

	Officer Key Decision
	Report to the Corporate Director Community Health and Wellbeing
	Lead Cabinet Member for Community Health and Wellbeing
Authority to tender contract for a social isolation and loneliness prevention service	

Wards Affected:	All Brent Wards
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Key Decision
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
No. of Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	N/A
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Name: Caroline Evans Job Title: Senior Public Health Strategist Email: Caroline.Evans@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council currently has a contract to deliver the present Social Isolation and Loneliness Prevention Service for Brent residents, This contract is ending on the 31st October 2024. There is a need to expand the breadth of the service to reach out to a wider population in Brent, not only for the residents who presently use the service, but also to the people who we are aware are impacted regarding health inequalities. This includes those who are socially isolated and are not aware of the service or those who tend to fall through the gaps, or would need reaching out to, as they do not have the confidence to reach out for that support themselves.
- 1.2 This report requests approval to invite tenders in respect of a Social Isolation and Loneliness Prevention Service as required by Contract Standing Orders 88 and 89.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

That the Corporate Director Community Health and Wellbeing:

- 2.1 Approves inviting tenders for a Social Isolation and Loneliness Prevention Service on the basis of the pre - tender considerations set out in paragraph 3.7 of the report.
- 2.2 Approves Officers evaluating the tenders referred to in 2.1 above on the basis of the evaluation criteria set out in paragraph 3.8(vi) of the report.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The aim of this service is to target and address social isolation in individuals who are over 18 years of age and identified as being at risk of, or suffering from social isolation, lack of social contact and low levels of community involvement. The service would deliver a prevention approach across health and social care services which includes GP practices, acute primary care, and adult social care to achieve a reduction in attendance to GP surgeries, A&E departments, Inpatient and Outpatient Hospital admissions, for those suffering due to unmet social needs and isolation affecting every aspect of health. The service will provide them with various face to face group activities, individual support, peer led activities, telephone support, befriending and socialisation support etc.
- 3.2 We aim to commission a service that leverages Brent's cultural diversity to tackle social isolation and loneliness. This service will build upon the existing Social Isolation and Loneliness Prevention Service by engaging with local communities and services to address health and social care needs, reduce health inequalities, and bridge gaps in social connections. Drawing on lessons from the pandemic, the service will focus on community-centred solutions, offer additional activities in local spaces, and enhance outreach and communication. It will handle referrals and work with NHS and social care services to ensure residents receive appropriate support. Our goal is to help residents thrive and become better connected, in alignment with Brent Council's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Borough Plan 2023-2027. The service will also collaborate with local authorities, community groups, and faith leaders to provide support, advice, and activities for those who are socially isolated or lonely.

Aims and Goals:

- **Leverage Brent's cultural diversity** to address social isolation and loneliness.
- **Enhance the Social Isolation and Loneliness Prevention Service** by boosting community engagement and support.
- **Address health inequalities and gaps in social connections** identified through insights from the pandemic.
- **Develop community-focused solutions** with more local activities and improved outreach.
- **Improve communication with residents** to ensure access to social connections and support.

- **Manage referrals and coordinate with NHS and social care services** for appropriate support.
- **Help residents thrive and strengthen social connections.**
- **Align with Brent Council's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Borough Plan 2023-2027.**
- **Collaborate with local authorities, community groups, and faith leaders** to provide support, advice, and activities for socially isolated or lonely individuals.

<https://www.brent.gov.uk/the-council-and-democracy/strategies-priorities-and-policies>

Background

- 3.3 The Council currently contracts Capable Communities Ltd to deliver the Social Isolation and Loneliness Prevention Service for Brent residents. This contract is set to end on 31 October 2024. There is a pressing need to expand the service to reach a broader population in the borough, addressing not only current users but also those affected by health inequalities.

3.4 Current Service Usage:

Since being directly awarded by public health for a six-month period starting 16 August 2023 (to ensure continuity after the Brent Gateway contract ended), the service has received 1,167 referrals.

From February 2024, when the service was extended for an additional nine months, there have been 196 new referrals and 639 attendances at various activities aimed at reducing isolation and loneliness.

The Brent Gateway was dissolved on the 1st of August 2023. There was a level of miscommunication at the time that the social isolation aspect of the previous partnership had finished. However, despite the social isolation service continuing as a result of having a new direct award for that particular stand alone service from 1st of August 2023 until the end of January 2024, there was a drop in referrals as a result.

The service offers face-to-face groups, creative activities, physical exercise, day trips to events like the theatre and cinema, telephone support, skills development, employability courses, support for carers, vulnerable families, people with long-term health conditions, and those recently discharged from hospitals.

The Brent Social Isolation service is for for Brent residents over the age of 18 years old. However, research and evidence has shown that there are specific groups that are at risk of social isolation and loneliness. The new service will therefore build on the previous service by better reaching and supporting

communities currently underrepresented or at risk of social isolation and loneliness.

The new service should aim to connect with as many socially isolated individuals as possible through various referrers and public services, including adult social care, Brent Carers Centre, Brent Health Matters, community mental health services, Council frontline services, hospital discharge teams, IAPT services, other NHS entry points, primary care services, social prescribers, social workers, housing services, A&E urgent care, VCSE organisations, community and voluntary organisations, faith groups, and self-referrals from residents.

3.5 Recent Focus Groups:

The public health team recently conducted focus groups with current users of the Social Isolation and Loneliness Prevention Service. While the current provider only facilitated these groups, we also held additional focus groups with users of other borough services. These efforts were aimed at gathering feedback, understanding resident needs, and identifying those unaware of the existing service. The 8 focus groups that were facilitated informed our knowledge of what residents said they needed or would like to have, moving forward, and has been incorporated within the specification in order to commission a high-quality and expanded service for Brent

3.6 Pre-tender Considerations

In accordance with Contract Standing Orders 88 and 89, pre-tender considerations for the procurement of the contract for A Social Isolation and Loneliness Prevention Service (the “Contract”) have been set out below.

Ref.	Requirement	Response	
(i)	The nature of the services / supplies / works.	A Social Isolation and Loneliness Prevention Service as described above	
(ii)	The estimated value.	£ 636,000 inclusive of VAT for a 2+1+1 year contract	
(iii)	The contract term.	2+1+1 year contract	
(iv)	The tender procedure to be adopted.	Open tender	
v)	The procurement timetable.		Indicative dates are:

Ref.	Requirement	Response	
		Adverts placed on Contracts Finder and London Tenders Portal	01/12/2024
		Deadline for tender submissions	12pm 17/01/2025
		Panel evaluation and moderation	27/01/2025 – 07/02/2025
		Report recommending Contract award circulated internally for comment & approval	14/02/2025
		Contract award decision	20/02/2025
		Standstill period	21/02/2025 – 02/03/2025
		Contract Mobilisation	03/03/2025 – 31/03/2025
		Contract start date	01/04/2025
(vi)	The evaluation criteria and process.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> At selection stage shortlists are to be drawn up in accordance with the Council's Contract Procurement and Management Guidelines by the use of a selection questionnaire to identify organisations meeting the Council's financial standing requirements, technical capacity and technical expertise. At tender evaluation stage, the panel will evaluate the tenders against the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50% Quality, 40% Price, 10% Social Value. 	
(vii)	Any business risks associated with entering the contract.	No specific business risks are considered to be associated with entering into the proposed Contract. Financial Services and Legal Services have been consulted concerning this Contract	
(viii)	The Council's Best Value duties.	The council will be awarding the contract to the Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT).	
(ix)	Consideration of Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012	The Council is under duty pursuant to the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 ("the Social Value Act") to consider how services being procured might improve the economic, social and environmental well-	

Ref.	Requirement	Response
		being of its area; how, in conducting the procurement process, the Council might act with a view to securing that improvement; and whether the Council should undertake consultation. Officers have had regard to considerations contained in the Social Value Act in relation to the procurement and social value forms 10% of the evaluation score.
(x)	Any staffing implications, including TUPE and pensions.	See section 9 below.
(xi)	The relevant financial, legal and other considerations.	See Financial Considerations at Sections 5 and Legal Considerations at Section 6 below.
(xii)	Sustainability	This has been assessed in line with the Procurement Sustainability Policy and determined that a quality measure for sustainability is not required and can be captured as part of the Social Value criteria.
(xiii)	Key Performance Indicators / Outcomes	Appropriate Key Performance Indicators / Outcomes will be included in the Contract Specification.
(xiv)	London Living Wage	The Contract will require the payment of the London Living Wage
(xv)	Contract Management	A contract manager will be appointed and appropriate contract management provisions will be included in the Contract.

