Improving mental health and tackling social isolation and loneliness

HEALTH AND INEQUALITY COMMISSION

Glasgow is Scotlands largest and most diverse city with a population of around 600,000. However it is also the most deprived city and local authority area in Scotland. Poor health and inequality continue to be considerable challenges with our poorest communities experiencing the greatest burden of poor health
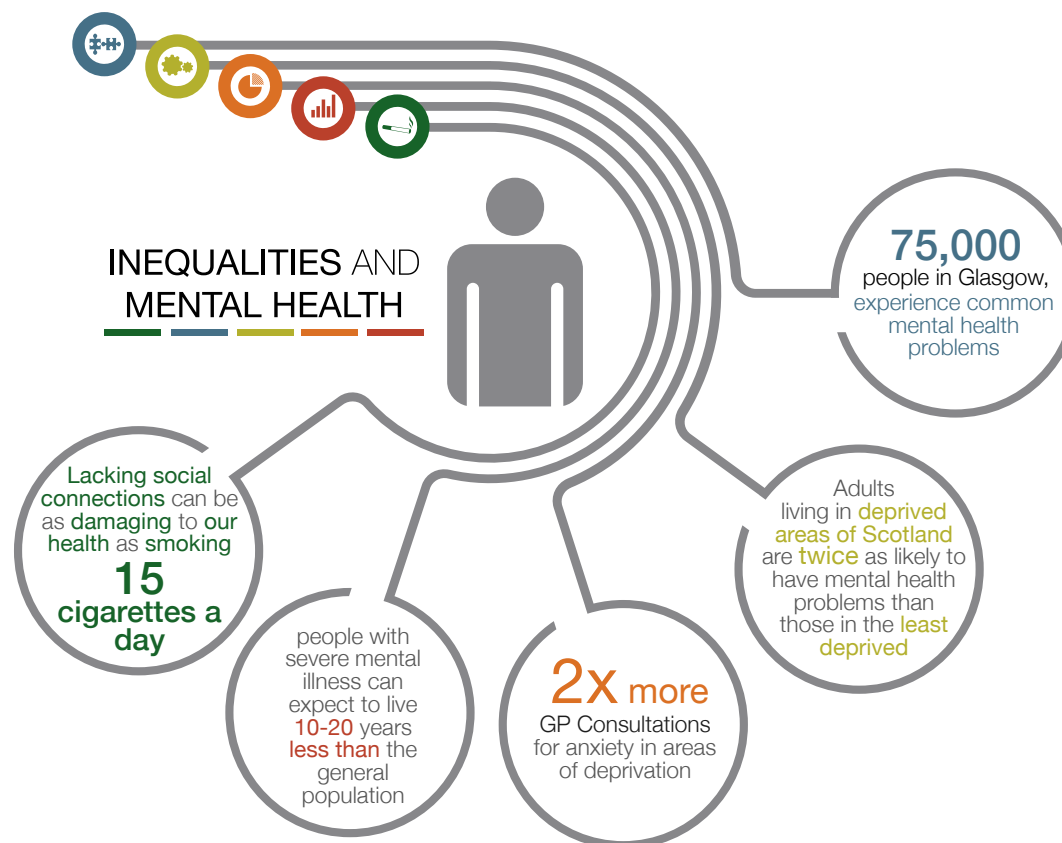
The Health and Inequality Commission was set up by Glasgow City Council in summer 2016 to develop proposals to improve the health of the city. It brought together city Councillors, public health experts, representatives from community groups and citizens with lived experience of poverty and poor health.

This pamphlet explains what the Commission did and shares its recommendations. It also provides links to useful resources for awareness raising and for help and support.

The Commission decided to look at mental health inequalities in Glasgow as a theme that has not figured as highly in our efforts to reduce the health gap. Mental health is an area of growing concern, the single biggest reason for ill health in Glasgow and is much more likely to be experienced by people living in the cities poorest areas.

The reasons for mental ill health are often complex and mental health is still not well understood. People with mental health problems still have poorer employment prospects than the population as a whole. In other words, poverty can be both a cause and a consequence of mental ill health

Loneliness and social isolation can be both a cause and a consequence of poverty and mental ill health. Many people experience loneliness at some point in their lives and for many loneliness can have a devastating impact on their daily lives, health and wellbeing. Evidence also shows that social isolation is higher in our poorer neighbourhoods.

Social networks and friendships not only have an impact on reducing the risk of mortality but also help people recover when they do fall ill.

The Commission looked at evidence and experience from Glasgow, UK and beyond. We heard from people with experience of mental health problems, services having an impact and professionals who support this area. We also visited a number of community projects to learn how they support the local community.

INEQUALITIES AND
MENTAL HEALTH

75,000 people in Glasgow, experience common mental health problems

Lacking social connections can be as damaging to our health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day

people with severe mental illness can expect to live 10-20 years less than the general population

2x more GP Consultations for anxiety in areas of deprivation

Adults living in deprived areas of Scotland are twice as likely to have mental health problems than those in the least deprived

Along with our full report, we have produced a series of short films to give greater insight into mental health inequalities. The films were created by people with lived experience of mental ill health, social isolation and loneliness. They aim to widen the audience and reach of our work and provide a resource to raise awareness of the challenges of and possible solutions to improve mental health. The films are available at www.glasgow.gov.uk/improvingmentalhealth.

We believe that the focus needs to be as much on maintaining good mental health for our citizens as supporting those with poor mental health. We know that loneliness and social isolation can have a powerful negative effect on health , well-being and life chances . We believe that tackling this effectively is fundamental to improving the health of

Glaswegians and effectively tackling health inequalities. To do this, we need to

- Tackle discrimination and exclusion for people in the city

- Prioritise activity to raise awareness of and tackle the stigma associated with mental ill health

- Improve opportunities for people locally to connect, contribute and make friendships

- Protect and generate new investment to strengthen connections in the city

- Ensure easier access to information on what's going on and available supports

- Ensure equity of access to health and other services

- Ensure disabled people and those with mobility, mental health and sensory barriers are able to get about and use the resources of the city

- Ensure effective support in work and when seeking work

The Commission has called on all city partners to recognise and prioritise the importance of tackling loneliness and isolation in our city. We believe that this is fundamental to improving the health of Glaswegians and effectively tackling mental health inequality.

However we can all play our part to reach out to lonely and isolated people, whether chatting to a neighbour , visiting an old friend or just making time for people you meet.

SUPPORT

If you just need to talk with someone, then the following organisations are here to help:

Samaritans -
116 123 (freephone)

Breathing Space -
0800 83 85 87 (freephone)

URGENT HELP

EMERGENCY– If you, or someone you know, need an immediate response call the emergency services on 999.

CONFUSED/DISTRESSED– If you are experiencing confusing or distressing thoughts, or if people around you have expressed concern about your well-being, arrange an appointment with your GP or call NHS 24 on 111.

If you, or someone you know, are currently being seen by someone from a community mental health team and require urgent attention, please contact the Out of Hours Team by the number you will have been provided with.