

**Title of meeting:** Health and Wellbeing Board

**Date of meeting:** 17<sup>th</sup> July 2024

**Subject:** Integrated Care Partnership Social Connectedness priority

**Report by:** Claire Currie, Assistant Director of Public Health

**Wards affected:** All

**Key decision:** No

**Full Council decision:** No

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**1. Purpose of report**

To highlight work taking place on the Portsmouth contribution to the Integrated Care Partnership Social Connectedness priority which is relevant to the Positive Relationships strand of the Portsmouth Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-30.

**2. Recommendations**

The Board is asked to:

- i. Note the activity underway in the city to promote social connectedness
- ii. Consider opportunities for this work to further complement the positive relationships priority for the city
- iii. Consider examples or approaches which members of the Health and Wellbeing Board can contribute in their efforts to promote social connectedness through their roles as employers or in delivering services to local residents.

**3. Background**

3.1 In developing the Health and Wellbeing Strategy for 2022-2030, the Health and Wellbeing Board identified positive relationships as one of the five priorities or "causes of the causes" in Portsmouth to tackle improve health and wellbeing outcomes in the city.

3.2 In the strategy, the Board noted:  
"Connectedness with each other, family and community underpins many positive outcomes. We call this social capital. Evidence shows that communities with high levels of social connectedness have longer and happier lives and are less dependent on public services."

3.3 The Integrated Care Strategy for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight was developed during 2022 through stakeholder assemblies and input from a range of partner organisations. The strategy is intended to complement place Health and Wellbeing Strategies.

3.4 The Health and Wellbeing Board received an update on the positive relationships work in the city in September 2023 which referenced the work of the ICP social connectedness priority. This paper seeks to expand on the progress made in this area which broadly reflects the first year of the social connectedness work programme.

#### **4. Overview of ICP social connectedness priority**

4.1. The aim of the social connectedness priority is "to contribute to building strong communities and playing our part in creating opportunities to meaningfully involve and connect individuals". Social connectedness is a sense of belonging. It's about relationships people have with each other and engagement with the broader community.

4.2. The programme recognises the importance of a life course approach to improve social connectedness, thereby reducing social isolation and loneliness and building social capital through supporting organisations and individuals / communities across HIOW by addressing inequalities in specific communities. The programme aims to improve mental and physical health for all ages and increase independence in older adults, reducing the need for health and care services as well as reducing unemployment and increasing productivity.

4.3. The Public Health Outcomes Framework (PHOF) measure relevant to social connectedness is the percentage of adults who feel lonely often or always or some of the time people who feel lonely often, always or some of the time. 2019/20 data (most recently published) shows Portsmouth to be significantly worse than England (28.61% v 22.26%). The national data highlights population groups experiencing a higher prevalence of loneliness such as people who are unemployed, living with a disability, younger adults (16-34 years) and older adults (85 years+), some ethnic minority groups and females. Separate PHOF measures highlight the percentage of adult social care users, and carers, who have as much social contact as they would like (Portsmouth was similar to national figures in the most recently published figures).

4.4. The HIOW Integrated Care Partnership social connectedness priority is overseen by an oversight group Chaired by Helen Atkinson, Director of Public Health, Portsmouth City Council. The group has representation from Local Authority Public Health teams, place VCSE representatives, including from HIVE Portsmouth and the Integrated Care Board Population Health & Health Inequalities team. This priority has been focused on recognising the on-going work already happening in local areas to improve social connectedness and has also sought to recognise the vital role that VCSE colleagues have in this space.

