Social Isolation in Northamptonshire
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SUMMARY

- Loneliness is a complex issue, not necessarily related to the amount of contact with other people. It is possible to feel lonely when surrounded by people.
- It can take the form of social loneliness, the lack of a network of friends and neighbours and emotional loneliness, which is the lack of a ‘significant other’ and a close attachment.
- Loneliness and Isolation are therefore not restricted to rural areas, in fact it is more likely to be found in urban areas.
- Loneliness is a chronic condition with many impacts on health, it is associated with higher blood pressure and depression and leads to higher rates of mortality, indeed comparable to those associated with smoking and alcohol consumption. It is linked to a higher incidence of dementia with studies reporting a doubled risk of Alzheimer’s disease. Lonely people tend to make more use of health and social care services.
- Older people are more likely to feel lonely or isolated, particularly those over 80 years of age, but it is not exclusive to the elderly.
- Extreme loneliness is a health risk almost comparable with socio-economic deprivation in its impact.
- Respondents to the Adult Care Users Survey in Northamptonshire felt like they had less social interaction than they would like than the England average.
- The percentage of adult carers asked the same question who had less social interaction than they would like was much lower than England and regional averages.
- Digital isolation, the inability to utilize the internet and technology to communicate, is of a 'medium' risk in Northamptonshire. This form of isolation relates to having the necessary skills to take advantage of technology, not just a good internet connection.
- The Campaign to End Loneliness cites the following as reasons people can feel isolated or lonely - Fear of Crime, Lack of Public Transport, Physical Environment (for example a lack of public benches or toilets), Housing, High Population Turnover, Demographics and Technological Changes.
- A strong correlation was found to exist in Northamptonshire between crime levels and loneliness, particularly anti-social crimes.
- A high population turnover was also found to be a strong factor influencing feelings of loneliness and isolation in Northamptonshire. Areas with a high proportion of rented property and a low proportion of owner occupiers were found to have a higher likelihood of loneliness.
- Public transportation links were found to be less of a factor than the two listed above, areas with seemingly excellent public transport links were found to be highly likely to be home to lonely or isolated people and some rural areas with considerably less public transport links were found to be at the opposite end of the isolation index.
- It was not possible to link the differences in physical environments to different levels of isolation in this study.
- A focus on reducing crime, anti social crime in particular, and creating methods of increasing the sense of community in areas with a high proportion of rented accommodation, or a high property turnover, would be beneficial in tackling loneliness and isolation in Northamptonshire.
OVERVIEW

This exercise uses CACI Acorn Customer Segmentation to map residents that may be vulnerable to isolation and loneliness. Essex County Council created an ‘isolation index’ using customer segmentation indices in January 2013 from which a map of the county could be produced showing the areas where residents were vulnerable to loneliness and isolation. Later that same year, Gloucestershire County Council used a similar model to create a map of their county highlighting the areas where loneliness was potentially an issue for residents. These maps drew praise from the Campaign to End Loneliness and all councils were urged to produce a similar map.

The population of Northamptonshire is growing in all areas of the county and in all age groups, particularly the older age groups as people are living longer. Communities are changing in both rural and urban environments. As a result, people are increasingly finding themselves isolated and lonely even in the most populated urban areas.

Almost 118,000 people in Northamptonshire are aged 65 or over. The largest numbers of older people live in Northampton, the largest area of population of all ages in the county, but in Northampton people aged 65 and over make up a relatively small proportion of the population. The two figures below show the spatial distribution of over 65’s in Northamptonshire (Figure 1) and over 85’s (Figure 2) and demonstrate that the population density of older people is highest in the more rural areas of the county. The older population in Northamptonshire has seen rapid growth over the last few years and this trend is expected to continue, particularly for those aged 80 and above. The numbers of over 80’s have doubled in the last 20 years and are expected to double again by 2030.

Loneliness and social isolation can have implications for physical health as well as mental health and lead to higher rates of mortality. Loneliness is not the same thing as isolation; loneliness can be caused by isolation but also by a feeling of a lack of suitable role in society. Loneliness is a complex issue which isn’t as easily defined as having contact with other people. "Loneliness is the difference between your desired contact with people and the contact with people you actually have," says Professor Vanessa Burholt, from the Centre of Innovative Ageing at Swansea University.

