

Course: BSc (Hons) Health and Social Care
Module: Independent Project (BMHP6020_BIRM)
Component 1: Element 1 - Project Proposal

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My project title: The Impact of Social Isolation on the Mental Health of Older Adults in the UK: A Review of Community-Based Interventions.

Aim

This project will look closely at how social isolation affects the mental health and well-being of older adults in the United Kingdom. It will also assess how well community programs work to reduce loneliness and encourage older people to participate in social activities.

Objectives

- Analyse the relationship between social isolation and mental health in older adults in the UK.
- Analyse current community-based programmes and their effectiveness in reducing loneliness and improving wellbeing.
- Evaluate evidence from UK-based studies, policy reports, and organisational initiatives that address social isolation.
- Provide recommendations for improving health and social care practices and community engagement strategies aimed at supporting older adults' mental health.

Background

In the UK, social isolation and loneliness have emerged as growing public health concerns among the ageing population (Public Health England, 2020). Recent statistics from Age UK (2023) show that over one million older adults experience loneliness, a concern closely tied to mental health issues like anxiety, depression, and cognitive decline (Fakoya, McCorry & Donnelly, 2020). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic further intensified these issues, especially among those with restricted mobility or limited access to digital technologies (Steptoe & Di Gessa, 2021).

In response to social isolation among older adults, both government and community groups have started initiatives like social prescribing, befriending schemes, and volunteer programs to encourage social engagement. However, there is not enough evidence to show how effective, sustainable, or inclusive these programs are. This study is critical because it will review literature focused on the UK to find practical strategies and offer policy recommendations that improve the mental well-being of older adults in community and care settings.

Methods

In this research, a secondary approach will be utilised to examine existing evidence from the UK regarding older adults and their experiences. The study will draw on a variety of credible sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, publications from the NHS and government, as well as reports from UK organisations such as Age UK and the Office for National Statistics. To gather relevant literature, databases like EBSCOhost, ProQuest, and PubMed will be searched using key terms including “older adults,” “social isolation,” “loneliness,” and “UK interventions.” A thematic analysis will be conducted to uncover common findings, outcomes, and any identified gaps in the existing research.

Resources

- i. EBSCOhost, ProQuest, PubMed
- ii. NHS England Digital Library
- iii. Age UK and Public Health England Reports
- iv. ONS Data

Timescale

i.	Weeks 1–2	Literature search and planning
ii.	Weeks 3–5	Analysis of sources
iii.	Weeks 6–7	Draft writing and revision
iv.	Week 8	Final proofreading and submission

Self-reflection

I have strong analytical and writing skills that will aid in the successful completion of this research project. My primary challenge will be navigating the vast array of literature available. Through this endeavour, I aim to refine my critical appraisal abilities, enhance my evidence-based reasoning, and improve my academic writing as part of my professional development.

References

Age UK (2023) *Loneliness and social isolation in later life*. Available at: <https://www.ageuk.org.uk> (Accessed: 4 October 2025).

Fakoya, O.A., McCorry, N.K. and Donnelly, M. (2020) '*Loneliness and social isolation interventions for older adults: a scoping review of reviews*'. BMC Public Health.

Lee, C., Kuhn, I., McGrath, M., Remes, O. and Lafortune, L. (2021) '*A systematic scoping review of community-based interventions for the prevention of mental ill-health and the promotion of mental health in older adults in the UK*'. Health & Social Care in the Community.

NHS England (2023) *Social prescribing and community-based support*. Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/personalisedcare/social-prescribing/> (Accessed: 10 October 2025).

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Public Health England (2020). *Tackling loneliness and social isolation: the role of public health*. London: PHE.

Steptoe, A. and Di Gessa, G. (2021) '*Mental health and social interactions of older people with physical disabilities in England during the COVID-19 pandemic*'. The Lancet Public Health.