your evaluation and your evaluation question/s - what are you trying to find out?
- Intended **audience and use of evaluation**
- Financial and human **resources & constraints**

Mixed methods evaluation

- Collecting and analysing **both quantitative and qualitative data** within the same evaluation
- Draw on **strengths of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to integrate the** data collection, analysis and interpretation of results



Mixed methods structure



Evaluation methods

Quantitative evaluation

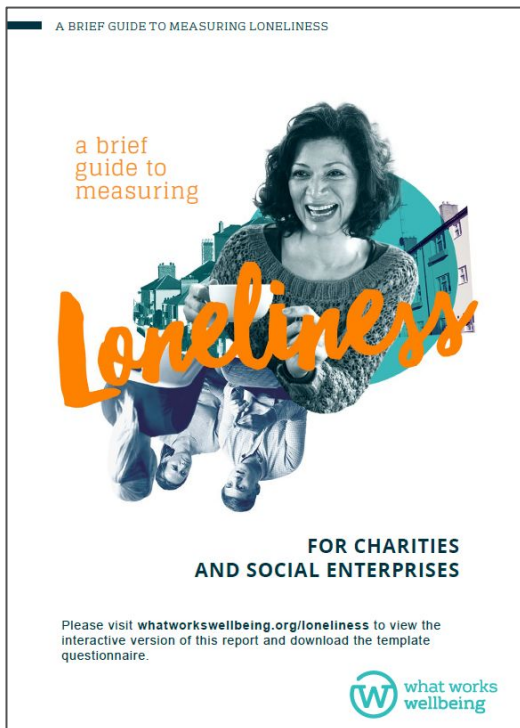
- Loneliness and other measures
- Developed and widely tested and used
- Research, evaluation and national surveys

National loneliness measures

		Hardly ever or never	Some of the time	Often
Q1	How often do you feel that you lack companionship?	1	2	3
Q2	How often do you feel left out?	1	2	3
Q3	How often do you feel isolated from others?	1	2	3

		Often / always	Some of the time	Occasionally	Hardly ever	Never
Q4	How often do you feel lonely?	1	2	3	4	5

Useful resources



National loneliness measures for children

		Hardly ever or never	Some of the time	Often
Q1	How often do you feel that you have no one to talk to?	1	2	3
Q2	How often do you feel left out?	1	2	3
Q3	How often do you feel alone?	1	2	3

		Often / always	Some of the time	Occasion ally	Hardly ever	Never
Q4	How often do you feel lonely?	1	2	3	4	5



Developed through cognitive testing and research
by The Children's Society



Also check for updates on development of the Youth
Loneliness Scale at <https://www.ylsproject.co.uk/>

Other quantitative measures

What's associated with loneliness?

Personal circumstances and characteristics:

- Demographics (age, sex, ethnicity)
- Being single or widowed or living alone
- Poor physical and mental health or disability
- Renting
- Unemployment and poverty

Other outcomes:

- Wellbeing
- Belonging
- Trust

Measuring these can help you understand:

- If you're reaching the right people
- Why people might be lonely
- The pathways out of loneliness
- Your impact on other outcomes

STARTING SCHOOL



TEENAGE PRESSURES



LEAVING UNIVERSITY



LEAVING SCHOOL



BULLYING

MOVING TO ANOTHER COUNTRY OR CITY

MOVING HOME



UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE FUTURE

REFUGEES AWAITING ASYLUM TRIALS



UNEMPLOYMENT



RETIREMENT



CHANGING JOBS



GETTING DIVORCED



CARING FOR FAMILY MEMBERS

BECOMING A PARENT



BEREAVEMENT



FAMILY BREAKDOWN



CHILDREN MOVING AWAY FROM HOME

BEING DIAGNOSED AND LIVING WITH A HEALTH CONDITIONS OR DISABILITY



CHILDREN LEAVING CARE



OLDER PEOPLE MOVING INTO CARE



HOMELESSNESS



SOME EVENTS WHICH COULD TRIGGER

Loneliness

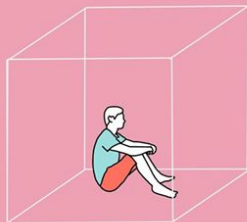
ACROSS OUR LIVES



Reconceptualising Loneliness in London

March 2022

MAYOR OF LONDON



1 in 12 Londoners are 'severely lonely' (around 700,000 people)

Associated with 'Big 5 risks':

1. Being acutely poor
2. Being single or living alone
3. Being Deaf and disabled
4. Going through life changes or being new in London
5. Feeling different or experiencing prejudice

How does it happen?



