

Loneliness

Birmingham Measurement Tools Webinar Series



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Introduction



Impact and outcome measurement should be a key part of any intervention.

Measuring in the impact of what we do helps us demonstrate that what we are doing is making a difference. They help us demonstrate that an intervention is having an impact in a measurable way rather than using just stories.

Using standard tools allows us to compare different interventions impact. Combining these standard measures with standard questions on people's identity helps understand if different interventions are more effective for different groups. We can also combine them with information on the cost of an intervention and the numbers of users to look at cost effectiveness.

Without clear impact and outcome measurements it is difficult to support funding for interventions or to justify that the approach used should be continued or scaled up.

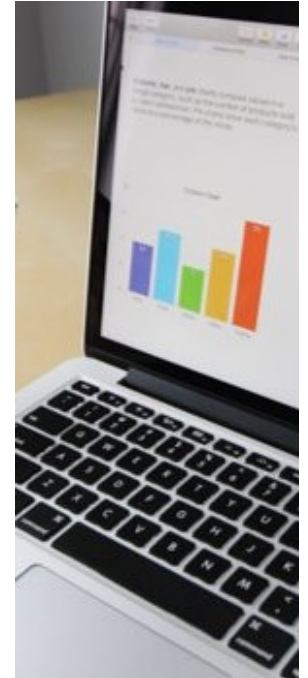
Birmingham Public Health Measurement Toolbox

The Birmingham Public Health Measurement Toolbox has been developed to standardise impact and outcome measures for interventions that are trying to improve health and wellbeing across Birmingham.

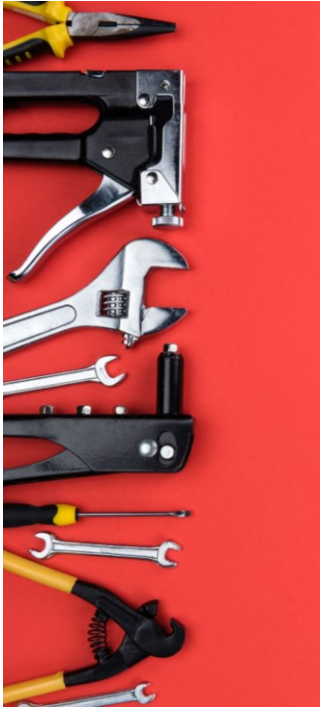
The toolbox supports organisations when they are developing projects to build the appropriate measures into their service design.

It provides clarity and transparency on how to clearly assess and measure interventions based on their focus, which can then be demonstrated clearly when applying for funding.

It allows for accurate and meaningful comparisons between different programmes and interventions to help inform decision-making.



Contents



The Tool Box is a developing set of resources to support measurement related to different areas of health and wellbeing, these include:

- Physical activity
- Smoking
- Mental Wellbeing
- High Blood Pressure/Hypertensions
- Long-acting Reversible Contraception
- HIV and Hepatitis Risk Reduction

For each section there is:

- A description of the issue/topic
- Links for local or national information on the issue/topic
- A description of the tool
- Information on any registration requirements to use the tool
- Useful links to support behaviour change and evidence-based interventions related to the issue/topic
- A case study example of using the tool in practice

LONELINESS MEASUREMENT TOOLKIT



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What is loneliness?

- No agreed definition of “loneliness” in research.
- painful feeling that occurs when there is a gap, or a mismatch, between the number and quality of social relationships and connections that we have, and those we would like.
- Others suggest that there are two dimensions to loneliness: social and emotional.
- There is a general agreement that loneliness is distinct from social isolation and wellbeing.

National and Local Context

- Age UK report demonstrates that there is a lack of good quality evidence on the impact of different types of services on loneliness.
- Campaign to End Loneliness – 7.1% (3.8m people) experience chronic loneliness.
- ONS Opinions and Lifestyle survey shows 7% in Birmingham.

Loneliness Measurement Questionnaire

| Tool | UCLA 3-Item Loneliness Scale |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Link to scale | The following questions: 1. How often do you feel that you lack companionship? (Hardly ever / Some of the time / Often) 2. How often do you feel left out? (Hardly ever / Some of the time / Often) 3. How often do you feel isolated from others? (Hardly ever / Some of the time / Often) |
| Cost | N/A |
| Use | Self-completed questionnaire or interview |
| Frequency | Pre-intervention Post- intervention 6-8wks post-intervention |
| Ambition | Individuals should have as much companionship, and inclusion as they feel they need / want. |
| Benchmark Data | English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) |

Using the tool

- In order to score somebody's answers, their responses should be coded as follows:

| Response | Score |
|------------------|-------|
| Hardly ever | 1 |
| Some of the time | 2 |
| Often | 3 |

- The scores for each individual question can be added together to give you a possible range of scores from 3 to 9. Researchers in the past have grouped people who score 3 – 5 as “not lonely” and people with the score 6 – 9 as “lonely”.
- You can compare the scores at different points in time to track progress.

Using the tool

- Widely used internationally and original paper cited over 1,500 times.
- Accurate when it is part of a self-completed questionnaire, and when an interviewer asks questions.
- To benchmark and compare - the scale is regularly asked of over 12,000 people aged 50+ as part of the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA).

Specific risk and issues to consider

- Full (20-point) UCLA scale was developed in the USA with students – However, the shorter, 3-item questionnaire has since been tested with older people.
- Negative wording may lead to less considered response.
- Difficult questions may need training / support for interviewers.
- Need to use care in interpreting results. A before and after average may not be accurate.

Additional resources

- A Short Scale for Measuring Loneliness in Large Surveys
([Journal article](#))
- UCLA 20-point scale as alternative tool
([Fetzer Institute](#))