

Loneliness & Social Isolation JSNA (2025)



1. Introduction

It is estimated that approximately 1 million older people in the UK are often lonely. Loneliness is a major issue that is now widely recognised in society today. This Chapter of the Ageing Well Joint Strategic Needs Assessment focuses on Loneliness and Social Isolation by adults aged 55 and over across Cheshire West and Chester.

The terms Loneliness and Social isolation are often interlinked however the definitions vary. AGE UK define them as -

Loneliness is a feeling, related to whether the social contact we have is meaningful to us and meets our emotional needs.

Isolation is being alone, whether or not that's what we want. Someone can be isolated but not feel lonely – and someone can feel lonely even when they're surrounded by people. (1)

In 2018 the Government created a new Strategy for Loneliness and defined Loneliness as “a subjective, unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship. It happens when we have a mismatch between the quantity and quality of social relationships that we have, and those that we want” (2)

The report stated - “Loneliness is not new but we do increasingly recognise it as one of our most pressing public health issues. Feeling lonely often is linked to early deaths – on a par with smoking or obesity. It’s also linked to increased risk of coronary heart disease and stroke, depression, cognitive decline and an increased risk of Alzheimer’s. It’s estimated that between 5% and 18% of UK adults feel lonely often or always. And when we feel socially rejected, it triggers a response in our brain similar to one from experiencing physical pain.”

Whilst the report also indicated that – “People are living longer, but not necessarily experiencing increased quality of life to match those increased years”

In 2020, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport commissioned a report on the financial impact of loneliness and whilst the report did indicate that those aged between 16 – 30 were most likely to feel lonely and those aged between 60 – 75 least lonely, it was still 3.2% of men and 4.3% of women. This increased to 4.4% in men and 4.9% in women over the age of 75. (3)

There are over 40,000 people aged 75+ living in Cheshire West and Chester. They make up 10.9% (40,464) of the population, a higher proportion than those aged 75+ in England (9.3%).

The population in Cheshire West and Chester is forecast to increase over the next ten years with the greatest increase is in the number of older people. Those aged 65+ are forecast to increase by 22% (17,300). (4)

The 2020 Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport report indicated a link between loneliness and poor health with the proportion of people who described themselves as 'lonely' being 25.1% for those describing themselves as being in 'poor health', and to 29.2% for people who described themselves as being in 'very poor' health. Locally, this is especially concerning as 11 Wards in the Borough have over 15% of residents aged over 65 who would describe their health as either 'poor' or 'very poor'. (3)

It also gave what it described as a conservative estimate of at least £9,537 per person per year as the cost of someone suffering severe loneliness.

The issue of loneliness is appearing to get worse. A report compiled by the Centre for Social Justice suggesting that 2023/24 was the loneliest year on record based on government data. (5)

In a poll created by the Centre for Social Justice it was revealed that nearly six in ten adults feel lonely most, often or some of the time. It also highlighted that in addition to the human cost, loneliness is contributing to the Treasury's financial black hole, costing the taxpayer billions of pounds. The cost to health and social care services of severe loneliness in older people is in excess of £6,000 per person. Researchers found that preventing loneliness could see savings of £3.6 million. (5)

It is these contributing factors that led to Loneliness and Social Isolation being selected as a Chapter in the Ageing Well JSNA.

2. The Older People Loneliness Dashboard

2.1 About the Older Peoples Loneliness Dashboard

The Older Peoples Loneliness dashboard was created to support the work of this Needs Assessment and is designed to be used alongside local knowledge to help identify where there is a higher risk and potentially higher levels of loneliness in Cheshire West and Chester. (6)

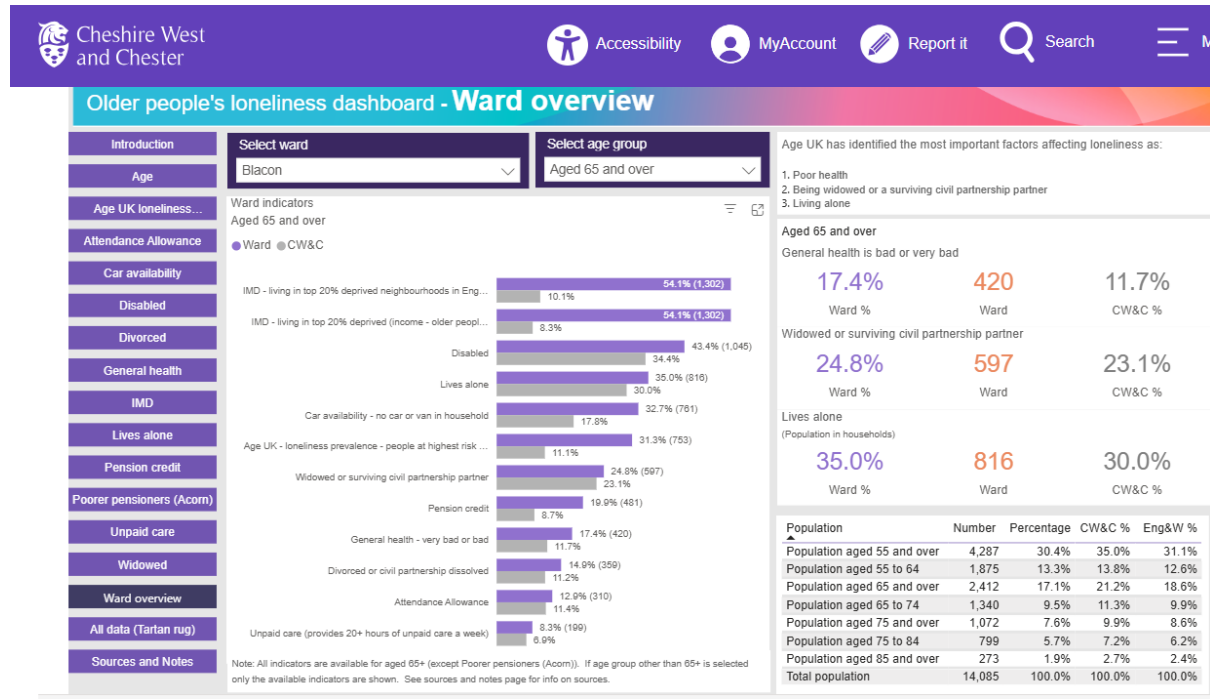
The dashboard provides statistics and maps on a range of indicators that national research has found are linked to higher risk of loneliness in an attempt to 'paint a picture' of where loneliness prevalence may be highest in older adults across the Borough.

Each of the thirteen indicators in the dashboard can be viewed individually, with maps and tables showing the wards with the highest prevalence in terms of numbers

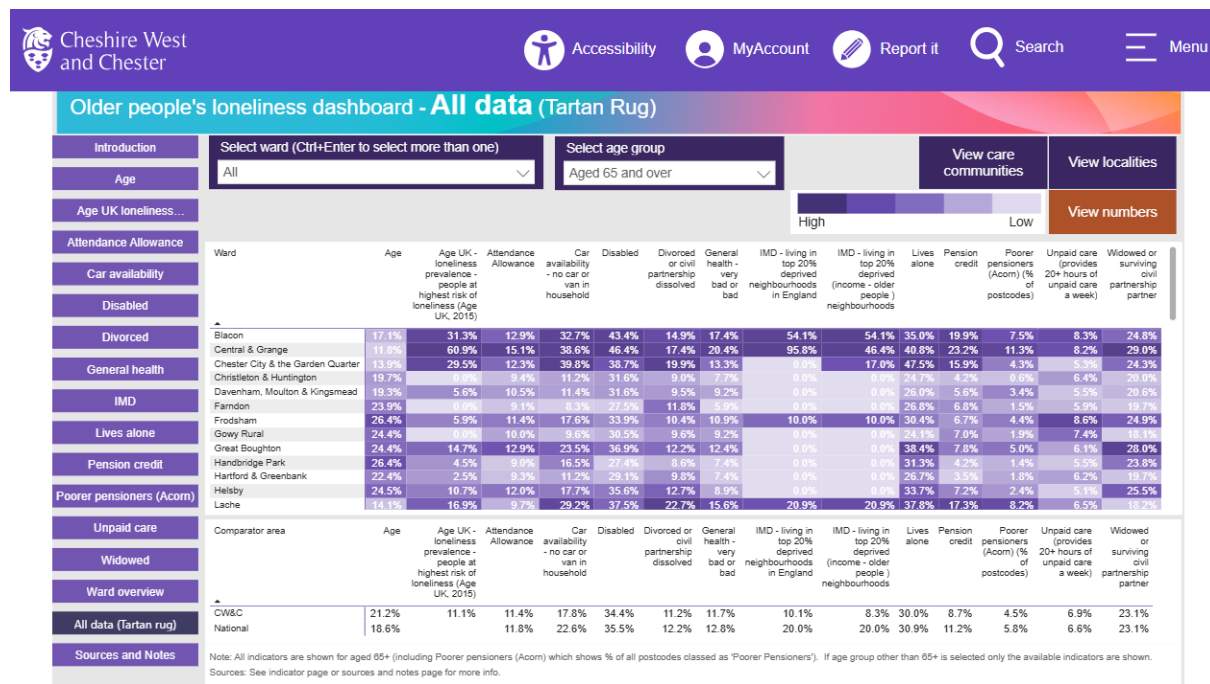
and percentages. Borough and national numbers and percentages are also included for context and comparison.

