Twenty-seven older people were involved.

**What is the extent of social isolation amongst older people in Govanhill / Merrylee?**

Members generally think social isolation is a big, and growing problem amongst older people, especially if they have no family. There is a feeling that: ‘We've lost trust in people’, and this is reflected in expressed fears about safety in public places for example.

Social isolation for older men might be a bigger problem, as they may be perceived as difficult to approach, and indeed they may find it harder to acknowledge feeling isolated.

**What impact does social isolation have on older people?**

It affects your health. It pulls you down. You can become lonely and withdrawn. Being stuck in the house all day can cause depression. Bereavement can make a big difference.

Having no-one to talk to from day to day makes it harder to communicate when you finally get the opportunity. The more withdrawn you get, the harder it is to go out, and the longer it goes on, the worse it gets. You get worried – why don’t people visit? You lose confidence.

**How do we combat social isolation?**

**a) existing practice / services**

Examples of current supportive initiatives in the local area include the Dixon Halls, Govanhill Baths Trust, the Church Guild, and local library services (e.g. film club).

Participants in Merrylee appreciate the weekly coffee morning that the Residents Group organises – for some that is the only weekly social activity they have. The Jamieson Court tenants appreciate the common room in the sheltered housing complex, as this enables tenants to meet together at any time.

The importance of having a garden where you can talk to neighbours over the fence is highlighted. Having a dog to walk, or grandchildren to take out, are both good reasons to get out and come into contact with other people. Having access to public
transport is essential, but the difficulties of this for disabled people are acknowledged.

People note that whatever resources exist in the community, people experiencing social isolation have to be encouraged to go out and make use of them. Befriending or buddy projects should be promoted. However, ultimately it has to be their decision.

b) Potential ideas for improvement and influencing policy

More local clubs for older people

Better public transport (Merrylee and Cathcart Road)

More accessible information – use community networks – word of mouth is most persuasive

Befriending projects (especially for older men)

Extend the services of home helps

Better local services and shops – to give people somewhere to go

In Merrylee there is the physical barrier of steps and stairs going over a railway line that prevents some people accessing local shops, church, library etc. There is also the lack of actual premises e.g. community halls, in which to carry out social or recreational activities.

Jamieson Court tenants raise the issue of confidentiality and information sharing. Can people be asked regularly if they want their neighbours and friends to be informed if they are hospitalised for example?

How do we raise awareness in the wider community?

- Through local churches and chapels
- Through local shops
- How do we get people out of their cars, and out from behind their doors?
- Get the message across through the media
- Visit and call your elderly family members.

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