ONS4 Subjective wellbeing questions

		not at all					completely					
Q1	How satisfied are you with your life nowadays?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Q2	How happy did you feel yesterday?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Q3	To what extent do you feel the things you do in life are worthwhile?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Q4	How anxious did you feel yesterday?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

- Q1 - Measures overall **evaluative** perspective
- Q2 - Measures **positive feelings** and experiences (affect)
- Q3 - Measures **purpose** and **functioning** (eudemonia)
- Q4 - Measures **negative feelings** and experiences

Life sat.
Happiness
Worthwhile

0 to 4 (low)
5 to 6 (medium)
7 to 8 (high)
9 to 10 (very high)

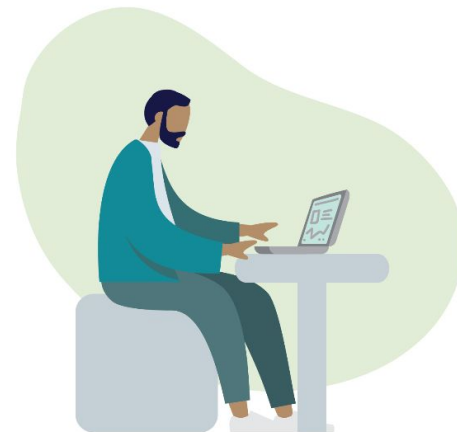
Anxiety

0 to 1 (very low)
2 to 3 (low)
4 to 5 (medium)
6 to 10 (high)

Guide to Measuring Wellbeing

1. What is wellbeing?
2. Introduction to wellbeing evaluation
3. Planning your wellbeing evaluation
4. Wellbeing measures and data
5. Choosing wellbeing measures
6. Gathering qualitative data
7. Analysing and interpreting your results
8. Wellbeing Measures Bank

measure-wellbeing.org



Qualitative Evidence

How loneliness can make you feel

distress

painful
feelings

anxiety

helplessness
and emptiness



abandoned

not being
understood
by others

fear and sadness

lost

Qualitative evidence

- Experiences, opinions, personal stories
- Understand how and why people are lonely
- Depth and detail - explains the quant data
- Use to develop a Theory of Change

Collecting data:

- Interviews
- [Focus groups](#)
- Personal diaries
- Creative methods
- [Capturing casual moments](#)

Evaluation Method: Capturing Casual Moments



Overview

Staff or volunteers record comments in non-formal circumstances.

What's required?

A simple means for writing down service-users' actual words.

Process

- Ensure that all staff and volunteers are familiar with the outcomes and indicators
- Agree a method for capturing comments in order to be able to add them to your database later
- Use your indicators to decide which comments map to what outcome/s.



Capturing evidence

You need to decide if you need a special tool for capturing comments or an extra section will be added to existing forms or records. See example on page 2.

You may simply keep notes in a comments book or add them to their file to come back to.

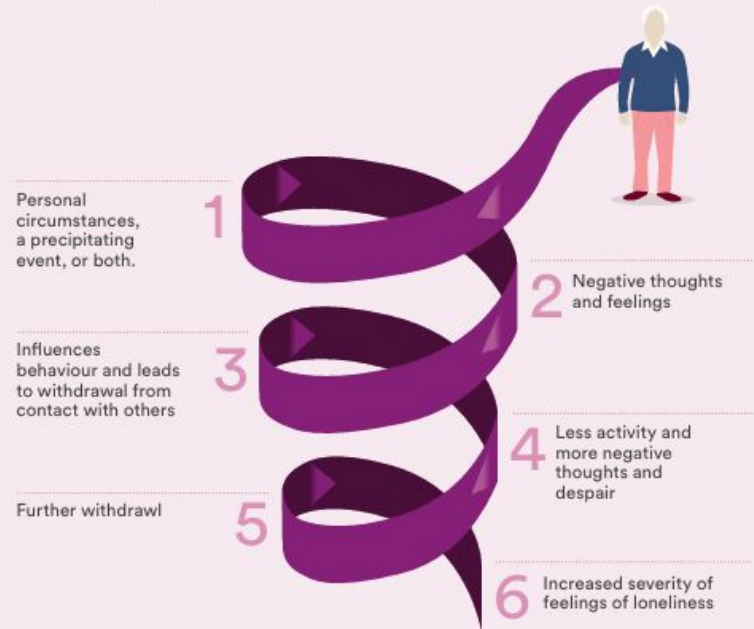
Useful for

- Gaining honest responses when the pressure is off
- Following up in a more formal setting e.g. one to one support session
- Contributing to a good mix of evidence
- Getting the attention of your audience

Understanding the ways in and out of loneliness

Figure 2

Downward spiral of loneliness



“If you’ve got a purpose, it will keep you going, and that’s why I’m saying to you, knitting something for somebody, then you know you’ve got that purpose and it helps.”