There is also a ward overview function to see how different areas are affected by each indicator and the comparisons against the Borough average; and an all data 'Tartan Rug' feature to give an overall visual display.

Screenshot – Ward Overview



Screenshot - Tartan Rug



This data can be found via the dashboard within reference 6.

2.2 Dashboard Key Findings

With such a vast array of data available it is possible to draw both broad overarching conclusions on wards where loneliness is most likely and more detailed conclusions based on specific population cohorts.

Overall, there are clearly wards that score significantly above the Borough and national average across many of the indicators. These include Central and Grange, Westminster and Wolverham in Ellesmere Port, Blacon in Chester and a number of the Wards in Winsford.

It should be noted that the dashboard is designed to highlight a range of factors that may increase the likelihood of loneliness in an area. It can be used to help identify the need for different types of support in different locations. The risk of loneliness will remain the same in these areas as long as underlying factors such as age profile, access to a car, and people living alone do not change. However, by using the dashboard to gain insight into need, support can be tailored to where the risk of loneliness is highest, helping to tackle loneliness across the borough.

More specific conclusions can be made when looking at specific indicators. For example, Northwich Leftwich has the second highest rates of unpaid carers in those aged over 65, one of the highest rates of both 'Poorer Pensioners' and 'deprivation via the IMD indicator' (that measures areas of deprivation.) It also has high percentages of residents without car access, poor general health and those who live alone, so these combined would also indicate a high probability loneliness is concern in this area.

Specific indicators also highlight possible loneliness concerns. There is a strong correlation between those wards with high numbers of people with disabilities and those on the AGE UK loneliness predictor. Westminster ward for example has the third highest percentage of residents living with a disability (42.2%), is the second highest percentage on the AGE UK indicator (57.3%) but also has the highest percentage of over 65's living alone (50%) and has an IMD deprivation indicator of 100%. These factors combined would suggest a significant chance of loneliness in this ward, and specific support may be required to help those with disabilities.

Wards with high number of specific groups such as unpaid carers will also need consideration as those with additional caring roles often can feel lonely and isolated. The risks of loneliness may be amplified by transport or financial issues. Northwich Leftwich, Netherpool and Frodsham wards all have very high percentages of unpaid carers (over 12%) and also have low percentages of people with access to a car and who are also on Pension Credit. Specific support is available for unpaid Carers, but more work may still be required to enable people to access this support.

Specific support could be required in wards with high numbers of older residents who are widowed, live alone or are recently divorced. These include Chester City and Garden Quarter, Newton and Hoole and Great Boughton in Chester, and Whitby and Central and Grange in Ellesmere Port.

The biggest strength of this dashboard is that it allows people in each ward to look at the specific needs within those areas and help create targeted support to meet the needs of the residents. It also allows those with responsibility for specific groups or cohorts of people to understand the areas of the borough where need is highest.

2.3 Focus on the borough overall

For those focussing on how to tackle older people’s loneliness across the borough, the ‘All data (tartan rug)’ function shows data for the borough overall. The indicators with the highest rates overall are, people aged 65+ who are: disabled (34.4%; 26,044), live alone (30.0%; 22,158) widowed or surviving civil partnership partner (23.1%; 17,475). At a borough level offering support for these particular groups could help maximise the number of people supported that may be affected by loneliness.

Cheshire West and Chester
Older people's loneliness dashboard - All data (Tartan Rug)

Introduction | Select ward (Ctrl+Enter to select more than one) | Select age group | View care communities | View localities

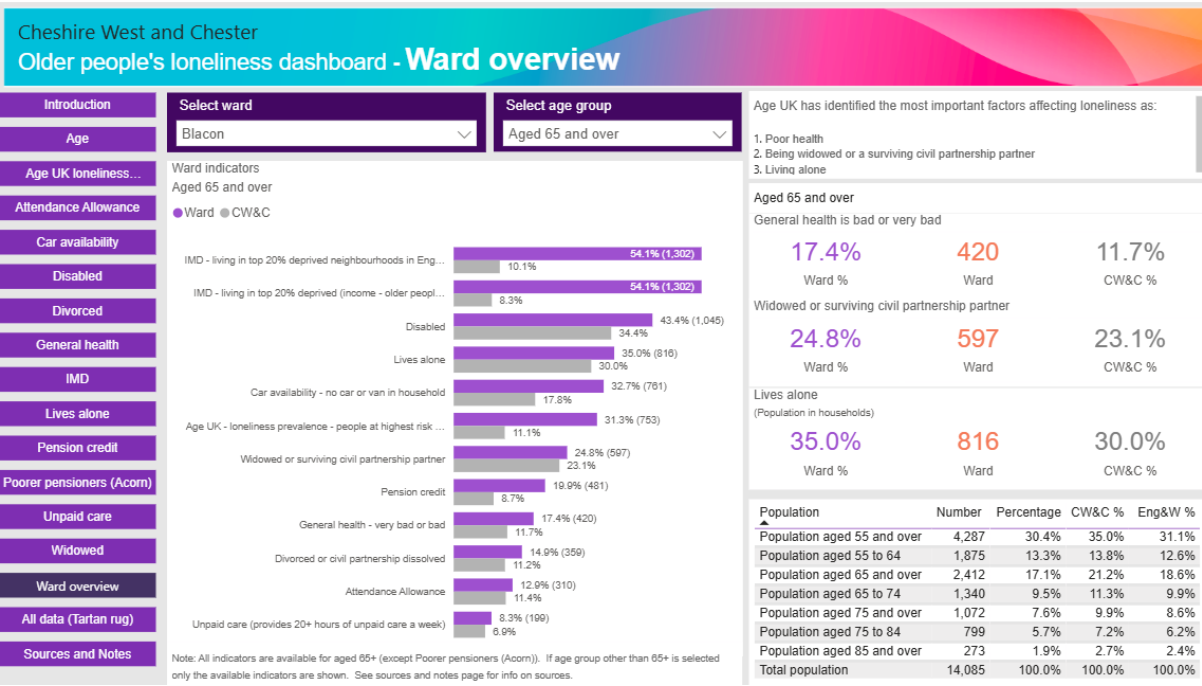
Age | All | Aged 65 and over | High | Low | View numbers

Ward	Age	Age UK - loneliness prevalence - people at highest risk of loneliness (Age UK, 2015)	Attendance Allowance	Car availability - no car or van in household	Disabled	Divorced or civil partnership dissolved	General health - very bad or bad	IMD - living in top 20% deprived neighbourhoods in England	IMD - living in top 20% deprived (income - older people) neighbourhoods	Lives alone	Pension credit	Poorer pensioners (Acorn) (% of postcodes)	Unpaid care (provides 20+ hours of unpaid care a week)	Widowed or surviving civil partnership partner
Blacon	17.1%	31.3%	12.9%	32.7%	43.4%	14.9%	17.4%	54.1%	54.1%	35.0%	19.9%	7.5%	8.3%	24.8%
Central & Grange	11.8%	60.9%	15.1%	38.6%	46.4%	17.4%	20.4%	95.8%	46.4%	40.8%	23.2%	11.3%	8.2%	29.0%
Chester City & the Garden Quarter	13.9%	29.5%	12.3%	39.8%	38.7%	19.9%	13.3%	0.0%	17.0%	47.5%	15.9%	4.3%	5.3%	24.3%
Christleton & Huntington	19.7%	0.0%	9.4%	11.2%	31.6%	9.0%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	24.7%	4.2%	0.6%	6.4%	20.0%
Davenham, Moulton & Kingsmead	19.3%	5.6%	10.5%	11.4%	31.6%	9.5%	9.2%	0.0%	0.0%	26.0%	5.6%	3.4%	5.9%	20.6%
Faindon	23.9%	0.0%	9.1%	8.3%	27.5%	11.8%	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%	26.8%	6.8%	1.5%	5.9%	19.7%
Frodsham	26.4%	5.9%	11.4%	17.6%	33.9%	10.4%	10.9%	10.0%	10.0%	30.4%	6.7%	4.4%	8.6%	24.9%
Gowry Rural	24.4%	0.0%	10.0%	9.6%	30.5%	9.6%	9.2%	0.0%	0.0%	24.1%	7.0%	1.9%	7.4%	18.1%
Great Boughton	24.4%	14.7%	12.9%	23.5%	36.9%	12.2%	12.4%	0.0%	0.0%	38.4%	7.8%	5.0%	6.1%	28.0%
Handbridge Park	26.4%	4.5%	9.0%	16.5%	27.4%	8.6%	7.4%	0.0%	0.0%	31.3%	4.2%	1.4%	5.5%	23.8%
Hartford & Greenbank	22.4%	2.5%	9.3%	11.2%	29.1%	9.6%	7.4%	0.0%	0.0%	26.7%	3.5%	1.6%	6.2%	19.7%
Helsby	24.5%	10.7%	12.0%	17.7%	35.6%	12.7%	8.9%	0.0%	0.0%	33.7%	7.2%	2.4%	5.1%	25.5%
Lache	14.1%	16.5%	9.7%	29.2%	37.5%	22.7%	15.6%	20.9%	20.9%	37.8%	17.3%	8.2%	6.5%	16.2%
Comparator area	Age	Age UK - loneliness prevalence - people at highest risk of loneliness (Age UK, 2015)	Attendance Allowance	Car availability - no car or van in household	Disabled	Divorced or civil partnership dissolved	General health - very bad or bad	IMD - living in top 20% deprived neighbourhoods in England	IMD - living in top 20% deprived (income - older people) neighbourhoods	Lives alone	Pension credit	Poorer pensioners (Acorn) (% of postcodes)	Unpaid care (provides 20+ hours of unpaid care a week)	Widowed or surviving civil partnership partner
CW&C	21.2%	11.1%	11.4%	17.8%	34.4%	11.2%	11.7%	10.1%	8.3%	30.0%	8.7%	4.5%	6.9%	23.1%
National	18.6%			22.6%	35.5%	12.2%	12.8%	20.0%	20.0%	30.9%	11.2%	5.8%	6.6%	23.1%