Figure 1: Distribution of Population Aged 65-84 by LSOA, Percentage of Population 2013

Figure 2: Distribution of Population Aged 85 and Over by LSOA, Percentage of Population 2013

5

6

http://www.northamptonshireanalysis.co.uk/dataviews/report?reportId=137&viewId=195&geoReportId=5012&geoId=58&geoSubsetId=

http://www.northamptonshireanalysis.co.uk/dataviews/report?reportId=137&viewId=195&geoReportId=5012&geoId=58&geoSubsetId=
Loneliness can have profound health consequences for older people. Disrupted sleep, elevated blood pressure, increased levels of the stress hormone cortisol and increased depression are all reported in people experiencing extreme loneliness. This can also cause problems for the body’s immune system and generally lower overall feelings of well-being.

Although loneliness and isolation are connected they are separate concepts. Loneliness is a subjective state with a number of forms. For example, ‘social loneliness’ is the absence of a social network or a broad group of friends, neighbours and colleagues. While ‘emotional loneliness’ is the absence of a significant other with whom a close emotional attachment is formed. Loneliness can be a chronic condition which is exacerbated with age or a condition which flares up in later life in response to life changes such as bereavement. It can be difficult to measure. In contrast, social isolation is an objective state, measurable by the number of contacts a person has. Although the terms are often used interchangeably they do remain distinct from each other. Social isolation often contributes to loneliness, but does not guarantee it. Feeling lonely can also lead to feeling anxious and unconnected to society. It is possible to feel lonely when surrounded by people. Loneliness can be seen as an indication of a discrepancy between ones desired level of social interactions and their actual or perceived level of interaction. As one can feel lonely when in a relationship or other social environment, and others can be alone but not feel lonely, loneliness is therefore subjective and can only really be self diagnosed.

Loneliness can have significant and lasting effect on health. It is associated with higher blood pressure and depression and leads to higher rates of mortality, indeed comparable to those associated with smoking and alcohol consumption. It is also linked to a higher incidence of dementia with one study reporting a doubled risk of Alzheimer’s disease. Lonely people tend to make more use of health and social care services and are more likely to have early admission to residential or nursing care.

The English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) asked respondents for their thoughts and feelings regarding social interactions and feeling lonely. The study found that the two points in life where feelings of social isolation and loneliness are most likely during adolescence and during old age. Figure 3 demonstrates this. Adults aged 16 and over were asked “On a scale where 0 is not at all lonely and 10 is extremely lonely, how lonely do you feel in your daily life?”. Responses were grouped into high levels of loneliness (those who rated their loneliness between 6 and 10), low to medium levels of loneliness (those who rated their loneliness between 2

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and 5) and very low levels of loneliness (those who rated their loneliness at 0 or 1).

**Figure 3: Proportion of people who report feeling lonely in their daily life by age group, 2014-15**

The consequences of feeling lonely or excluded can be difficulty in performing daily tasks and having a lower perception of quality of life and lower states of wellbeing.

According to research by Professor John Cacioppo at the University of Chicago, extreme loneliness can increase an older person’s risk of premature death by 14%.

**Figure 4: Frequency of people aged 60 and over feeling lonely**

This makes extreme loneliness a risk factor for premature death that is nearly as potent as disadvantaged socioeconomic status. Disadvantaged

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socioeconomic status is known to cause an increase of 19% in risk of early death.\(^\text{12}\)

It is unclear whether there are gender differences in loneliness. In recent studies, researchers who examined gender differences in the stability of loneliness produced mixed results\(^\text{13}\). Targeted responses are regarded more likely to achieve results. For example, in general lonely men are best engaged through specific activities related to long-standing interests, such as sport or gardening, and respond less well to loosely-defined social gatherings, which are of more interest to women.\(^\text{14}\)

**Figure 5** is taken from the Public Health Outcomes Framework and presents how adult social care service users and carers feel about the amount of social contact they have. Northamptonshire’s social care users are less likely to have as much contact as they would like compared to the national average and around the same amount as regional averages. It is adult carers who have much less social interaction in Northamptonshire than they would like compared to national and regional averages.

In this digital age, it is possible for people who may not be able to physically meet people to enjoy some human contact via the internet. Go On UK\(^\text{15}\) estimate that 23% of UK adults don’t possess the skills to be able to fully exploit the advantages of modern technology. They have produced a Map of Digital Isolation, this is shown in **Figure 6**, the darker colours represent an increased likelihood of digital isolation. In this context, the term digital isolation is defined by Go On UK as being unable to do simple things like send a Facebook message, apply for a job online, pay bills with an app, or even check what day the bins are collected on their local council website. For some, it means not knowing how to communicate with family and friends online, leading to loneliness, isolation or ill-health.

For all areas of Northamptonshire, the likelihood of digital exclusion is rated as medium, most areas falling into the centre of the spectrum, however digital exclusion is considered less likely in Northampton and South Northamptonshire, however Go On UK still rate the risk as medium. Digital isolation is not confined to areas with little or slow internet access, but also includes the necessary skills to take advantage of the internet and technology.