4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

- 4.1 We have held focus groups for current service users who are socially isolated, and have also held focus groups for residents who use other services from various communities for their feedback regarding what they think is required from within a service for socially isolated people. Officers have undertaken market research and had discussions with providers.
- 4.2 We will also hold a stakeholder panel consisting of a small group of residents, to feedback their thoughts about shortlisted providers offer with public health officers, who have been involved with previous focus groups, and with the designing of the new service project, having reflected on the specification.

5.0 Financial Considerations

- 5.1 The estimated total value of this 2+1+1 Contract is £636,000 inclusive of VAT.
- 5.2 It is anticipated that the cost of the Contract will be funded from existing resources from the Public Health budget.

6.0 Legal Considerations

- 5.1 Social Isolation and Loneliness Prevent Service are classified under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (the “PCR 2015”) as social and other specific services that fall within those services listed in Schedule 3 to the PCR 2015. The estimated value of the proposed contract for the Social Isolation and Loneliness Prevent Service is £636,000 including VAT (see paragraphs 3.24 and 3.25(ii)). which is below the threshold for Schedule 3 Services, currently set at £663,540 (inclusive of VAT) and as such this procurement is therefore not governed by the PCR 2015.
- 5.2 The procurement is subject to the Council’s own Standing Orders and Financial Regulations in respect of Medium Value Contracts given the Council’s element of the procurement is valued at £636,000. For Medium Value Contracts, the Public Health Director must approve the pre-tender considerations set out in paragraph 3.8 above (Standing Order 89) and the inviting of tenders (Standing Order 88).
- 5.3 Once the tendering process is undertaken, Officers will report back to the Public Health Director in accordance with Contract Standing Orders, explaining the process undertaken in tendering the Contract and recommending award.
- 5.4 Since this procurement is not governed by the full requirements of PCR 2015, the Council is not obligated to adhere to the mandatory 10-calendar-day standstill period stipulated by PCR 2015 before awarding the contract. However, a voluntary standstill period of 10 days will be applied.
- 5.5 In the present case if the contracts are awarded to a new contractor the Transfer of Employment (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (“TUPE”) is likely to apply so as to transfer from the current to the new contractor those employees of the current contractor who spend all or most of their working time on the activities taken over by the new contractor.

7.0 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

- 7.1 Pursuant to s149 Equality Act 2010 (the “Public Sector Equality Duty”), the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and

(c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it,

7.2 The Public Sector Equality Duty covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

7.3 Having due regard involves the need to enquire into whether and how a proposed decision disproportionately affects people with a protected characteristic and the need to consider taking steps to meet the needs of persons who share a protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it. This includes removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by persons who share a protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.

7.4 There is no prescribed manner in which the council must exercise its public sector equality duty but having an adequate evidence base for its decision is necessary.

7.5 The proposals in this report have been subject to screening and officers believe that there are no adverse equality implications.

7.6 There are no health inequalities impacted.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

8.1 There are no environmental objectives impacted.

9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

9.1 There are no direct staffing implications for the Council arising from the tender process. The services are currently provided by an external provider. As part of the procurement process, employee liability information will be sought from current contractor and provided to the tenderers. The TUPE process and any issues that may arise from it will be managed during the mobilisation phase.

10.0 Communication Considerations

10.1 There will be no communications required from Council services, as the new service will be commissioned to provide any information regarding any outgoing communications to the local community.

Report sign off:

***Rachel Crossley,
Corporate Director Community Health and Wellbeing***