Note: All indicators are shown for aged 65+ (including Poorer pensioners (Acorn) which shows % of all postcodes classed as 'Poorer Pensioners'). If age group other than 65+ is selected only the available indicators are shown. Sources: See indicator page or sources and notes page for more info.

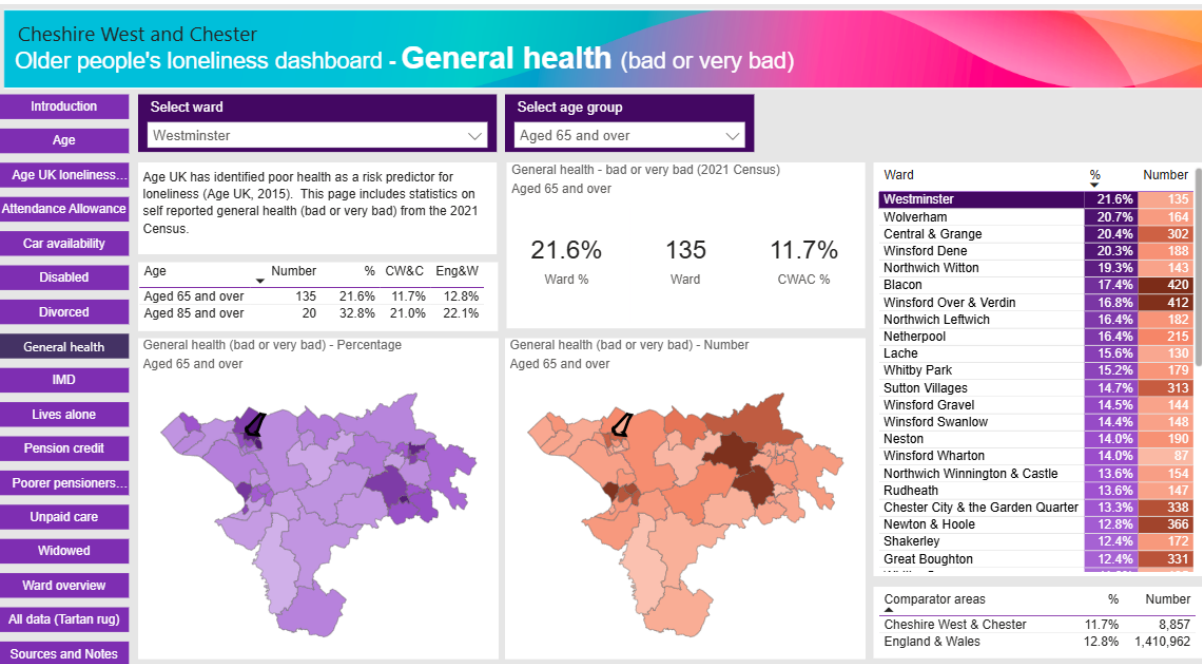
2.4 Focus on need in a ward

For those focussing on how to tackle loneliness in a particular ward, the ‘Ward overview’ page of the dashboard shows the indicators and issues in each particular ward. The example, in Blacon ward, in terms of the three factors Age UK has identified as most important in affecting loneliness, Blacon has a higher proportion of people aged 65+ and in poor health, widowed and living alone than the borough. This alongside higher levels (than the borough average) of all other indicators in the dashboard suggests loneliness prevalence is higher in the ward than the borough overall. The chart shows the key issues potentially driving higher levels of loneliness in terms of numbers of people (and percentages) in Blacon. There are high levels of deprivation (compared to the borough overall), and relatively high (compared to other indicators) numbers of disabled people, older people living alone, and those without cars. Tailored support for Blacon ward might want to focus on supporting the relatively large numbers of people affected by these particular issues.



2.5 Focus on particular indicator across the borough.

Age UK has identified living alone as one of the key predictors of loneliness. In Cheshire West and Chester at the time of the 2021 Census, 30% of people aged aged 65+ and more than half of those aged 85+ lived alone. For those wanting to tailor support to this particular group of residents, the 'Lives alone' page in the dashboard shows hotspots in terms of numbers and percentages of people living alone. For example, in terms of relatively high percentages, Westminster ward and Chester City and the Garden Quarter ward are hotspots with around 50% of people aged 65+ living alone in these areas. Ward levels across the borough range from 51% in Westminster to 22% in Sandstone. In terms of numbers, there are relatively large numbers of residents living alone in Chester wards (over 3,000 in total in Chester City and the Garden Quarter, Newton and Hoole and Great Boughton). These are large wards in terms of total population aged 65+, however they also all have relatively high proportions of older people living alone and these statistics may indicate a geographical area where there is a higher level of need for support for those living alone to help tackle loneliness.



3. JSNA Activity Participation Survey

In 2023, as part of the research supporting the JSNA, a participation survey was created to gather the lived experience of older residents living in the Borough. Full details of this survey are available in Annex A.

Questions were asked in relation to weekly participation in activities. and were designed to try and understand participation rates, knowledge of local activities and how many people may potentially feel lonely or isolated without directly asking.

Initially, responses were collated in three separate ways: Social Prescribers, who are trained link workers within primary care that support individuals to improve their health and wellbeing by connecting them to non-medical community groups and activities; the Local Authority's 'Participate Now Panel', whose members volunteer to give feedback; and through an e-bulletin circulated by Cheshire West Voluntary Action, a local organisation that supports Community and Voluntary Organisations within the Borough.

Responses were analysed separately initially to understand if 'how' the responses were collected had an impact on the results given. However, upon review, there were no significant differences between the results on any of the questions. Therefore, the results were combined to give one larger data set of 363 responses.

The ages of those completing the survey were as follows –

Age	55- 64	65 - 74	75 - 84	85+	Unknown
Number	103	146	89	19	6

Whilst ideally more replies of residents over 85 would have been desirable, there was a balanced spread across the age ranges and there were some interesting findings when looking at the data in age categories.

An effort was made to try and secure responses from across the Borough. Due to the collection of postcodes during the survey we were able to view the responses in terms both geographical location and level of deprivation (using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintiles) (7). This is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas in England and is calculated by combining seven measures relating to Health, Education and Employment. It ranks areas in terms of deprivation and divides these areas into five groups (quintiles: 1 most deprived to 5 least deprived).

Locality	Chester	Ellesmere Port	Northwich and Winsford	Rural	Unknown
Number	75	31	68	172	17

Quintile	1	2	3	4	5	Unknown
Number	17	50	56	77	146	17

There was less representation from residents living in the most deprived neighbourhoods in the borough (quintile 1). This may have had an impact upon the results as deprivation is considered a probable cause of loneliness and social isolation.

The following responses were collected for each question in the questionnaire.

1. What current activities do you engage in an average week?

- Social gatherings is most popular in all age groups.
- A fifth (20%) of responders said they do not engage in regular social activities.
- Volunteering is very important to the over 65's.
- 'Others' comprised over 60 different options.
- Health and Fitness was well supported, particularly by the 55-64 age group. With Seated Fitness activities popular with over 75's.

2. What activities would you like to engage in an ideal week?

- Social gathering with friends was the most popular answer overall, with Health and Fitness groups the highest scoring answer for residents aged 55-64.
- Volunteering was popular particularly with those over 65's, although less popular in Ellesmere Port.
- Arts and Crafts, and Food / Cooking were popular options, with traditional activities such as 'Knit and natter' and 'Lunch clubs' receiving very few positive responses.

3. Do you know what social groups / activities are available each week for adults?

- Concerningly 31% of responders picked the bottom two answers with 18% suggesting they did not know of 'many' groups in their area, and 13% suggesting they did not know of 'any' groups in their area.
- Only 14% of respondents chose the most positive answer suggesting they knew about lots of activities in their locality in different venues.
- People living in Rural areas are more likely to know what groups are in their local community with only 26% of the 172 responses choosing the bottom two answers, and only 8% suggesting they did not know of any groups in the area.
- Still, only 16% of rural responders suggested they knew about lots of activities in their locality in different venues. Notably, this response was only 6% of the responses in Ellesmere Port.

4. What barriers, if any, do you have for taking part in groups and activities?

- Whilst 'I don't believe I have any barriers' was the most popular response (39%), 61% of people who responded do have a barrier to taking part in group activities.
- For many people under 65 being in Work was a common response, which would also be reflected in 'time of groups' as these are often scheduled during the daytime when people are at work.
- Suitability of location for a group and transport could be viewed as a similar issue and both relate to having a suitable accessible venue . The combined total was 32%, although less so in Chester.
- Transport is a bigger barrier as residents age, with only 8% of the youngest age category considering it a barrier, compared to 26% of those over 75
- Cost was the lowest barrier cited by only 11% of respondents. However, very few people who responded to this survey were from the most deprived areas based on the IMD data.
- Within the 'others' category, being a carer was frequently mentioned in the comments as a barrier to participation.

5. How would you like to be informed about groups and activities in your area?

- Online methods of communication were considered the most popular method of communication overall.
- Websites were the most frequently cited by those under 75, with those over 75 preferring direct email contact.
- Traditional methods such as Newsletters and Community noticeboards were well received; however, Newspapers score much lower, perhaps reflecting the fall in the of number of people who regularly read a newspaper.

**6. Thinking about how much contact you have with people you like, which of the following statements best describes your Social Situation?
(A list of 4 options was given related to 'if someone felt like they had enough social contact.')**

- Positively the highest response with 42% was that people had 'as much social contact as I want with people I like'.
- There were 28% who either did not have enough social contact or had little contact and felt isolated.

4. Adult Social Care Survey Questions

An annual Adult Social Care survey gathers feedback from service users in Cheshire West and Chester. Some of the responses to the 2021-22 survey were analysed to focus on those aged 55 for this JSNA. Full details of this survey are available in Annex B.

This data was analysed as a whole set, but also by the same age groups as the participation survey; the same geographical locations; gender and also by the IMD quintiles as there was a balanced spread across all quintiles with this data set.

Question (8a)- Thinking about how much contact you have had with people you like, which of the following statements best describes your social situation.

- This was the same question as from the participation survey.
- Only 35% of respondents had as much social contact as they wished with people they liked. (Compared to 42% of respondents in the participation survey)
- There were 36% who either 'did not have enough social contact' or had 'little contact and felt isolated.. The number of Adult Social Care service users who said they either 'did not have enough social contact' or had 'little contact and felt isolated' decreased with age. Those aged 55-64 had a combined total of 43%, this decreases slightly to 41% in 65-74 year olds, then dropped again to 32% in the 75-84 category and again to 30% in the 85+ age group.
- The responses from Quintile 1 (the most deprived) have the lowest number of people who said they had 'little social contact and felt isolated' however they also had the highest number who described themselves as having some social contact but not enough. The combined total for these scores was 50%
- There was limited difference in the responses by both males and females. Males were more likely to report they have as much social contact as they wanted with people they liked, than females; 37% compared to 33%, respectively.

A follow up question was included in the Adult Social Care users survey to enquire if the support people received helped them have social contact.

Question (8b) - Do care and Support services help you in having social contact with people?

- 48% of respondents (123) said care and support services do not help them in having social contact with people.
- Although not statistically significant due to the low sample numbers the following respondents were more likely to say this:
 - Those living in Chester
 - Those aged between 75-84
 - Males

An additional question was analysed regarding how respondents spent their spare time.

Question (9a) - Which of the following statements best describes how you spend your time.

- Only 20% of responses suggested they were able to spend their spare time doing things they value or enjoyed.
- 14% said they did not do anything of value with their spare time.
- Those aged over 85 were less likely to say they did not do anything of value with their spare time (9%). This was half of those aged between 55-64.

Another follow up question was included in the Adult Social Care users survey to enquire if the support people received helped people in relation to how they spent their spare time.

Question (9b) – Do care and support services help you in the way you spend your spare time?

- 50% of respondents (130) said care and support services do not help them in the way they spend their time.
- Although not statistically significant in the data due to the low sample numbers the following respondents were more likely to say this.
 - Those living in Chester
 - Those living in IMD Quintile 3
 - Those aged 75 plus
 - Females

5. Social Action Outreach Feedback

On 29th February 2024, in collaboration with the Good Practice Mentor Network (8), a small team completed a Social Action outreach task in Ellesmere Port. (Full details are available in Annex C.)

This focused on approaching people who the team believed to be aged over 55 and initiating conversations about how people spent their spare time.

It was not planned as a formal survey or questionnaire, and we made this clear in our initial approach to people. This was an attempt to start a free-flowing conversation with notes taken afterwards, so it felt informal, and responses were not restricted. With the goal of gaining insight from people who may not provide feedback in other ways.

The conversations were based around three key questions.

1. How do you spend your free time / leisure time?
2. Do you feel you are meeting enough people?
3. How do you / or would like to find out about groups and activities?

There were additional questions depending on the responses received to gather more detail whilst also trying to make sure it felt like a natural conversation.

Overall, 38 conversations took place with 20 older men and 18 older women. Based on the information shared with us by the people we approached and engaged the following information was recorded:

- Eight conversations indicated or expressed loneliness (One older man highlighted that opportunities for casual conversations rather than organised planned events were required)
- Seven conversations included indications or expressions of isolation. (COVID-19 has changed atmosphere 'scared' to talk to people outside of family -older woman).
- Three carers (2 men, 1 woman) all of whom found it difficult to socialise/take up activities as a result of caring for their partner ("I don't really have any 'leisure time/interests' I look after my wife she had a stroke last year" - older man)
- Three indications or expressions of vulnerability. (Shared is transgender 'I have to be careful' - older man)
- Six what were described by the Good Practice Mentor Lead as 'Special conversations.' (In-depth conversations that in themselves provided a significant social interaction/opportunity for older person to share views/substantive personal information about their lives). In-depth conversations, focused on unreliable housing for older people, who did not have heating for several months (older man)

During our conversations 15 individuals were given signposting information about local groups/ activities.

One of the key insights from using this method is the individual stories and informal case studies gained through these snapshots. This brings data to life and gives feedback from people who could be described as 'hardly reached' in our communities, that may not complete surveys or take other opportunities to share their experiences.

A conversation with an older woman met alone in Ellesmere Port market shared:

“That she lives alone, spends a lot of time alone and has depression. She has a big family, but they won’t want to know. She comes to the Market everyday it is open and stays for lunch. Very sad it is becoming a ‘food court’ as doubts she will be able to afford it. She is concerned the market stall holders will leave. She said she would like to meet people but can’t see how and since COVID-19 a lot of what was available has stopped. When asked what would help her to access activities: transport, I have COPD. Also has a motorised wheelchair. Said that she is not online, information about activities and opportunities needs to be put up and visible in the places she can see it.”

6. Warm Hubs / Welcome Spaces

In October 2022, as part of the response to rising energy prices, Cheshire West and Chester Council joined a number of local authorities in launching a warm hub initiative. This started with council buildings such as Libraries, Museums and Leisure centres offering a warm, welcoming Space, and provide residents with refreshments, activities, and the chance to stay warm without having to heat their own home.

This initiative expanded to the community, voluntary and faith sector with grants being given to organisations to support the Warm Hub initiative. The activities, refreshment offer, and opening times varied, but it provided a community based focal point for residents to come together and stay warm over the winter.

Data on the reasons for frequenting a Warm Hub was not collected as the concept was that these were to be a welcoming space for all. However anecdotal evidence quickly demonstrated that it was the social interaction and having a place to meet and being and spend time in the company of others that became the major draw of the Hubs rather than just to keep warm and save on heating costs.

Over the following years the Hubs have been renamed as Welcome Spaces (10) and continue to operate throughout the year as a Hub to allow social interaction and provide refreshments and activities for residents.

To access more information about our current Welcome Spaces offer, follow the link within reference 10.

7. Service Mapping

The collation and mapping of services to provide social activities and places to prevent residents feeling at risk of being lonely or socially isolated is required.

This allows Social Prescribers, Care Staff, Social Workers, and residents and their families a way of accessing what opportunities are available in the local community.

The Live Well Cheshire West platform is the Cheshire West and Chester site that allows people to access this information. (10)

In addition to the Livewell site there is the option to speak to Council employees at ‘Lets Talk’ Community Hubs. These link council services and the community sector

and provide face to face support for residents. More details of how to access this support can be found in reference 11.

8. Examples of Good Practice

With Loneliness and Social Isolation being considered a national issue there have been opportunities to work with other organisations on the topic.

The Good Practice Mentor Network are a team from around the country that brings together legacy, learning and resources from Ageing Better, a seven-year Test and Learn project that worked to reduce social isolation and loneliness in people aged over 50, and engaged more than 150,000 people in over 366 projects. (8)

They supported us in our Social Action Outreach research both in planning our goals and joining us on the day, about also acting as a sounding board for the areas we were looking to investigate.

They have worked extensively in this field and have created a Toolkit to support working in communities to reduce loneliness and isolation in older adults.

Key themes from their work include:

- Creating a culture of co-production
- Community development through micro-funding
- Tackling ageism through co-production
- Growing sustainable groups
- Asset based community development

In 2020, East Lincolnshire Council conducted an all-age study on social isolation in their Borough through a multi-disciplinary team in partnership with Community and Voluntary organisations. They analysed data, conducted interviews, held workshops and conducted desk-based research. (13)

Their key findings were -

- We believe that being single, a lone parent, carer, care leaver, experiencing sudden loss of a partner or social networks can amplify people's feelings of loneliness and isolation.
- We believe that there is not enough understanding about social isolation and loneliness, who it affects, and how people can get support.
 - There is a perceived stigma about isolation and loneliness that prevents people reaching out for help
 - It is not clear for people struggling with social isolation on where to get help
 - Sometimes organisations are not recognising the signs and symptoms of isolation and loneliness
 - Often people do not recognise the causes of the way they feel
- We believe that the absence of a clear picture of community activities in some areas leads to gaps in delivery and to people not knowing what is available to them.

- We believe that a lack of access to, knowledge about, and funding for, transport means that people are not able to take part in activities.
- We believe that people's mental health issues prevent them from seeking or accessing support, getting online or meeting others socially:
 - Lack of confidence, depression, anxiety and other mental and emotional health issues have a dramatic effect on people's ability to attend activities and/or reach out.
 - Services and organisations are not always set up to understand or support individual needs.
 - Residents and organisations talked about long term and past issues (family issues, domestic abuse, trauma and abuse in childhood) that have affected people's abilities to develop and form friendships and relationships.
 - People with severe anxiety often struggle to even make a phone call
- We believe that digital exclusion can prevent people from social contact and increase social isolation
- We believe that the system cannot effectively meet people's needs without better 'joined up' working and more person-centred delivery
- We believe that 'issue' focussed provision can miss the true value of the individual, their need for purpose and how they can play a part in community life
 - We make assumptions about people, and people make assumptions about themselves
 - We don't ask people about their lives or what they'd like to do
 - As people lose or don't use their confidence/capabilities/abilities, we lose valuable contributions they could make within their communities, to their lives and those of others

9. Overall Findings

- There is clear evidence that a significant proportion of residents do not have as much social contact as they would like or frequently enjoy how they spend their spare time.
- There are a significant proportion of older adults who have barriers to taking part in social activities. These can vary depending on individual circumstances.
- The creation of the Loneliness Dashboard to highlight areas with highest overall likelihood of loneliness; the specific support requirements of each ward to help reduce loneliness; and allow people to see where across the Borough those who may require specific support such as unpaid carers or those who have been widowed are located. (6)
- The Loneliness Dashboard strongly indicates wards with multiple factors that are likely to cause Loneliness and Social Isolation. These include Central and

Grange, Westminster and Wolverham in Ellesmere Port, Blacon in Chester and several wards in Winsford.

- Social Gatherings were the most popular in all age groups, so whilst structured activities are valued, creating opportunities for people to make connections to enjoy unstructured time is important.
- Volunteering is considered a very popular option for the over 65's and therefore a huge potential resource to support community activities are available if harnessed correctly. This, in combination with small grant funding opportunities to grow small groups, could be an important strategy in reducing social Isolation.
- Health and fitness, arts and crafts, and food and cooking are popular activities for residents over 55 years old. This may be a change to the traditional activities offered in many community venues, so adapting the programme of events to meet the needs of the users is important.
- Groups and activities need to be 'local' for older residents and draw on the strengths and resources in the local community. 'Places of Welcome' (9) and 'Lets talk' hubs (11) provide a good structure of locations across the Borough for those initial places to meet new people and discover more about the options in each local community.
- Places of welcome and Lets talk should encourage a 'warm welcome strategy' for people new to the group or venue. This will put them at ease initially and may encourage them to return and reduce social anxiety.
- A significant number of residents may not be aware of all the groups and activities available in their area. A strong digital offer to show the options available locally is required, complemented by local newsletters and community notice boards.
- As part of the digital resource a 'Live' Mapping Portal to publicise groups and activities that can be updated by users and not become out of date would allow the most up to date information to be available for service users, support workers and social prescribers.
- Whilst providing local support for residents in their community is important, finding suitable transport has been highlighted as a priority in all of the feedback received.
- There is the potential that the scale of the number of people impacted by loneliness or social isolation could be higher as there are potentially many people experiencing these issues who are not known to any services or community organisations.

- The impact of informal hubs such as local markets where people can gather cannot be underestimated, and changes to these spaces or the closing of them may have significant previously unconsidered impact.
- Walking was referenced through various forms of feedback. Informal walking groups based in communities may be an easy solution that could support a number of people at a basic level. (14)
- Lack of self-confidence, depression, anxiety and other mental and emotional health issues have a dramatic effect on people's ability to attend activities and can increase the chances of being socially isolated.

10. Recommendations

- Programmes of support to reduce loneliness and social isolation should be prioritised within grant programs. These should include opportunities for people to develop social connections outside of structured group times.
- Organisations should be supported to develop volunteering opportunities across the Borough.
- Community venues need to evaluate to see if their current programme of activities meets the needs of their wider communities.
- The Community Led Support approach through the Borough's 'Let's Talk' offer should be developed to further draw on the strengths of the local communities and give a focal point for communities and develop the support available hyper-locally.
- An improved digital offer should be available to compliment the Let's Talk hubs and show the community support available in each area. This needs to remain updated with accurate information to support service users, social providers and Community groups.
- Reducing loneliness and social isolation needs to be a focus for any transport reviews and collaboration is needed because if people are unable to access the available support, then any changes will not have the desired impact.

11. References

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11. **Cheshire West and Chester Council (2026)** *Let’s Talk Health and Wellbeing*. Available at: <https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/health-and-social-care/adult-social-care/getting-support-from-adult-social-care/lets-talk-health-and-wellbeing> (Accessed: 21 January 2026).
12. **Permission to Reference Good Practice Mentors Toolkits:**
Following confirmation from the Good Practice Mentor, permission has been granted to reference and include links to the Good Practice Mentors resources within the JSNA. The Good Practice Mentor highlighted two key toolkits that provide practical strategies for finding and engaging people who are less likely to

access formal groups, services, activities and support. These should be credited to the Good Practice Mentors.

- **Good Practice Mentors (no date)** *Street Outreach Toolkit*. Available at: https://www.syha.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/GPM-Street_outreach_landscape-FINAL-1.pdf (Accessed: 4 February 2026).
- **Good Practice Mentors (no date)** *Informal Conversational Strategies Toolkit*. Available at: https://www.syha.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/GPM-Informal-conversational-strategies_landscape-FINAL.pdf (Accessed: 4 February 2026).

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Appendix 1 - JSNA Activity Participation Survey

In 2023 as part of the research into the JSNA a participation survey was created to gather the lived experience of older residents living in the Borough.

Six questions were asked in relation to weekly participation in activities.

1. What current activities do you engage in an average week?
2. What activities would you like to engage in an ideal week?
3. Do you know what social groups / activities are available each week for adults?
4. What barriers, if any, do you have for taking part in groups and activities?
5. How would you like to be informed about groups and activities in your area?
6. Thinking about how much contact you have with people you like, which of the following statements best describes your Social Situation? (A list of 4 options were given related to 'if someone felt like they had enough social contact.')

The questions were designed to try and understand participation rates, knowledge of local activities and how many people may potentially feel lonely or isolated without directly asking.

Initially, responses were collated in three separate ways.

- 53 responses came from people who had been referred to Social Prescribers.
- Cheshire West and Chester have a Community Sector infrastructure Partner (Cheshire West Voluntary Action) who shared the survey through their e-bulletin which generated 94 responses.

- 216 responses came through a group of residents (aged over 55) who have agreed to offer the council feedback on initiatives, through a tool called the Participate Now Panel.

Responses were analysed separately initially to understand if ‘how’ the responses were collected had an impact on the results given. However, upon review, there were no clear significant differences between the results on any of the questions.

Therefore, the results were combined to give one larger data set of 363 responses.

The ages of those completing the survey were as follows –

Age	55- 64	65 - 74	75 - 84	85+	Unknown
Number	103	146	89	19	6

Whilst ideally more replies of residents over 85 would have been desirable, there was a balanced spread across the age ranges and there were some interesting findings when looking at the data in age categories.

An effort was made to try and engage in responses from across the Borough.

Responses were categorised by locality. -

Locality	Chester	Ellesmere Port	Northwich and Winsford	Rural	Unknown
Number	75	31	68	172	17

Chester and Ellesmere Port both focused on those towns in the west of the Borough. Northwich and Winsford were grouped together as geographically close on the east of the Borough and often have shared initiatives and working groups in Adult Social Care. Rural was the name given to the remainder of the Borough that does include rural areas, but also the other market towns, such as Neston, Frodsham, Tarporley and Malpas which are spread across the Borough but all much smaller in population and do not often have the resources focused on them compared to the four main towns in the Borough.

Due to the collection of postcodes during the survey we were also able to view the responses in terms of the IMD quintiles. This is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas in England and is calculated by combining seven measures relating to Health, Education and Employment. It ranks areas in terms of deprivation and divides these areas into five groups (quintiles).

Quintile	1	2	3	4	5	Unknown
Number	17	50	56	77	146	17

There was less representation from residents living in the most deprived areas of the borough (quintile 1). This may have had an impact upon the results as deprivation is considered a probable cause of loneliness and social isolation.

Q1. What current activities do you engage in during an average week?

Age Group	55-64	65-74	75-85	85+	Unknown	Total	
Social Gatherings with Friends	47	92	44	8	3	184	51%
Volunteering	26	61	34	2	1	124	34%
Other (Please Specify)	20	50	33	9	1	113	31%
Health and Fitness Groups	42	40	25	4		111	31%
I currently do not engage in regular social activities	30	21	15	5		71	20%
Arts and Crafts	9	24	14	4	2	53	15%
Food / Cooking	7	23	17	3	1	51	14%
Reading Groups	7	20	12	2		41	11%
D.I.Y.	9	16	11	2		38	10%
Music / Singing	5	15	12	2	2	36	10%
Lunch Clubs	2	13	9	6	3	33	9%
History	5	14	10	2		31	9%
Seated Fitness Activities	2	1	11	3		17	5%
Knit and Natter	0	6	5	3		14	4%
Board Games	4	0	17	2	1	14	4%
Total	103	146	89	19	6	363	100%

- Social gatherings is most popular in all age groups.
- 20% of responses said they do not engage in regular social activities.
- Volunteering is very important to the over 65's.
- 'Others' contained over 60 different options.
- Health and fitness was well supported, particularly by the 55-64 age group. With seated fitness activities popular with over 75's.
- Arts and crafts, and food and cooking were popular with over 65 residents.
- (Similar trend for reading and DIY groups.) Lunch clubs were popular with residents over 85's
- There were no distinct geographical variations.

Q2. What activities would you like to engage in an ideal week?

When analysing by the age of those giving the responses.

Age Group	55-64	65-74	75-85	85+	Unknown	Total	
Social Gatherings with Friends	49	75	39	6	2	166	46%
Health and Fitness Groups	61	55	25	4	1	146	40%
Volunteering	32	53	25	0	2	112	31%
Arts and Crafts	26	39	21	9	0	95	26%
Food / Cooking	33	40	19	2	1	95	26%
History	27	40	22	1	0	90	25%
Other (please Specify)	18	32	15	3	0	68	19%
Music / Singing	19	26	16	3	1	65	18%
Reading Groups	15	27	15	4	0	61	17%
D.I.Y.	20	19	10	2	0	51	14%
Lunch Clubs	12	17	13	2	3	47	13%
Seated Fitness Activities	3	3	17	2	0	25	7%
Knit and Natter	3	10	10	0	1	24	7%
Board games	2	4	13	1	1	21	6%
TOTAL	103	146	89	19	6	363	100%

- Social gathering with friends was the most popular answer overall with Health and Fitness groups being the highest scoring answer for residents aged 55 – 64.
- Volunteering was popular particularly with those over 65's
- Arts and crafts, and food / cooking were popular options, with traditional activities such as 'Knit and natter' and 'Lunch clubs' receiving very few positive responses.
- Others contained 24 different suggestions from walking to gardening to specific interest where only one person suggested.

When looking at the responses based on Locality

Locality	Chester	Ellesmere Port	Winsford and Northwich	Rural	Unknown	Total	
Social Gatherings with Friends	35	15	26	83	7	166	46%
Health and Fitness Groups	27	12	25	77	5	146	40%
Volunteering	31	6	23	50	2	112	31%
Arts and Crafts	19	9	25	39	3	95	26%
Food / Cooking	15	12	15	49	4	95	26%
History	23	10	14	39	4	90	25%
Other (please Specify)	16	7	16	27	2	68	19%
Music / Singing	13	8	14	25	5	65	18%
Reading Groups	14	3	13	29	2	61	17%
D.I.Y.	9	7	16	18	1	51	14%
Lunch Clubs	10	2	8	25	2	47	13%
Seated Fitness Activities	6	5	5	9	0	25	7%
Knit and Natter	5	4	4	11	0	24	7%
Board games	2	3	5	11	0	21	6%
Total	75	31	68	172	17	363	100%

- History was well supported more than the average in Chester
- Volunteering was less popular than the average in Ellesmere Port
- Arts and Craft was more popular than average in Northwich and Winsford
- Food / Cooking was more popular than average in rural locations.

Q3. Do you know what social groups / activities for adults are available locally?

When analysing by the age of those giving the responses.

Age Group	55-64	65-74	75-85	85+	Unknown	Total	
3. I know about some groups and activities that happen in the area.	29	43	24	4	1	101	28%
4. I know of a number of local groups and activities in the area.	20	41	28	5	1	95	26%
2. I don't know of many groups and activities in the area	26	26	11	2		65	18%
5. I know of many groups and activities that take place in different locations	14	21	13	3		51	14%
1. I don't know of any groups and activities in the area.	14	14	13	5		46	13%
Blank		1			4	5	1%
Total	103	146	89	19	6	363	100%

- Concerningly 31% of responders picked the bottom two answers with 18% suggesting they did not know of 'many' groups in their area, and 13% suggesting they did not know of 'any' groups in their area.
- Only 14% of respondents picked the most positive answer suggesting they knew about lots of activities in their locality in different venues.

When looking at the responses based on Locality

Locality	Chester	Ellesmere Port	Winsford and Northwich	Rural	Unknown	Total	
3. I know about some groups and activities that happen in the area.	18	9	23	47	4	101	28%
4. I know of a number of local groups and activities in the area.	21	8	14	52	0	95	26%
2. I don't know of many groups and activities in the area	14	6	11	30	4	65	18%
5. I know of many groups and activities that take place in different locations	10	2	9	27	3	51	14%
1. I don't know of any groups and activities in the area.	12	6	11	14	3	46	13%
Blank				2	3	5	1%
Total	75	31	68	172	17	363	100%

- People living in Rural areas are more likely to know what groups are in their local community with only 26% of the 172 responses picking the bottom two answers, and only 8% of them suggesting they did not know of any groups in the area.
- Still only 16% of rural responses picked the most positive answer suggesting they knew about lots of activities in their locality in different venues, however this response was only 6% of the responses in Ellesmere Port.

Q4. What barriers, if any, do you have for taking part in groups and activities.

When analysing by the age of those giving the responses.

Age Group	55-64	65-74	75-85	85+	Unknown	Total	
I don't believe I have any barriers	32	66	38	4		140	39%
Others (Please Specify)	32	32	15	6	1	87	24%
Time of Groups	36	24	14	2	1	77	21%
Suitability of Location	19	25	18	3	2	67	18%
Interest in activities	24	22	9	4		59	16%
Transport	8	15	20	8	1	52	14%
Self Confidence	13	26	11	1		51	14%
Cost	16	10	8	5		39	11%
Total	103	146	89	19	6	363	100%

- Whilst 'I don't believe I have any barriers' was the most popular response with 39% that still indicates that 61% of people who responded do have a barrier to taking part in group activities.
- For many people under 65 being in work was a common response, which would also be reflected in 'time of groups' as these often happen during the daytime when people are at work.
- Suitability of location and transport could be viewed as combining to a similar issue because both relate to requiring a suitable accessible venue and had a combined total of 32%
- Transport is a bigger barrier as residents age, with only 8% of the youngest age category considering it a barrier, compared to 26% of those over 75
- Cost was the lowest barrier listed with only 11%, however very few people who responded to this survey were from the most deprived areas based on the IMD data.
- Within the 'others' category listed being a carer was frequently mentioned in the comments as a barrier to participation.

When analysing by the age of those giving the responses

Locality	Chester	Ellesmere Port	Winsford and Northwich	Rural	Unknown	Total	
I don't believe I have any barriers	27	12	28	68	5	140	39%
Others (Please Specify)	18	11	18	37	3	87	24%
Time of Groups	16	5	14	36	6	77	21%
Suitability of Location	15	6	13	28	5	67	18%
Interest in activities	14	4	13	24	4	59	16%
Transport	9	8	8	26	1	52	14%
Self Confidence	10	4	11	25	1	51	14%
Cost	8	2	8	17	4	39	11%
Total	75	31	68	172	17	363	100%

- Transport was considered proportionately less of a barrier in Chester City and the towns of Northwich and Winsford. Ellesmere Port went against that trend with 26% of its 31 responses considering it a barrier.
- Anecdotal evidence suggests Rural transport is an issue however statistically it was only highlighted by 15% of the 172 Rural responses.

Q5. How would you like to be informed about groups and activities in your local area?

Age Group	55-64	65-74	75-85	85+	Unknown	Total	
Websites	72	91	44	5		212	58%
Direct Email Contact	42	73	46	10	1	172	47%
Newsletters	33	52	33	5		124	34%
Community Notice Boards	32	52	26	6		116	32%
Leaflets	22	39	27	5		93	26%
Flyers	20	28	18	4		70	19%
Local Newspapers	14	30	14	5	1	64	18%
Text messages	11	24	10	4	1	50	14%
Others (Please Specify)	21	14	2	0	1	38	10%
Community Workers	10	3	9	2		24	7%
Telephone Calls	2	3	2	2	1	10	3%
Total	103	146	89	19	6	363	100%

- Online methods of communication were considered the most popular method of communication overall.
- Websites were the highest by those under 75 with those over 75 preferring direct email contact.
- Traditional methods such as Newsletters and Community noticeboards were well received; however Newspapers score much lower, probably indicating the fall in the of number of people who regularly read a newspaper.
- Neither text messages or phone calls received significant numbers to suggest their popularity.
- There were no significant geographical variations.

Q6. Thinking about how much contact you've had with people you like, which of the following statements best describe your social situation.

Age Group	55-64	65-74	75-85	85+	Unknown	Total	
1. I have as much social contact as I want with people I like	40	68	38	6	1	153	42%
2. I have adequate contact with people	37	36	22	8		103	28%
3. I have some contact with people, but not enough	20	41	22	4	1	88	24%
4. I have little social contact with people, and I feel socially isolated	6	1	7	1		15	4%
Blank					4	4	1%
Total	103	146	89	19	6	363	100%

- This question is also replicated in the Adult Social Care Survey that goes out each year.
- Positively the highest response with 42% was that people had 'as much social contact as I want with people I like'.
- There were 28% who either did not have enough social contact or had little contact and felt isolated.
- There were no geographical variations.

Appendix 2 - Adult Social Care Survey Questions

An annual Adult Social Care survey gathers feedback from service users in Cheshire West and Chester. Some of the responses to the 2021-22 survey were analysed to focus on those aged 55 and over to support this JSNA.

This data was analysed as a whole set, but also by the same age groups as the participation survey; the same geographical locations; gender and also by the IMD quintiles as there was a balanced spread across all quintiles with this data set.

Question (8a)- Thinking about how much contact you have had with people you like, which of the following statements best describes your social situation.

Response	I have little social contact with people and I feel socially isolated		I have some social contact with people but not enough		I have adequate social contact with people		I have as much social contact as I want with people that I like		Total
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	
All Responses	31	12%	63	24%	76	29%	90	35%	260

- This was the same question as from the participation survey.
- Only 35% of respondents had as much social contact as they wished with people they liked. (Compared to 42% of respondents in the participation survey)
- There were 36% who either 'did not have enough social contact' or had 'little contact and felt isolated.' With 12% feeling Socially isolated.

Response	I have little social contact with people and I feel socially isolated		I have some social contact with people but not enough		I have adequate social contact with people		I have as much social contact as I want with people that I like		Total
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	
Age									
Aged 55- 64	8	16%	14	27%	11	22%	18	35%	51
Aged 65- 74	7	13%	15	28%	14	26%	17	32%	53
Aged 75 – 84	11	14%	15	18%	24	31%	27	35%	77
Aged 85+	5	6%	19	24%	27	35%	27	35%	78

- The number of Adult Social Care service users who said they either 'did not have enough social contact' or had 'little contact and felt isolated' decreased with age. Those aged 55-64 had a combined total of 43%, this decreases slightly to 41% in 65-74 year olds, then dropped again to 32% in the 75-84 category and again to 30% in the 85+ age group.

Response	I have little social contact with people and I feel socially isolated		I have some social contact with people but not enough		I have adequate social contact with people		I have as much social contact as I want with people that I like		Total
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	
Location									
Chester	12	15%	25	32%	20	25%	22	28%	79
Northwich and Winsford	9	12%	15	20%	24	32%	26	35%	74
Rural	7	13%	7	13%	20	36%	21	38%	55
Ellesmere Port	3	6%	16	31%	12	24%	20	39%	51

- The number of Adult Social Care service users who said they either 'did not have enough social contact or had 'little contact and felt isolated' was most prevalent in Chester with 47%, with 15% saying they felt socially isolated.
- Chester had the lowest number of people who said they had as much social contact as they would want with the people they like at only 28%
- Ellesmere Port had the lowest number of people who said they had 'little contact and felt isolated' at 6% It also has the highest number of people who felt they had as much social contact as they wanted at 39%
- The Rural area has the lowest combined total at 26% of those who felt they did not have enough social contact, or those that felt they had little and were isolated.

Response	I have little social contact with people and I feel socially isolated		I have some social contact with people but not enough		I have adequate social contact with people		I have as much social contact as I want with people that I like		Total
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	
IMD 2019 Quintile									
Q1	3	6%	22	44%	12	24%	13	26%	50
Q2	8	13%	15	23%	18	28%	23	36%	64
Q3	7	16%	11	24%	13	29%	14	31%	45
Q4	5	14%	4	11%	11	31%	16	44%	36
Q5	8	13%	11	17%	22	34%	23	36%	64

- The responses from Quintile 1 (the most deprived) have the lowest number of people who said they had 'little social contact and felt isolated' however they also had the highest number who described themselves as having some social contact and not enough. The combined total for these scores was also the highest at 50%
- Quintile 1 also received the lowest number of people who suggested they had as much social contact as they wanted with people they liked.

- Those responses from people living in Quintile 4 have the fewest responses to suggest they have ‘some social contact, but not enough’ or ‘little contact and feel isolated’ at 25%; and the highest total so people who have as much social contact as they want with people they liked.

Response	I have little social contact with people and I feel socially isolated		I have some social contact with people but not enough		I have adequate social contact with people		I have as much social contact as I want with people that I like		Total
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	
Female	20	11%	45	25%	53	30%	59	33%	177
Male	11	13%	18	22%	23	28%	30	37%	82

- There was limited difference in the responses by both males and females, with males having a slightly higher response to having as much social contact as they wanted with people they liked. 37% compared to 33%.
- There was only a 2% difference between genders when looking at the two most positive responses. 65% male and 63% female.

A follow up question was included in the Adult Social Care users survey to enquire if the support people received helped them have social contact.

Question (8b) - Do care and Support services help you in having social contact with people?

Response	No		Yes		I do not need care and support services to help me have social contact with people		Total
	Total	%	Total	%			
All Responses	123	48%	87	34%	47	18%	260

- 48% of respondents (123) said care and support services do not help them in having social contact with people.
- Although not statistically significant in the data due to the low sample numbers the following respondents were more likely to say this:
 - Those living in Chester
 - Those aged between 75-84
 - Males

An additional question was analysed regarding how respondents spent their spare time.

Question (9a) - Which of the following statements best describes how you spend your time.

Response	I don't do anything I value or enjoy with my time		I do some of the things I value or enjoy with my time		I am able to do enough of the things I value or enjoy with my time		I am able to spend my time as I want doing things I value or enjoy		Total
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	
All Responses	35	14%	89	35%	82	32%	51	20%	257

- Only 20% of responses suggested they were able to spend their spare time doing things they value or enjoyed.
- 14% said they did not do anything of value with their spare time.

Response	I don't do anything I value or enjoy with my time		I do some of the things I value or enjoy with my time		I am able to do enough of the things I value or enjoy with my time		I am able to spend my time as I want doing things I value or enjoy		Total
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	
Age									
Aged 55- 64	8	18%	17	33%	12	24%	13	25%	51
Aged 65- 74	6	12%	14	27%	22	42%	10	19%	52
Aged 75 – 84	13	17%	29	38%	21	28%	13	17%	76
Aged 85+	7	9%	28	36%	27	35%	15	19%	77

- Those aged over 85 had the fewest responses to say they did not do anything of value with their spare time 9%. This was half of those aged between 55-64.
- Those aged between 65-74 had the highest combined total of responses of the two most positive replies 61% with those aged 75-84 the lowest at 45%

Response	I don't do anything I value or enjoy with my time		I do some of the things I value or enjoy with my time		I am able to do enough of the things I value or enjoy with my time		I am able to spend my time as I want doing things I value or enjoy		Total
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	
Location									
Chester	14	18%	29	37%	20	26%	15	19%	78
Northwich and Winsford	7	10%	28	38%	25	34%	13	18%	73
Rural	6	11%	18	34%	14	26%	15	28%	53
Ellesmere Port	8	15%	13	25%	23	44%	8	15%	52

- Chester had the highest percentage of those who indicated they did not do anything of value with their spare time 18% and the highest combined of the lowest two responses 55%.
- The Rural responses were the highest in relation to those who could use their spare time doing the things they valued or enjoyed (28%) nearly double that of Ellesmere Port (15%)
- Ellesmere Port did have the lowest number of combined responses at 40% of those who felt they did not do anything or only some of the things they value or enjoy in their spare time.

Response	I don't do anything I value or enjoy with my time		I do some of the things I value or enjoy with my time		I am able to do enough of the things I value or enjoy with my time		I am able to spend my time as I want doing things I value or enjoy		Total
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	
IMD 2019 Quintile									
Q1	8	16%	15	31%	15	31%	11	22%	49
Q2	9	14%	22	34%	20	31%	13	20%	64
Q3	4	9%	22	49%	12	27%	7	16%	45
Q4	7	21%	4	12%	12	35%	11	32%	34
Q5	7	11%	25	39%	23	36%	9	14%	64

- The responses from Quintile 3 have the lowest number of people who said they did not do anything of value in their spare time (9%) however they also had the highest number who described themselves as doing some things they enjoy. The combined total for these scores was also the highest at 56%
- Those responses from people living in Quintile 4 had both the highest number of responses to suggest they did not do anything they enjoy with their spare time (21%) and the highest number who said they were able to spend their spare time as they chose 32%

Response	I don't do anything I value or enjoy with my time		I do some of the things I value or enjoy with my time		I am able to do enough of the things I value or enjoy with my time		I am able to spend my time as I want doing things I value or enjoy		Total
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	
Gender									
Female	24	14%	62	36%	54	31%	34	20%	174
Male	11	13%	26	32%	28	34%	17	21%	82

- The responses from both males and females were generally similar in terms of percentages for each answer. There is a 5% variation when looking at those who gave their answers as being either being able to spend their spare time as they chose, or enough of their spare time as they chose. Males 61% and females 55%

Another follow up question was included in the Adult Social Care users survey to enquire if the support people received helped people in relation to how they spent their spare time.

Question (9b) – Do care and support services help you in the way you spend your spare time?

Response	No		Yes		I do not need care and support services to help me in the way I spend my time		Total
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	
All Responses	130	50%	76	29%	53	20%	259

- 50% of respondents (130) said care and support services do not help them in the way they spend their time.
- Although not statistically significant in the data due to the low sample numbers the following respondents were more likely to say this.
 - Those living in Chester
 - Those living in IMD Quintile 3
 - Those aged 75 plus
 - Females

Appendix 3 - Social Action Outreach Feedback

On 29th February 2024 in collaboration with the Good Practice Mentor Network (6) a small team completed a Social Action outreach task in Ellesmere Port.

This focused on approaching people who the team believed to be aged over 55 and initiating conversations about how people spent their spare time.

It was not planned as a formal survey or questionnaire, and we made this clear in our initial approach to people. This was an attempt to start a free-flowing conversation with notes taken afterwards, so it felt informal, and responses were not restricted. With the goal of gaining insight from people who may not provide feedback in other ways.

The conversations were based around three key questions.

- 4. How do you spend your free time / leisure time?**
- 5. Do you feel you are meeting enough people?**
- 6. How do you / or would like to find out about groups and activities?**

There were additional questions depending on the responses to try and gather more detail but also trying to make sure it felt like a natural conversation.

38 conversations took place with 20 older men and 18 older women plus additional six conversations. Based on the information shared with us by the people we approached and engaged the following information was recorded.

- Eight conversations indicated or expressed loneliness (One Older Man highlighted that opportunities for casual conversations rather than organised planned events were required)
- Seven conversations indications or expressions of isolation. (Covid has changed atmosphere 'scared' to talk to people outside of family - older woman).
- Three carers (2 men, 1 woman) all of whom found it difficult to socialise/take up activities as a result of caring for their partner ("I don't really have any 'leisure time/interests' I look after my wife she had a stroke last year" - older man)
- Three Indications or expressions of vulnerability. (Shared is transgender 'I have to be careful' -older man)
- Six What were described by the Good Practice Mentor Lead as 'Special conversations.' (In-depth conversations that in themselves provided a significant social interaction/opportunity for older person to share views/substantive personal information about their lives). In-depth conversation, spoke a lot about unreliable housing for older people, did not have heating for several months (older man)

During our conversations 15 individuals received signposting information about local groups/ activities.

In conversation focusing on the 1st question - **How do you spend your free time / leisure time?**

By identifying frequent words/common responses we know that the people we engaged shared with us that they do:

- Nothing (nine responses)
- Socialise with friends/family (eight responses)
- Visit the market and shopping centre as social activity (seven responses)
- Walking (four out of five go alone)
- Visit library (three)
- Pub (two)
- Bingo (two)
- Fishing (two)
- Singular responses: football, watch TV, church, gardening, golf, local club/group

As part of the conversation where appropriate follow up questions asked –

1.a) Anything you would like to do?

1.b) Anything that would help you to do it?

In these conversations

- Six responses suggested they were unsure or did not know what they would like to do.
- Three people suggested they would like to do something, but their health was an issue.
- Single responses included walking, fishing, bingo and ‘anything’.
- Five people suggested transport was an issue in participation.
- Three people indicated that options needing to be affordable.
- Three responses that more options were needed in the local area.

When analysing the responses to the second question – **Do you feel you’re meeting enough people?**

- 12 clearly said ‘No’ with a further 3 people saying yes but only referencing family in the conversations about who they met.

The follow up questions in relation to this were

2.a) How and where would you like to meet people?

2. b) Anything that would help you to do this?

2. c) Are you interested in any formal groups / activities?

- There were no clear places where people indicated where they would like to meet, with just two references to community spaces.

- Transport was again considered an issue with four people mentioning it in conversation.
- In relation to ‘organised groups 4 people said, ‘yes’ with two more ‘maybe’s’ and one” so long as it was informal”

When asking about **How do you / or would like to find out about groups and activities?**

With the follow up question

3.a) Anything that would help to do so

- 14 referenced ‘online’ options or search engines.
- Six indicated they Don’t know where to look/find information
- Four Wife/family member/friend
- Three Library
- Three Community space/club or group
- Two Noticeboard
- Single responses: Facebook, Pride in the Port (Local Social media account), Local paper, word of mouth, council website, ask someone.
- Eight responders said ‘I’m not online’
- Six responses suggested that ‘Put up information/flyers in public spaces would help.
- Two referenced using the local newspapers “the Wirral Globe use to be brilliant for this’)

One of the key insights from speaking in this method is the individual stories and informal case studies you can gain through these snapshots. This brings data to life and gives feedback from people who could be described as ‘hardly reached’ in our communities, that may not complete surveys or take other opportunities to share their experiences.

Older woman met alone in Elsmere Port market shared

“That she lives alone, Spends a lot of time alone and has depression. She has a big family, but they won’t want to know. She comes to the Market everyday it is open and stays for lunch. Very sad it is becoming a ‘food court’ as doubts she will be able to afford it. She is concerned the market stall holders will leave. She said she would like to meet people but can’t see how and since Covid a lot of what was available has stopped. When asked what would help her to access activities: transport, I have COPD. Also has a motorised wheelchair. Said that she is not online, information about activities and opportunities needs to be put up and visible in the places she can see it.”

Based on our social action research activity – What opportunities might there be for further engagement?

Suggestions could include:

- Exploring, if possible, for staff at the information stall in the market to take a ‘roaming approach’ proactively approaching and sharing information.

- Opportunity to provide an informal feeling steppingstone activity to bring harder to reach older people together in the market café. This could be a springboard for engaging seldom heard voices in your coproduction/consultation approach.
- Informal walking groups.
- Put up information about local opportunities in the market area/shopping centre.
- Refine social action research approach/questions and go out in the local area for more conversations/insight capture
- Recognition of the market and shopping centre as a key informal social hub for many local older residents