

Press release
For immediate release

WEST OF ENGLAND

IMPACT

ALLIANCE

Alliance of 50 organisations launches charitable programme to end loneliness

An alliance of leading organisations has launched an ambitious charitable programme to “make loneliness a stranger.”

The Impact Alliance is a pioneering initiative bringing together more than 50 diverse organisations to tackle the pressing issue of loneliness and social isolation in the West of England.

By fostering collaboration, sharing expertise and pooling resources, the Impact Alliance aims to deliver significant and sustainable change through funds awarded in Bristol, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire, and Bath and North East Somerset.

A launch event for the Impact Alliance was held at the Bristol Beacon on 3 December, where a panel of experts in the fields of business, education, housing, older people and care were interviewed on stage by Jonathan Dimpleby.

The panel included Kay Libby CEO for Age UK Bristol, Julie Barnett Professor of Health Psychology at the University of Bath, Carol Watson Service Director for Commissioning Housing and Partnership at South Gloucestershire Council, Jessica Vallentine Director of Responsible Business for Business West, Kate Jopling policy and strategy consultant and Chief Executive of the St Monica Trust, David Williams.

Kay Libby said: “The Impact Alliance wants to create a West of England where loneliness is a stranger, and where all individuals feel connected, valued, and supported. By embracing these principles and working together, the Impact Alliance is poised to make a lasting difference in the lives of people across the region.

“Through co-production with local organisations, we will tackle loneliness and social isolation with an in-depth understanding of the issues at the heart of the problem, providing strategic funding and supporting project delivery through established and new partners.”

Kate Jopling said: “While many of us will experience loneliness at some point in our lives, most of us will move past it fairly quickly. But when loneliness becomes a daily experience, it starts to grind us down with devastating impacts on both our mental and physical health.

“The longer we feel lonely, the harder it is to reconnect - and when our communities are affected by loneliness we all miss out on people's contributions and bear the costs of the resulting ill-health. That means there's not only a moral imperative to address it, but also societal and economic benefits to doing so.

“So it's genuinely exciting to see such a broad range of partners coming together to work on this issue across local communities. The solutions to loneliness are as diverse as people are - because it's a totally individual experience - so no one organisation has all the answers, but together we can make a real difference.”

Strong evidence shows that loneliness has a range of negative effects on individuals, including poorer health, increased risk of premature mortality, the onset of depression and other common mental health problems, as well as poor psychological well-being.

According to a white paper issued by the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness:

- Over 9 million adults are often or always lonely. (British Red Cross and Co-op)
- For 3.6 million people aged 65 television is the main form of company. (Age UK)
- More than 1 in 3 people aged 75 and over say that feelings of loneliness are out of their control. (Independent Age)
- 43% of 17 – 25-year-olds using Action for Children services experienced problems with loneliness. (Action for Children)
- Weak social connection is as harmful to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. (Holt Lunstad)
- Loneliness costs UK employers £2.5 billion per year. (Co-op)
- Disconnected communities could be costing the UK economy £32 billion every year. (Big Lunch)

David Williams said: “The challenge of making meaningful change within our communities is highly complex and cannot be achieved by a single funder, organisation or sector, and there is a rich history within our region of collaboration between local funders.”

“Through the Impact Alliance, we are taking a collaborative approach to tackle deep-rooted issues, developing effective and measurable solutions that leave a greater impact and legacy. This way, we can tackle the causes rather than our individual grants acting as a sticking plaster for societal issues, such as loneliness.”

At the beginning of last year, the St Monica Trust invited a range of people and organisations to a series of ‘think tank’ meetings to explore new ways of working, which led to the creation of the Impact Alliance. The Trust has also committed £500,000 per year to the programme, with the goal of raising a minimum of £1.5 million annually through contributions from partner organisations.

Nathan Evans, Director of Partnerships and Development at Shaw Foundation who have committed £100,000 in funding to the Impact Alliance, said: “We would like to thank everyone

who has contributed to the formation of the Impact Alliance and all our partner organisations and delivery partners who came out in support of tonight's event.

“The response has been overwhelmingly positive and there is a clear appetite for enabling long-term change through greater collaboration and focused funding. Together we can indeed make loneliness a stranger.”

The Impact Alliance would like to hear from potential funders, including grant givers, charitable trusts, corporate givers, foundations and philanthropists, as well as delivery partners, universities, researchers and policy makers. For more information go to www.impact-alliance.co.uk or email hello@impact-alliance.co.uk.

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