



# A life less lonely? Building connected communities

The challenge

**We want to live longer lives in communities where we feel a sense of belonging. But, instead, the community infrastructure that helps us connect to one another has been eroded and levels of loneliness across all ages are rising.**

What we know

There is now clear evidence linking loneliness with a range of physical and mental illness – including depression, dementia, and cardiovascular disease. In 2023 the US Surgeon General issued a formal advisory on the threat of social isolation and in the UK analysis by the Campaign to End Loneliness demonstrated that over half a million more people are experiencing chronic loneliness in the UK than before the pandemic.

Social disconnection was on the increase before the pandemic: our sense of belonging to a neighbourhood and our positive engagements with neighbours has been declining over the past decade. Levels of loneliness have always been highest among younger and older age groups – but rates of loneliness among young people are increasing alarmingly – people aged 16 to 29 are now twice as likely to be chronically lonely than over-70s.

Being connected not only keeps us healthy it helps us withstand the shocks of life. Research by Ambition for Ageing showed that during times of disaster, social inclusion plays a key part in keeping older people more resilient than people of other ages.

There is increasing recognition of the power of community with initiatives from the Big Society to Levelling Up, to the Community Power movement. However, in reality, the social fabric of communities has weakened particularly in the most deprived communities. Research by New Philanthropy Capital showed that there is a third less local charitable activity in Levelling Up priority areas, than in the lowest priority areas. And vital community facilities are being lost – Hospitality Market Monitor shows a long-term decline in the number of licenced premises – down 13% since before the pandemic.

New evidence

## People in more deprived areas have fewer amenities



**People in the most deprived communities are at greater risk of becoming lonely (21%) than people in the least deprived areas (14%)**

**22% of people in the most deprived areas disagree they get on well with people from different backgrounds versus 9% in the least deprived areas**

Community Life Survey 2021/22 Reference Tables - published May 2023 and Understanding Society. [data series] University of Essex, Institute for Social and Economic Research. (2023).

**We know we can do better than this.  
Do you have a sustainable solution for longer lives?**

Please email your solution to [info@ilcuk.org.uk](mailto:info@ilcuk.org.uk)

The ILC Longevity White Paper is supported by:

