

# Literature search

Reducing loneliness and social isolation in older people

SEARCH FOR Virginia Wilton

17 August 2012

## What you asked for

You and your community groups in Napier are interested in identifying intervention strategies which would reduce social isolation and loneliness in older people. The focus is on getting a feel of what works to make older people actively engaged. You may perhaps write a summary of the research findings. The search is to be from 2000.

## Search summary

As loneliness has strong associations with depression and its adverse mental and physical health consequences, it is considered an independent risk factor for depression. Not surprising then that much of the intervention literature speaks of reducing it in order to improve quality of life and functioning in the elderly.

I have found many intervention strategies, and it appears that the befriending and social group ones are most effective as they reduce loneliness and boost well-being by a large measure. The search has been sometimes restricted to the years after 2005 owing to the large amount of published material available on this subject.

## Search method

The databases used for this search were:

Social Care, EbscoHost Research Databases, Informit (an Australian database) and the Internet.

The search results are presented according to intervention strategies.

## Accessing the results

Items with links can be accessed directly. Contact us if you want any of the hardcopy items.

It may take up to five working days to obtain hardcopy items from external suppliers. Urgent (same or next day) requests can be made. In some cases, we may not be able to supply the items.



MINISTRY OF  
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT  
*Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora*

A6362010



## Search results

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### 1. The internet

#### **Older Australians and the Internet : bridging the digital divide**

[Link to document](#)

National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre. 2011. 32 p.

Older people with low internet skills are unable to conduct business or access important services over the web. They can be isolated from their community and family at a time in their lives when feeling connected is very important. This report sets looks at what older Australians who never or rarely use the internet know about the types of online products and services available to them, and how they might use these to improve their daily life. It identifies the barriers to internet use that exist for the over 50s, and what kind of support is needed to overcome these and bridge the digital divide

#### **Escape loneliness by going digital: A quantitative and qualitative evaluation of a Dutch experiment in using ECT to overcome loneliness among older adults**

[Link to document](#)

T. Fokkema and K. Knipscheer.

Ageing & Mental Health. 11(5) : 496-504 ; 2007.

Note: ECT stands for electronic communication facility.

This study evaluates the outcomes of an Internet-at-home intervention experiment that intended to decrease loneliness among chronically ill and physically handicapped older adults through introducing them to the use of an electronic communication facility. Both the participants and the control persons experienced a reduction in loneliness over time. Moreover, the changes in loneliness were significantly greater among the participants compared to the control persons. E-mail was found to facilitate social contact. Furthermore, the computer and Internet were often used to pass the time, taking people's minds off their loneliness. Unexpectedly, the intervention also improved people's self-confidence.

**Can the internet improve the well-being of the elderly?**

David Mellor, Lucy Firth and Kathleen Moore.

Ageing Int. 32(1) : 25-42 ; 2008.

Note: Please note the year of publication.

This article reports on a project that aimed to evaluate the potential of the Internet to reduce social isolation amongst the elderly, and thereby, improve psychosocial functioning. Twenty residents of a retirement village in Australia volunteered to be given access to, and training in, the use of computers and the Internet. After 3 months, they exhibited little change in measures of self-esteem, positive affect, personal well-being, optimism and social connectedness. However, they reported that they found the use of the Internet to be of great benefit. Over the 12 months of the study data collected suggests that impact of the Internet on the wellbeing of the elderly may be more complex than suggested, and broader than was assessed psychometrically.

**Videoconference program enhances social support, loneliness, and depressive status of elderly nursing home residents**

[Link to document](#)

Hsiu-Hsin Tsai, Yun-Fang Tsai, Hsiu-Hung Wang, Yue-Cune Chang and Hao Hua Chu.

Ageing & Mental Health. 14(8) : 947-954 ; 2010.

The purpose of this Taiwanese quasi-experimental study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a videoconference intervention program in improving nursing home residents' social support, loneliness, and depressive status. Results showed that subjects in the experimental group had significantly higher mean emotional and appraisal social support scores, had lower mean loneliness scores, and lower mean depressive status scores at three months after baseline. As it appeared that videoconference program alleviated depressive symptoms and loneliness in elderly residents in nursing homes, it could be used for residents of long-term care institutions, particularly those with better ability to perform activities of daily living.

**'I feel less lonely': what older people say about participating in a social networking website**

Alison Ballantyne.

Quality in Ageing and Older Adults. 11(3) : 25-35 ; 2010.

This article highlights results from a pilot project that implemented an internet social networking intervention and evaluated the effect it had on older people's experience of temporal loneliness. Six people aged 69 to 85 years were recruited from a community aged care programme in South Australia. All participants were connected to the internet and provided with one-on-one tutoring in how to use the social networking site. Findings revealed four major themes: the participants' experience of loneliness; technology as an enabler; providing a supportive environment; and connectivity. A case study shows how social networking can help reduce the participants' experience of loneliness.

## 2. Radio and telephone

### **Silver Memories: Implementation and evaluation of a unique radio program for older people**

[Link to document](#)

Catherine Travers and Helen P. Bartlett.  
Ageing & Mental Health. 15(2) : 169-177 ; 2011.

A unique radio program Silver Memories, specifically designed to address social isolation and loneliness in older people by broadcasting music (primarily), serials and other programs relevant to the period when older people grew up - the 1920-1950s, first aired in Brisbane, Australia, in April 2008. The impact of the program upon older listeners' mood, quality of life (QOL) and self-reported loneliness was independently evaluated. The results showed a statistically significant improvement in measures of depression and QOL from baseline to follow-up but there was no change on the measure of loneliness. It was concluded that listening to Silver Memories appears to improve the QOL and mood of older people and is an inexpensive intervention that is flexible and readily implemented.

### **An Exploratory Study of Carers' and Care Staff's Perspectives of Silver Memories—A Unique Radio Program for Older People**

Catherine Bartlett Travers Helen.  
Act. Adapt. Ageing. 34(2) : 135 ; 2010.

**Note:** Related to the above item.

The aim of this evaluation was to ascertain the perspectives of both carers of older people and residential care staff regarding the impact of a new radio program, Silver Memories, on the behavior and well-being of older listeners, as well as their opinions regarding the program's quality and appeal. The majority of respondents thought that listening to Silver Memories positively influenced the well-being, morale, and behavior of older listeners very much or greatly. Relaxation was the most frequently reported benefit and older listeners with dementia appeared to receive the greatest benefit. The friendliness and quality of the program were also rated highly. It was concluded that old-time music and programs such as those broadcast by Silver Memories appear to be beneficial for older people.

### **The use of telephone befriending in low level support for socially isolated older people - an evaluation**

Mima Cattan, Nicola Kime and Anne-Marie Bagnall.  
Health and Social Care in the Community. 19(2) : 198-206 ; 2011.

Telephone befriending schemes have long been considered an effective method to reduce loneliness among older people. This study investigated the impact of a national scheme for 40 isolated and lonely older people, involving 8 project sites in the UK. Different models of telephone-based befriending services helped older people to gain confidence, re-engage with the community and become socially active again. They impacted on their health and well-being because of the following outcomes: life is worth living; gaining a sense of belonging; knowing they had a friend; a healthy mind is a healthy body; the alleviation of loneliness and anxiety; increased self-confidence; ordinary conversation; a trusted and reliable service; the future - giving something back. These telephone befriending schemes provide low-cost means for socially isolated older people to become more confident and independent and develop a sense of self-respect.

### Telephone Support Groups for Seniors with Disabilities

Miriam Stewart, Karen Mann, Susan Jackson, et al.  
Canadian Journal on Ageing. 20(1) : 47-472 ; 2001.

The growing population of seniors with disabilities experiences unmet support needs and loneliness. Although support deficiencies can be overcome by peers in support groups, most support groups are inaccessible to older adults with limited physical functioning. Accordingly, this project aimed to develop and test the impact of an accessible telephone support group intervention for seniors with disabilities. Qualitative analyses of the telephone transcripts and post-intervention interviews of participants and leaders revealed decreased support needs, diminished loneliness, and enhanced coping. Selection, training, and support of peer and professional leaders and member control of discussions were important ingredients of successful support groups.

### Dialling up social care for older people

Pat Fitzsimmons.  
Working with Older People. 14(3) : 10-14 ; 2010.

For 20 years Community Network has pioneered the use of social telephony as a means of delivering social care in the UK. Social telephony adopts the concept and technology of telephone conferencing to provide telephone support and befriending groups for vulnerable and marginalised people. As well as highlighting the scale and causes of the problem of social isolation, the article takes a look at different types of telephone befriending groups and why the telephone is currently a far better solution for delivering this type of support than web-based alternatives. The article also explains: how telephone befriending groups work; how much they cost; evaluating the success of the groups; and, most importantly, what the groups can achieve.

## 3. Living arrangements

### Loneliness, housing and health in Australia

[Link to document](#)

Adrian Franklin, Bruce Tranter  
Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute. 38 p. 2011.

This essay explores the relationship between loneliness and housing, and considers whether housing policy in Australia can help address its impact on health. It discusses the rise in loneliness in contemporary society and its policy relevance, and demographic groups at risk, including single people, migrants, homeless people, older people, single parents, and younger adults. The essay draws on the international research literature and the findings from a 2009 survey of Australian adults. The authors conclude that housing is a critical point of intervention, and policies should be developed that address housing pathways, biographies and careers.

### Living arrangements of older persons around the world

[Link to document](#)

United Nations. Dept. of Economic and Social Affairs. Population Division  
New York : United Nations, 2005. 216 p.

Note: Gives a good overview besides international comparisons.

This publication provides the first global survey and analysis of the patterns and trends in the living arrangements of older persons, with comparable data for more than 130 countries. Demographic, social and economic correlates of living arrangements of people aged 60 years or over are analysed, focusing on co-residence with family members, solitary living and the institutionalisation of older persons.

### Social well-being in extra care housing: an overview of the literature

[Link to document](#)

Lisa Callaghan. 2008.

Note: Social well-being is defined as involving social relationships, social participation, social networks, and social support.

The aim of this literature review was: to identify how social well-being has been defined in the literature; to identify what factors affect social well-being; and to identify how social well-being could be measured in the housing and care setting. Searches were conducted of a large number of databases and of the internet. In terms of environmental characteristics, the literature covers the areas of physical design, approach taken to activity provision within the housing and care setting, links with the local community, and staffing and care. The literature on social factors includes friendships and social support, loneliness and isolation, social activity and participation, and social climate.

### Identifying Living Arrangements That Heighten Risk for Loneliness in Later Life: Evidence From the U.S. National Social Life, Health, and Ageing Project

Emily A. Greenfield and David Russell.

Journal of Applied Gerontology. 30(4) : 524-534 ; 2011.

The authors used data from a national sample of adults aged 57 and older to estimate associations between a variety of living arrangements and loneliness to identify risk factors. In contrast to respondents living with a spouse/partner, respondents who were living alone, living with children without a spouse/partner, and living with other relatives or friends without a spouse/partner reported more loneliness. Living alone was associated with greater loneliness among men than women, but living with children without a spouse/partner was associated with greater loneliness among women. Results suggest the importance for interventions aimed at reducing loneliness to target adults who live alone, as well as adults who live with others besides intimate partners, and to consider gender differences in the propensity for particular types of living arrangements to affect loneliness.

**Ageing in place in the United Kingdom**

Andrew SIXSMITH and Judith SIXSMITH.  
Ageing Int. 32(3) : 219-235 ; 2008.

Ageing in Place is a key component of UK policy on older people and housing. Helping older people to 'age in place' at home is seen to benefit the quality of life and also provide a cost-effective solution to the problems of an expanding population of very old people. The research suggests that while ageing in Place may bring social and psychological benefits, there can also be a significant downside on an everyday level. Home in old age can be a place of negative experiences, such as isolation and loneliness and there are often significant weaknesses in terms of informal support, physical environment of the home and neighbourhood and social network, which undermine the person's ability to live independently. The paper then briefly reviews recent UK initiatives to use "telecare" to address some of these issues.

**From exclusion to inclusion: housing and support for older people who are homeless or at risk**

Bruce Judd, Alan Morris and Kay Kavanagh.  
Parity. 18(1) : 58-59 ; 2005.

An estimated 300,000 older Australians on low incomes do not own their own homes and are therefore vulnerable to homelessness or to being housed in inappropriate, inadequate or unstable accommodation. This article outlines an AHURI project that investigated the housing and support needs of older homeless people, through a survey of ACHA (Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged) agency workers and clients. It emphasises the need to provide a variety of housing options and specialised support services for older people who are homeless or at risk, and notes the challenges posed by this need in view of an ageing population, the lack of affordable private rental accommodation and the winding back of public housing programs.

**4. Befriending and social groups****At a glance 60 : preventing loneliness and social isolation among older people**

[Link to document](#)

For Excellence Social Care Institute 2012.

Karen Windle, Jennifer Francis and Caroline Coomber

Note: The link to the full document is [Here](#)

This briefing explains the importance of tackling social isolation and loneliness, particularly among older people. It highlights the adverse effects of feeling isolated and describes a number of services that have been found to help reduce the problem. It also includes case study examples of two services - a befriending scheme and social group - that help to help mitigate loneliness and isolation and improve the wellbeing of older people.

### **Promoting social support and social networks among Irish pensioners in South London, UK**

[Link to document](#)

Bob Cant and Ann Taket.

Diversity in Health & Social Care. 2(4) : 263-270 ; 2005.

The study aimed to explore the nature and extent of unmet mental health needs among Irish pensioners living in a socio-economically deprived borough in South London. The study's findings demonstrated that the project provided space for social interaction among otherwise isolated Irish pensioners, many of whom experienced multiple morbidity. The project worked successfully to overcome the sense of stigma that prevented many of its members accessing statutory services. It also identified needs among carers. There was an Irish cultural ambience at the project centre, which generated a sense of belonging among members, and assisted in the development of social networks. The project initiated other forms of social support through the use of volunteers and developed befriending and telephone support services.

### **VitalLinks: nurturing emotional well-being in older people through one-to-one communication**

Kathleen Gillet and Melanie Dixon.

Working with Older People. 13(4) : 20-23 ; 2009.

VitalLinks, is supporting and promoting befriending for older people. This article considers the new service, and how befriending enhances well-being through one-on-one communication. The initiative allows older people, their families, carers, and other professionals to search for the nearest available befriending schemes. Ranked in the top five of service options that older people consider important, befriending is a good example of low level practical support that is especially effective as a form of early intervention, often allowing older people to live in their own homes and have a 'life worth living'. Schemes such as this can reduce loneliness for older people, and at the same time increase their emotional well-being - in an ever-changing world of online communications, the value of face to face contact is often forgotten.

### **Groupwork as a tool to combat loneliness among older people: initial observations**

Julie Heathcote and Chia Swee Hong.

Groupwork. 19(2) : 121-130 ; 2009.

Independent living and caring for an ageing partner is known to increase loneliness, described as an unwelcome feeling or lack of companionship. Help the Aged has suggested that participation in meaningful activities can reduce isolation and loneliness. This article describes the positive impact of groups on older group members and the staff working with them. By providing companionship, engagement, support and activity, groupwork can bring structure to the lives of older people and their carers who may be feeling 'lonely' and 'isolated' and consequently can impact upon their quality of life. The author concludes that while groupwork is not the solution to reducing social isolation for everyone, for some people it is a positive step in the right direction.



**An exploration of the value and mechanisms of befriending for older adults in England**

Helen Lester.

Ageing and Society. 32(2) : 307-328 ; 2012.

Befriending services are an intervention used in many countries to target social isolation in older adults. This study finds that befriending offers some compensation for loss of elective relationships from older adults' social networks, providing opportunities for emotional support and reciprocal social exchange through development of safe, confiding relationships. Befrienders broadened befriendees' perspectives on life, particularly among older adults in residential care. Social engagement was a powerful mechanism of action, particularly in terms of connecting people back into the community, reinforcing meaningful social roles and connecting to a past life that had often been significantly disrupted by loss.

**Breaking the cycle of loneliness? Psychological effects of a friendship enrichment program for older women**

C. M. S. Martina and N. L. Stevens.

Ageing Mental Health. 10(5) : 467-475 ; 2006.

The present study examines effects of participation in the friendship enrichment program, an intervention that is designed to stimulate improvement in friendship, self-esteem and subjective well-being, as well as reduction in loneliness among older women. The results indicate that the program was successful in attracting lonely older women who were willing to work on their friendships. Many participants reported improvement in the quantity and quality of their friendships. The program was moderately successful in stimulating improvement in subjective well-being and awareness of the need for an active stance toward achieving goals in social relations, especially in friendship. Loneliness among the participants was reduced, but it also declined in the control group, and both groups continued to experience loneliness. One conclusion is that an effective intervention to help older women reduce their loneliness should be multi-dimensional focusing not only on friendship but also on other personal and situational factors contributing to loneliness.

**No country for old men? The role of a 'Gentlemen's Club' in promoting social engagement and psychological well-being in residential care**

Ilka Gleibs.

Ageing Mental Health. 15(4) : 456-466 ; 2011.

A common, negative, effect of residential care is social isolation. This is especially true of men, who are marginalised as a result of reduced numbers and greater difficulty in accessing effective support. This study investigated whether increased socialisation with others of the same gender enhances social identification, well-being, and cognitive ability. Findings revealed a clear gender effect. For women, there was evidence of maintained well-being and identification over time. For men, there was a significant reduction in depression and anxiety, and an increased sense of social identification with others.

**Supporting relationships and friendships: a workbook for social care workers**

Suzan Collins. 2010.

Note: A cost effective tool. Available only as an interlibrary loan.

Receipt of care in residential services or their own homes can result in service user becoming very isolated. This workbook is designed to provide social care staff with the knowledge and skills to understand what friendships and relationships mean to these service users' health and well being. The workbook book is appropriate for all staff supporting people with mental health needs, people with a learning or physical disability, older people and people with dementia. It can also be used as a cost effective training resource in both residential and domiciliary settings.

**Magic Me Programme Profile**

Susan Langford.

Journal of Intergenerational Relationships. 1(4) : 95 ; 2003.

Magic Me programme specialises in intergenerational arts projects. It is based in Spitalfields, London, England. These projects are stated to be creative and educational and they bring together the old and young from diverse sections of the community, thus tackling isolation. It is also stated that a real relationship develops during these programs as each child works with a regular adult partner. It challenges them to take risks and become aware of their own potential.

**5. Primary preventative services****Effectiveness of day services: summary of research evidence**

[Link to document](#)

U. K. Age. 2011.

This briefing updates the research evidence on the effectiveness of day services featured in the publication 'Day services for older people. Quality and effectiveness: a resource for providers and commissioners' (2008). The briefing summarises the key points of the literature review. Due to the lack of evidence focusing on day services, research is also included on activities to reduce isolation and loneliness. The few studies that specifically evaluated the impact of day services found that older people and their carers benefitted from them. The review also identified the different types of day services that can address older people's need for social contact, exercise, to engage in and make contributions to society.

**Adult day groups: addressing older people's needs for activity and companionship**

Tamara Tse and Linsey Howie.

Australasian Journal on Ageing. 24(3) : 134-140 ; 2005.

Adult day groups (ADG) are used by older adults living at home in the community in Australia. Their aim is to prevent social isolation and to maintain independence through supporting social networks and providing a program of activities that enhance the physical, intellectual and social well being of the participants and carers. The study included observation of four ADGs and interviews with five female and three male clients. Four major themes were derived from data analysis: the importance of companionship with staff and clients; how participants valued keeping occupied in activities not achievable at home; how home was experienced as a place where time passed slowly and there were insufficient things to do; and participant dissatisfaction with ADGs.

**Prevention: Promoting well-being**[Link to document](#)

For Excellence Social Care Institute. 2011.

**Note:** An example of primary prevention.

The services featured in this film are specifically aimed at reducing loneliness in later life and include a luncheon club and separate tea dance club, both based in Dorset. These types of services are sometimes referred to as 'primary prevention' and are aimed at people who have few or no social care needs or symptoms of illness. Therefore the focus is on maintaining independence and good health and promoting well-being. 'Primary prevention' can involve the provision of universal access to good quality information, promotion of health and active lifestyles, delivery of practical services and the provision of social groups, such as the ones featured in this film. The film begins by introducing two people, Brian and Gwen who describe the enormous impact that recent bereavement has had on their lives. Both Brian and Gwen are clear about the beneficial effects of the groups they joined, including feeling healthier, fitter, no longer feeling lonely and, for one of them, even finding love again!

**Care to live or live to care?: an insight into the experiences of ageing parent carers**[Link to document](#)

Sue King, Johnson Nsiah, Caitlin McDowell, John Bellamy

Anglicare NSW. : 26 p. ; 2010.

The Anglicare Support Coordination program in New South Wales aims to help older parents caring for an adult child with a disability. This report presents intake information on the issues facing these older carers, including wellbeing, stress, social support, isolation, life satisfaction, service access issues, service gaps and limitations, and what the carers say they need. The report also examines whether these services - such as targeted intervention, transition planning, and alternative accommodation - make a difference, as well as recommendations for policy and service delivery.

**Promoting health and wellbeing in later life: interventions in primary care and community settings**[Link to document](#)

Helen Frost, Sally Haw and John Frank. 2010.

**Note:** Please search for "isolat" to check out the relevant parts.

The aim of this Scottish review is to provide an overview of the evidence for interventions that prevent or delay physical disablement in later life with a view to informing policy makers and developing equitable intervention strategies. A search was conducted to find information relevant to research, interventions, policies and programmes delivered in Scotland or internationally that aim to impact on health and reduce inequalities in older people. The key policies and frameworks that have been published internationally and in Scotland relevant to the care of an increasingly ageing population are discussed. One of the specific interventions considered is the category of interventions to prevent social isolation and loneliness.

### **Catholic Healthcare Community Services Community Connections program : enhancing the quality of life of older people who have experienced homelessness**

Alan Morris.

Parity. 21(7) : 39-40 ; 2008.

Community Connections is a day centre program that provides support services for older people in inner Sydney who have experienced homelessness. This article describes the program and its impact in breaking down the barriers of social exclusion and isolation among elderly people. It discusses the program's positive effects on participants' physical and mental health, self esteem and living skills.

### **Making life better for older people: an economic case for preventative services and activities**

[Link to document](#)

Great Britain Office of the Deputy, Prime Minister. 2005.

The experience of exclusion affects people of all ages. However, exclusion can be particularly acute in later life. It is all too rare that people who are excluded in mid-life are able to break the cycle of exclusion in later life. Indeed, it can often become more acute. The impact of age discrimination on both the aspirations of individuals and the environment within which they operate can lead to exclusion. Too often this exclusion is compounded by the failure of services which are not managed cost-effectively.

### **Older people's participation in political activity—making their voices heard: A potential support role for welfare professionals in countering ageism and social exclusion**

[Link to document](#)

Karen Postle, Peter Wright and Peter Beresford.

Practice (09503153). 17(3) : 173-189 ; 2005.

**Note:** Encourages activists work.

Drawing on findings from research, this paper explores key issues relating to older people's participation, highlighting their disillusion with traditional political activity and the exacerbation of their exclusion through powerlessness. Some older people are taking part in new forms of political activity, marking a shift of focus from self-help to campaigning. They frequently gain strength and encouragement from campaigning achievements. This offers potential for building capacity among older people. By supporting such activity and involving older people in the development of policies and services, health and social care workers can support older people to counter discrimination and influence issues that particularly affect them.

### **Self-efficacy and depression in late life: a primary prevention proposal**

[Link to document](#)

D. G. Blazer.

Ageing & Mental Health. 6(4) : 315-324 ; 2002.

Feelings of sadness and loneliness are ubiquitous in late life and a risk factor for depression and perhaps other mental illnesses in late life. Targeting sadness and loneliness for an intervention addresses both primary risk reduction for depressive disorders and promotion of overall mental health in the elderly. The author argues that the attainment of positive mental health depends in considerable part upon an individual's self-efficacy - the belief that one can organise and execute

the courses of action required to develop and enhance a person's belief that he or she can act in ways that lead to a desired goal. The extant literature suggests that many potential approaches may be available to develop and enhance self-efficacy in the elderly - approaches that potentially could be broadly applicable in community settings.

### **Preventing social isolation and loneliness among older people: a systematic review of health promotion interventions**

Mima Cattan, Martin White, John Bond and Alison Learmouth.  
Ageing & Society. 25(1) : 41-67 ; 2005.

The effectiveness of many interventions to prevent and alleviate social isolation and loneliness among older people has been questioned because of the lack of evidence. A systematic review was conducted to determine the effectiveness of health promotion interventions that target social isolation and loneliness among older people. Quantitative outcome studies between 1970 and 2002 in any language were included. Articles were identified by searching electronic databases, journals and abstracts, and contacting key informants. Thirty studies were identified and categorized. Most were conducted in the USA and Canada, Nine of the 10 effective interventions were group activities with an educational or support input. Six of the eight ineffective interventions provided one-to-one social support, advice and information, or health-needs assessment. The review suggests that educational and social activity group interventions that target specific groups can alleviate social isolation and loneliness among older people.

## **6. Specific needs and interventions**

### **The psychosocial impact of vision loss on older people**

[Link to document](#)

Samuel R. Nyman, Margot A. Gosney and Christina R. Victor.  
Generations Review, 20(2), April 2010, (published online). 2010.

Provides a review of research into the effects of vision loss on the mental health and social functioning of older adults (aged 60 and over). The review looked at seven outcomes, categorised as: depression/mental health; anxiety; quality of life; social functioning; loneliness; social support; and interventions. Findings reflected complex inter-relationships among these outcomes. The article concludes that interventions directly addressing psychosocial needs are more effective than those addressing them indirectly through instrumental support.

### **SCIE research briefing 21: identification of deafblind dual sensory impairment in older people**

[Link to document](#)

For Excellence Social Care Institute. 2007.

Rising life expectancy and increasing numbers of older people in the population means a growing number of individuals are affected by dual sensory impairment. Raising general awareness of problems and potential solutions is essential to maximising individual quality of life and minimising social isolation. Simple interventions, such as ensuring regular sight and hearing checks or holding conversations in well-lit areas, can be very effective in improving the quality of life of people with

dual sensory impairment. Families, carers and other 'non-specialists' can play a crucial role in early identification, hopefully leading to appropriate and timely interventions.

### **Supporting Older Women in the Transition to Driving Cessation**

Bryanton, Olive; Weeks, Lori E Lees, Jessie M.  
Act. Adapt. Ageing. 34(3) : 181 ; 2010.

This study explores how older women have their transportation needs met following driving cessation and the factors influencing the transition to driving cessation. They often used different mobility options to continue their participation in different types of activities, and they experienced reductions in social activity participation. Location and access to public transportation, access to stable mobility options, control over mobility options, and planning for driving cessation influenced adaptation to driving cessation. The results provide direction for the development of appropriate mobility options and the development of effective programs to reduce the negative impact of driving cessation

### **An exploration of loneliness: Communication and the social networks of older people with cerebral palsy**

Liora Ballin and Susan Balandin.  
Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability. 32(4) : 315-327 ; 2007.

In this paper, the authors present some findings from a larger qualitative study on the loneliness experiences of older people with cerebral palsy. Seven older adults with cerebral palsy participated in in-depth interviews. Six themes were identified. All participants agreed that the themes of communication and social networks are most important when considering loneliness. In this paper, the participants' discussion of these two themes and their related topics are presented. The results demonstrate the need to provide support and training in communication to older people with cerebral palsy who experience communication difficulty, as well as to their communication partners. They also indicate the need for policy development to assist older adults with cerebral palsy to develop and maintain their social networks and form relationships that are rewarding and enriching.

### **Rebuilding connections: creating opportunities for socially isolated older Australians: evaluation of the Brotherhood of St Laurence Community Care Socialisation Program**

[Link to document](#)  
Michael Hillier. : 32p ; 2007.

The Brotherhood of St Laurence's Socialisation Program was designed to support and improve the social engagement of older people and people with a disability through community groups and recreational activities. It assesses the impact of the Socialisation Program on clients' quality of life and social well being. Care managers reported that older people's social networks, self esteem and sense of identity had all improved under the Program; family carers reported that the Program had provided them with quality respite, even when they attended the group activities with the person they were caring for.

## 7. Welfare rights and stipends

### Can welfare-rights advice targeted at older people reduce social exclusion?

Suzanne Moffatt and Graham Scambler.  
Ageing & Society. 28(6) : 875-899 ; 2008.

This paper reports a small qualitative study into the effectiveness of a welfare-rights advice and acquisition service for men and women aged 60 or more years that was provided through a local primary health-care service. Additional financial and non-financial resources were obtained by accessing previously unclaimed state-welfare benefits. It was found that these significantly improved the participants' quality of life. The impact of additional resources was considerable and included: increased affordability of necessities and occasional expenses; increased capacity to cope with emergencies; and reduced stress related to financial worries. Knowledge of and access to welfare-rights services also appeared to have a positive effect. It is argued that a level of material resources above a basic level is necessary for social relations and for accessing services and civic activities, and can reduce social exclusion among older people

### Evaluating the Senior Companion Program: A Mixed-Method Approach

Sandra S. Bullett.  
Journal of Gerontological Social Work. 47(1) : 45-70 ; 2006.

This article reports on a mixed-method assessment of the Senior Companion Program (SCP), a federal program which provides volunteer opportunities with small stipends to low-income older adults, 60 years of age and older, who provide companionship and offer assistance to frail community elders. Informants reported relatively large social networks and low levels of depression and loneliness. Thematic analysis of the qualitative data revealed the benefits of the program for both volunteers and their clients: companionship, independence, reduced anxiety, giving, and rewards.

## 8. Minority and community groups

### The Impact of Professionally Conducted Cultural Programs on the Physical Health, Mental Health, and Social Functioning of Older Adults

Gene D. Cohen, Susan Peristein, Jeff Chapline, Jeanne Kelly, Kimberly M. Firth and Samuel Simmens.  
Gerontologist. 46(6) : 726-734 ; 2006.

The aim of this study was to measure the impact of professionally conducted community-based cultural programs on the physical health, mental health, and social activities of individuals aged 65 and older. Results revealed positive findings for the effectiveness of the intervention such that the intervention group reported a higher overall rating of physical health, fewer doctor visits, less medication use, fewer instances of falls, and fewer other health problems than the comparison group. The intervention group also evidenced better morale and less loneliness than the comparison group

### **Beyond the Bible and the Cross: a Social and Cultural Analysis of Chinese Elders' Participation in Christian Congregations in the United States**

[Link to document](#)

Gehui Zhang and Heying Jenny Zhan.  
Sociological Spectrum. 29(2) : 295-317 ; 2009.

Social isolation and lack of social support system resulting from immigration and Ageing process serve as the major drive for the elders to pursue social and cultural recognition from Chinese Christian gatherings. Besides religious services, social service functions of churches and opportunities for fellowship are other factors that explain Chinese elders' church involvement. In conclusion, we argue that social and cultural services are needed to particularly assist Chinese seniors to adjust and adapt to their elderly lives in the host country.

### **Veiled entrapment: a study of social isolation of older Chinese migrants in Brisbane, Queensland**

David Ip, Chi Wai Lui and Wing Hong Chui.  
Ageing and Society. 27(5) : 719-738 ; 2007.

This paper presents the findings of a study of the support and service needs of older Chinese people in Brisbane. The findings indicate that older Chinese people, and particularly women, experience significant restrictions in their activity patterns, social isolation and loneliness. Their lack of proficiency in the English language, and the difficulties they have in accessing language-support and interpretation services, limit their autonomous mobility and make them heavily dependent on their adult children, not least for transport. Their physical and psychological wellbeing is affected further by strained relations with their adult children, and these are compounded by financial concerns. The implications of the findings for welfare policy and practice are discussed at the end of the paper.

### **A Community-Based Participatory Critique of Social Isolation Intervention Research for Community-Dwelling Older Adults**

Myra Sabir, Elaine Wethington, Risa Breckman, Rhoda Meador, M. C. Reid and Karl Pillemer.  
Journal of Applied Gerontology. 28(2) : 218-234 ; 2009.

This article examines the dialogue within Research-to-Practice Consensus Workshop that critiqued academic research priorities regarding social isolation among community-dwelling older adults and identified practice-based suggestions for a social isolation research agenda. The group's critique resulted in several key recommendations for future research including the need for a social isolation measure with specific capacity to identify isolated older adults during a community crisis. This study demonstrates that the Research to-Practice Consensus Workshop model can be used successfully to identify priority areas for research that have implications for community practice, construct an evidence base more relevant for community application, strengthen existing community- researcher partnerships, and build agency and practitioner capacity to take part in community-based participatory research.



### **How Local Interventions Can Build Capacity to Address Social Isolation in Dispersed Rural Communities: A Case Study from Northern Ireland**

Deirdre Heenan.

Ageing Int. 36(4) : 475-491 ; 2011.

Existing research has demonstrated the significance of social networks in relation to physical and emotional well-being. This paper identifies the issues pertinent to these dispersed communities and reviews a locally-based active ageing group, which aims to build capacity and encourage community cohesion. The research highlights the importance of initiatives which build on and enhance the sense of community, while simultaneously challenging the assumption that older people are needy, dependant, avaricious users of services with little or nothing to contribute.

### **Migrants: let people decide, says Vanstone [Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, Amanda Vanstone]**

Paul Starick.

The Advertiser. : 3 ; 2003.

Social isolation is a major problem of growing old, and is more significant for the elderly from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CLDB). Issues include a reduced pool of contemporaries of similar cultural background and reduced access to culturally appropriate recreation and services. Communication barriers may be compounded by physical barriers. Research has identified four sets of variables that are predictors of social isolation: demographic factors, acculturation attitudes, intercultural contact variables, and psychosocial adjustment factors. Isolation is also associated with four groups of variables related to affective states and well being, inadequate social skills, emotional arousal and conflict, poor self regard, and negativistic attitudes. Policy makers need to recognise that an immigrant background can have a significant effect on social isolation.

### **Inclusion rather than exclusion: respite care which promotes cultural identity, sense of belonging and adventure**

[Link to document](#)

D. Dambergs. 2002.

This paper teases out the more pressing issues that need to be considered when developing respite services for culturally and linguistically diverse older persons in the community. The paper also gives an overview of a multicultural respite service that is currently being developed on the Queensland Sunshine Coast. The Sunshine Coast Multicultural Respite Service has sought to demonstrate creative ways of delivering respite services that invite the participation of culturally diverse community groups, mainstream service providers, carers and persons of varying age groups.

## 9. General items

### **The campaign to end loneliness.**

Ferguson Laura;  
Working with Older People, 15(2), 2011, pp.66-70.

This paper aims to give an overview of the issue of loneliness, an update of issues heard of from across the country, as well as some positive stories and projects being delivered to alleviate loneliness in older age. It describes the current research into loneliness in older age. Loneliness is a highly subjective emotion that is difficult and complex to measure. This paper highlights the first steps being taken by organisations working, under the umbrella of a recently launched Campaign to End Loneliness, towards further reducing loneliness in older age

### **Addressing loneliness in a retirement village community: A pilot test of a print-delivered intervention**

[Link to document](#)

Gracia, Natalie Moyle, Wendy Oxlade, Deborah Radford, Katrina.  
Australasian Journal on Ageing. 29(4) : 179-182 ; 2010.

**Note:** A cost effective way of raising awareness of loneliness and social well-being.

The study explored perceptions of a self-help print-delivered intervention aimed at encouraging social well-being and addressing loneliness in an Australian retirement village community. 58 residents received a series of five factsheets addressing various dimensions of loneliness. The factsheets raised awareness of the importance of social well-being and loneliness. However, the approach was considered difficult to update and was not appropriate for those from a non-English speaking background or with vision impairments. The non-face-to-face approach also was unable to address issues of loneliness associated with bereavement.

### **Are services and activities for socially isolated and lonely older people accessible, equitable, and inclusive?**

[Link to document](#)

Mima Cattan.  
Research Policy and Planning. 23(3) : 149-164 ; 2005.

**Note:** Please note the year of publication. Perhaps users are consulted more these days.

This article presents finding from a survey and interviews undertaken as part of a study whose purpose was to explore the appropriateness and accessibility of activities intended to alleviate social isolation and loneliness among older people. The findings suggest that access to services and activities were often not tailored to the needs of those who were most lonely and isolated. Older people were rarely involved in developing or evaluating programmes intended for the socially isolated and lonely.

**Agenda for later life 2011: public policy and an ageing society**[Link to document](#)

U. K. Age. 2011.

Note: The report focuses mainly on the way national Government and the wider public sector impact on British lives as the baby boomers age. Please search for "isolat".

The barriers older people face tend to be greatest in terms of money, isolation, marginalisation, and their health and care needs. This report details Age UK's annual audit of the way public policy is shaping later life. The organisation stands up for almost 14 million people in the UK who have now reached later life.

**Social exclusion among older people: a preliminary study from inner-city Melbourne**[Link to document](#)

Catherine Waterhouse. : 21p ; 2005.

This study investigated the views of Brotherhood of St Laurence clients, aged 48 to 75 years, on issues of social exclusion for older people. The themes explored were: income; a safe place to live; social contact and support; good health; housing; transport; independence and choice; participation and feeling heard.

**Improving access to information: a key requirement for reducing social exclusion**

Charlie Hislop.

Working with Older People. 14(4) : 38-43 ; 2010.

Southampton City Council is involved in a European project called Cities in Balance and has been looking at how older people access. Barriers to information access include lack of knowledge and use of technology, lower levels of social networking in later life, high levels of aural and visual impairment, inadequate language and literature skills to understand modern communication and a strong distrust of corporate branding and advertising. Older people prefer to receive information by word of mouth, are more likely to retain information if it is useful at the time it is received, want to be able to access information as and when they need it and are often likely to need assistance and interpretation in order to use information. The author concludes that information strategies for older people also require strong partnership working through community and neighbourhood networks.

**Risk factors and intervention programs for depression in nursing home residents: nursing home staff interview findings**

Namkee G. Choi, Richard J. Wyllie and Sandy Ransom.

Journal of Gerontological Social Work. 52(7) : 668-685 ; 2009.

25 nursing home staff members were interviewed to examine their perceptions and experiences of risk factors for residents' depression, current depression intervention programmes and specific needs for staff training. The interviewees identified residents' sense of loss and grief and feelings of isolation and loneliness as the causes of their depression. Barriers to providing effective depression interventions were: an overdependence on antidepressant medication, low Medicaid reimbursement rate, staff shortages, residents' attitudes and nursing home culture. Staff members wanted training on skills to monitor nonverbal signs and changes and to systematically screen for different types of depression; education about antidepressants and their effects, and systematic training in different types of psychosocial and behavioural interventions for late-life depression in residents with various levels of physical disabilities and cognitive impairments.