“I have a little routine every morning. I make myself do this and I feel better for it and I make myself have a walk to the garage every morning and back, and I feel better for it. I don’t always feel like doing it, but I do do it.”

[What made you set up that routine?]

Well, it’s just I do a few exercises, showers, and I walk to get the paper and come back again. By the time I’ve walked to the garage and spoken to people, ‘Good morning’ and I get back in the house, I feel fine, you know? But I think if I got up and didn’t, I wouldn’t.”

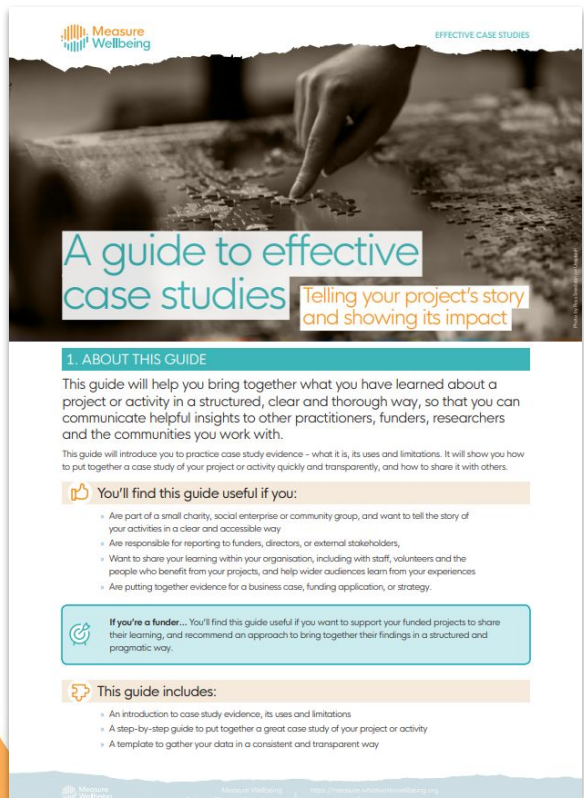
Participant case study

- **Motivations** for getting involved, pathway to engagement
- **Outputs:** what they valued about the project, activities, people involved, atmosphere
- **Outcomes:** what difference did the project make to their wellbeing (confidence, friendships, skills, mental health)?
- **'Counterfactual':** what would be different if the project hadn't happened?
- **Behaviour change:** what will they do differently as a result of the project



- Name, personal characteristics
- Pictures, quotes, video
- 500 words, or 2-3 minutes video
- Ethics and permission!

Project case study



This guide includes:

- An introduction to project case study evidence, its uses and limitations
- A step-by-step guide to put together a great case study of your project or activity
- A template to gather your data in a consistent and transparent way

HUB RESOURCE:

<https://tacklinglonelinesshub.org/developing-practice-based-case-studies/>

Questions or comments?

Discussion (10 mins)

- *Are these methods relevant and useful to your projects?*
- *What would help you implement these approaches?*
- *What's one next step you could take in your evaluation work after today?*

Sound Creators

Isolated, young, female carers building confidence and friendship through Sound Creators – our creative music programme - UK Youth

Expression through music for young female carers in the UK

Outcome measurement limited by Covid-19:

- “On a scale from 0 to 10, how happy are you with your relationships with your friends?” increased from 2.9 to 7.9.
- 86% of participants agreed or strongly agreed they had made new friends in the programme.
- 100% felt they now had more than one person who they could talk to (up from 30%).
- 82% reported increased confidence - “it has helped me overcome my shyness” shared one participant.

British Red Cross & Co-op Community Connectors

https://figshare.shef.ac.uk/articles/report/Evaluation_of_the_British_Red_Cross_Community_Connectors_Programme_final_report/14560761?file=27938097

National scheme, tailored to local areas, <12 weeks support/signposting to community activities to reduce loneliness

Mixed target group Young parents (aged 18 – 24), recently bereaved, divorced or separated, living without children at home, poor health or mobility problems

Mixed-methods evaluation including **matched comparator analysis** and **Social Return on Investment (SROI)** analysis

- $\frac{2}{3}$ reduction in their loneliness (mean change in UCLA = 1.8)
- $\frac{1}{3}$ changed from 'lonely' to 'not lonely'
(UCLA score 3-5 not lonely vs. 6-9 lonely)