## **5. Portsmouth initiatives to improve social connectedness**

- 5.1 There are many inspiring examples of services and initiatives supporting local residents in Portsmouth to improve social connectedness and address loneliness, for instance the Portsmouth City Council Independence and Wellbeing Team, the Close Encounters project led by Portsmouth Age UK and so much more which HIVE Portsmouth and other partners have roles in.
- 5.2 The social connectedness priority has sought to celebrate the asset based community development (ABCD) work underway in Paulsgrove and Portsea. An ABCD approach aims to recognise, connect and mobilise the strengths, talents and resources of individuals and communities to build stronger and more sustainable communities. This work has supported communities to identify solutions and actions on areas that are importance to local communities with this work now being linked into the wider health and care system.
- 5.3 There has been willingness to recognise the role of social connectedness within health and social care service delivery through i) exploring the feasibility of social prescribers offering support to build social connectedness among young adults experiencing loneliness, ii) implementing group consultations as part of the women's health programme, iii) developing a women's only substance misuse provision, iv) embedding social connectedness as an anticipated benefit of developing Integrated Neighbourhood Teams, and, v) highlighting social connectedness within the Portsmouth Carers Strategy.
- 5.4 Loneliness awareness week 10-16<sup>th</sup> June 2024: The theme for this national awareness week was 'random acts of connection'. This awareness week was supported by messages to the Community Champions Network as well as through Health and Care Portsmouth communications channels which included a podcast by Helen Atkinson, Director of Public Health. As an example of workplace action, within the Public Health office space a seating area was designated a "happy to chat" area for the week to promote social connection at work.
- 5.5 A 'connecting the connectors' event is currently being planned for 8<sup>th</sup> August 2024 in Victoria Park with a further event to follow in Paulsgrove. This event will aim to provide a networking opportunity for staff and volunteers working to deliver social connection activities learn more about what each other does. In addition, a part of the event will enable local residents to also find out more about what services and community groups are available in Portsmouth.
- 5.6 Further initiatives are being explored.

## 6. HIOW initiatives to improve social connectedness

- 6.1 A [Social Connectedness framework](#) was developed as a tool to support a shared understanding of social connectedness across ICP partners and places.
- 6.2 An Integrated Care Partnership [Assembly on Social Connectedness](#) met on the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024 at the Central Hall in Southampton with nearly 100 people attending. The objectives of the event was to highlight the importance of social connectedness to individuals and to our communities, including the evidence and impact, highlight the opportunity of working together across VCSE, NHS, Local Authorities and academic partners to improve social connectedness, and inspire attendees through showcasing and celebrating examples of local work. Father Bob White shared an inspiring story of Fratton Big Local with Portsmouth Carers Service and the Paulsgrove and Portsea ABCD work also kindly shared through stands on the day.
- 6.3 There has been willingness at system level to align social connectedness with other system priorities. Firstly, in directing HIOW ICB Advancing Mental Health Equalities funding towards developing a community builder / self-healing communities scheme. Secondly, in embedding social connectedness as an anticipated benefit of developing Integrated Neighbourhood Teams with a community centred approach built into the principles of this developing work.
- 6.4 Loneliness awareness week (June 2024): All ICP partners were asked to support the communications efforts for this awareness week.
- 6.5 All ICP partners have been asked to support their workforce to address loneliness in the workplace with suggested actions provided. Loneliness at work reduces employee engagement, which has a direct impact on productivity. It also makes workers more likely to leave, increasing turnover costs, and affects workers health and wellbeing.
- 6.6 At the end of June 2024, a 'sandpit' event took place as a collaboration between the NIHR Applied Research Collaboration (ARC) Wessex Healthy Communities Theme and the HIOW Integrated Care Partnership Social Connectedness Programme. The outcome of this sandpit was to identify a small number of research seed projects aligned with what may be useful to practice with some funding available from ARC Wessex to support these projects. Seed funding will be available to get the collaborations on these projects started with potential for these projects to inform longer term research priorities.

## 7. Reasons for recommendations

The Integrated Care System strategy is intended to complement place Health and Wellbeing Strategies. The recommendations support this intention.

**8. Integrated impact assessment**

No integrated impact assessment has been undertaken because individual projects will be subject to their own assessments as appropriate.

**9. Legal implications**

There are no legal implications specifically associated with this report. Any projects undertaken will be subject to their own assessments.

**10. Director of Finance's comments**

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. Any projects that flow from this will be subject to their own individual financial assessments.

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Signed by:

**Appendices:**

None

**Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/  
rejected by ..... on .....

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Signed by: