Loneliness and Social Isolation in Dorset

Welcome to **our**communities bitesize research bulletin on loneliness and social isolation in Dorset. This edition will include a local perspective on a national issue using data to build a picture of areas where residents have a high vulnerability to loneliness.

Big Numbers Box

14,000
Households

Highly vulnerable to social isolation/loneliness In Dorset

1 in 5
Households

Vulnerable to social isolation/loneliness In Dorset

Box 1: Why loneliness is of importance in the county

Over recent years, the problems associated with loneliness and social isolation, especially among older people, has become a national priority. National research indicates that loneliness and social isolation can be detrimental to people's physical and mental wellbeing. Stress, depression and dementia are just some of the problems that can be worsened. Not only that, loneliness can have serious impacts on health and social care as well as other local authority services.

1 in 5 Dorset households are vulnerable to social isolation/loneliness

Box 2:   Factors contributing to loneliness

Although loneliness and isolation in older age has been shown to be a serious public health issue, these issues are not just the effect of the aging process; many different factors play a part. The environment, life events and social factors (for example, a person's personality, where they live, access to transport and personal circumstance) can all combine to amplify or alleviate loneliness and social isolation. It is clear, however, that it is very much an issue in the older population.

Dorset is a rural county with an increasing elderly population. This alone could mean that there are many areas where the most vulnerable can feel both lonely and isolated.
It is important to reach, understand and support lonely individuals and aim to tackle loneliness with adequate services and support.

In addition, the population of Dorset is expected to increase over the next 20yrs by almost 9% and this is driven by an increase in the older population of which a 114% increase is projected for over 85 year olds – this could lead to even more people in Dorset suffering from social isolation/loneliness.

Social Isolation and Loneliness Index

■ Most Vulnerable

Least Vulnerable
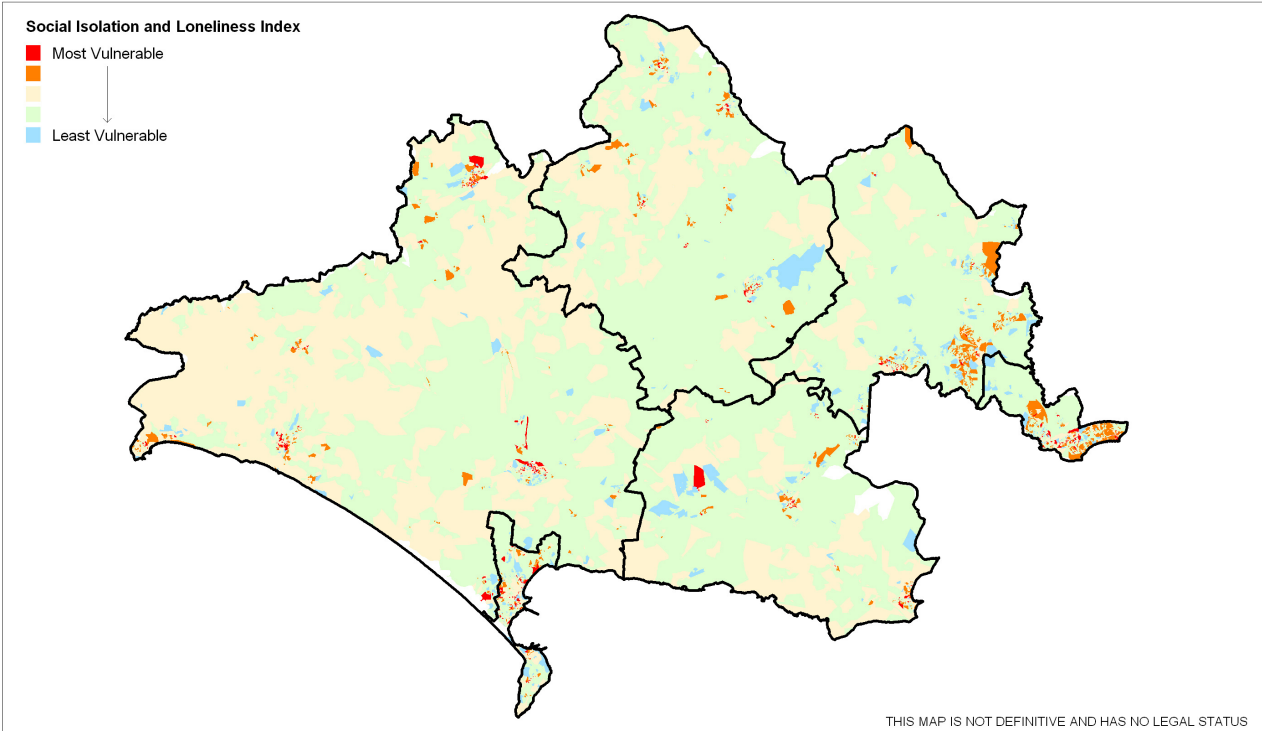
THIS MAP IS NOT DEFINITIVE AND HAS NO LEGAL STATUS

Households vulnerable to Social Isolation and Loneliness (by Postcode unit)

Ref:
Date: 04/06/2015
Scale 1:1043034
Drawn By:
Cent X: 375599
Cent Y: 100257

GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SYSTEMS
Dorset County Council
© Crown copyright and database rights 2015 Ordnance Survey 100019790.
You are permitted to use this data solely to enable you to respond to, or
interact with, the organisation that provided you with the data. You are not
permitted to copy, sub-licence, distribute or sell any of this data to third
parties in any form. Aerial Photography © UKPerspectives 2002
© Getmapping 2005, 2009 & 2014

Box 3: Identifying those at risk

To identify those at most risk we need to identify areas where loneliness is most prevalent.

Using Experian MOSAIC data, a 'social isolation and loneliness index' has been created to identify areas with a high vulnerability to loneliness. The index included variables that are potential drivers of isolation and social isolation - factors such as low income, health, community safety, single households and not owning a car were all taken into consideration when assessing the potential for loneliness.

Those areas across Dorset with households most vulnerable to loneliness and social isolation can then be identified once mapped, as seen above.

What can be done?

The data and research that has been undertaken here can be used to help identify households potentially at risk. The 'loneliness map' could enable resources to be targeted at the people and places that need them the most.

This work should also be utilised in future research and help to inform and prioritise future service delivery and early intervention initiatives that combat loneliness and social isolation in the future.

Like more info?

Contact: Pete Jackson;
Consultation and Research team,
Chief Executive's department
p.p.jackson@dorsetcc.gov.uk
01305 224614
Data source: Dorset County
Council, Experian