A BT Report estimated the value of digital inclusion for a new user to be £1,064 per year. The value for an advanced user is estimated at £1,756\(^\text{16}\).

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\(^{13}\) [http://pps.sagepub.com/content/10/2/250.full.pdf+html](http://pps.sagepub.com/content/10/2/250.full.pdf+html)


\(^{15}\) [http://www.go-on.co.uk/](http://www.go-on.co.uk/)

### Figure 5: PHOF Indicator 1.18, Social Isolation

#### 1.18i - Social Isolation: % of adult social care users who have as much social contact as they would like

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>95% Lower CI</th>
<th>95% Upper CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td></td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands region</td>
<td></td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derby</td>
<td></td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derbyshire</td>
<td></td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td></td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leicestershire</td>
<td></td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td></td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northamptonshire</td>
<td></td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nottingham</td>
<td></td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rutland</td>
<td></td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adult Social Care Survey - England

#### 1.18ii - Social Isolation: % of adult carers who have as much social contact as they would like

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>95% Lower CI</th>
<th>95% Upper CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td></td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands region</td>
<td></td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derby</td>
<td></td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derbyshire</td>
<td></td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td></td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leicestershire</td>
<td></td>
<td>49.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td></td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northamptonshire</td>
<td></td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nottingham</td>
<td></td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nottinghamshire</td>
<td></td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rutland</td>
<td></td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Personal Social Services Survey of Adult Carers in England (NHCS)

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19 [http://www.go-on.co.uk/resources/heatmap/#details-container](http://www.go-on.co.uk/resources/heatmap/#details-container)
METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed to generate the map in this exercise is similar to the methodology used by Gloucestershire County Council in the production of theirs\(^{20}\). LSOAs were scored based on a cumulative index, sourced from the CACI Acorn Customer Segmentation Tool, which equated to the sum of individual households and the sum of the indices aggregated to LSOA level from the individual household level. This was then converted into an aggregated index for each LSOA by dividing the cumulative index by the number of households as shown below in Figure 7.

**Figure 7: Aggregated index Calculation with example**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LSOA Name</th>
<th>No. of Households</th>
<th>Cumulative Index</th>
<th>Aggregated Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>75968</td>
<td>108.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cumulative index/No. of Household = Aggregated Index

Weightings from 1 to 5 could then be applied to the aggregated index for each variable as shown below in Figure 8. The sum of the weighted aggregated indices was then divided by the sum of the weightings to produce a final ‘average aggregated isolation index’ for each LSOA.

Household variables were calculated and combined in a similar manner to LSOA variables described above. The variables were then weighted according to the following risk index.

- Index >150 = 5
- Index >125 = 4
- Index >80 = 3
- Index >50 = 2
- Index <50 = 1

For example, the LSOA in Figure 8 would be ranked as shown in Figure 9.

**Figure 8: Selected variables and weightings with example**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Variables (LSOA &amp; Individual Household)</th>
<th>Weighting applied to the variable</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population: Head of Household 65–74</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population: Head of household: 75+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population: Household size: 1 person</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of Highest Level of Qualifications: No formal qualification</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of Highest Level of Qualifications: GCSE / O levels / CSE / School Certificate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of Highest Level of Qualifications: Degree or higher degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of Highest Level of Qualifications: A-levels / AS levels or Higher</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of Health Indicators: Clinical Depression</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of Car Ownership: Number of Cars 0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of Isolation: Belong to neighbourhood: Disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of Isolation Can borrow things from neighbours: Disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of Isolation: Talk regularly to neighbours: Disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of Isolation: could go to someone in my neighbourhood for advice: Disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of Contentment: Not satisfied with leisure time</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of Household Annual Income: £0–£20,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of Internet: Never used</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sum of aggregated variables divided by sum of weighting (10)

The aggregated risk was then calculated by dividing the weighted variable by the sum of the four isolation variables (Frequency of talking to neighbours, having someone to listen, someone to help in a crisis and

\(^{20}\) [http://www.cotswold.gov.uk/media/777436/Appendix-1-Social-Isolation-in-Gloucestershire.PDF](http://www.cotswold.gov.uk/media/777436/Appendix-1-Social-Isolation-in-Gloucestershire.PDF)
someone to relax with) and the contentment variable (Not satisfied with social life) with no weighting and multiplied by 10 to produce a double figure value for mapping by quintile. In the example, the five selected variables all have a maximum weighted score of 5, so the calculation in this case would be \(((5 \times 5)/5) \times 10 = 50\)

**Figure 9: Weighted variables example**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Variables (LSOA &amp; Individual Household)</th>
<th>Example with weighting</th>
<th>Quintile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age - Head of Household 65-74</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age - Head of Household 75+</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Size - 1 Person</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Level of Qualification - No Formal Qualifications</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Level of Qualification - GCSE/O Levels/School Certificate</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Level of Qualification - ONC/BTEC/Apprenticeship</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Indicators - mental illness/AntiSocial/Depression/Nerves</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car Ownership - No Car Ownership</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation - Frequency of Talking to Neighbours: &lt; Once a Month or Never</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation - Have Someone Who Will Listen: No-One</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation - Have Someone To Help In A Crisis: No-One</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation - Have Someone You Can Relax With: No-One</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contentment - Not Satisfied With Social Life</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Annual income - £0-20,000</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet - Never Used</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>89.73</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Isolation Score Index LSOA’s were divided into quintiles and plotted onto a map of the county. The areas with the darker shading are more at risk of housing lonely and isolated people than those with a lighter shading. Hotspots are visible in all the major urban areas of the county, particularly Northampton. It might be expected that people living in more rural locations would be more at risk of isolation and loneliness but this is only true in the East and South of Northamptonshire.

Figure 10 to the right shows the county’s LSOA’s mapped by Isolation Index Quintile.

The same exercise was completed for the isolation index at household level in order to identify individual households at risk of isolation (Figure 10). In this case, deciles were mapped rather than quintiles as the sheer number of households in urban areas would overwhelm the map image. This second exercise produces a map that is similar to the LSOA map, households at risk are located in areas that correspond to those in the LSOA map, however this second map also illustrates that households are still vulnerable to isolation and loneliness in areas where overall the index score is low. This is most evident around Northampton (Figure 16).

Combining the two maps demonstrates the above. Rather than produce one large map of the county, Figures 12 to 18 contain both indexes by borough/district.
Figure 11: Social Isolation – Most Vulnerable Households

Figure 12: LSOA & Vulnerable Households, Corby

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Figure 17: LSOA & Vulnerable Households, South Northamptonshire

Social Isolation: Socio-economic Vulnerability based on LSOA and Vulnerable Households

South Northamptonshire

Figure 18: LSOA & Vulnerable Households, Wellingborough

Social Isolation: Socio-economic Vulnerability based on LSOA and Vulnerable Households

Wellingborough

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The following areas comprise the top ten LSOA in the isolation index.

**E01032978 Northampton 021E** - Northampton 021E is part of the Castle electoral ward in the centre of Northampton. This particular LSOA is predominately made up of the area known as Spring Boroughs, an area identified for regeneration in Northampton Borough Council’s Central Area Action Plan. This LSOA is ranked 2,928 out of 32,844 in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2015 and is the 24th most deprived area of Northamptonshire.

**E01027110 Kettering 007B** - Kettering 007B is part of the William Knibb electoral ward and comprises of the area around the High Street in the centre of the town. The ward is made up of the town centre and an area to the east consisting of smaller housing in terraced streets. This LSOA is ranked 2,794th out of 32,844 in the 2015 Indices of Multiple Deprivation and is 20th in the list of most deprived LSOA’s in Northamptonshire.

**E01027153 Northampton 021C** - Northampton 021C forms part of the Castle electoral ward in Northampton Town Centre. It is to the North and East of 021E and is formed by the Upper Mounts and part of Semilong. This area of Northampton consists of smaller, terraced housing. This part of Northampton is ranked 21st. 

1,040 out of 32,844 in the national IMD of 2015 and is the 7th most deprived LSOA in Northamptonshire.

E01032979 Northampton 021F - Northampton 021F is a mostly commercial area covering the southern part of the town centre. 021F is ranked 256th out of 32,844 in the national IMD and is the second most deprived LSOA in Northamptonshire.

E01027244 Northampton 017E - Northampton 017E covers the majority of the area known as Kings Heath and is part of the Spencer electoral ward. The area consists of former social housing and is ranked 854th out of 32,844 in the national IMD. In Northamptonshire, Northampton 017E is the fourth most deprived LSOA.

E01027349 Wellingborough 006A - Wellingborough 006A forms part of the Swanspool electoral ward and is situated in the town centre of Wellingborough. Most of the area is given over to commercial use and the parts that are residential are mainly small terraced housing and flats. This LSOA is ranked 5,023 out of 32,844 in the 2015 IMD, it is the 46th most deprived LSOA in Northamptonshire.

E01027168 Northampton 012A - Northampton 012A forms part of the Eastfield electoral ward and is located in the streets to the South of Eastfield Park in the North East of Northampton. Housing here is predominately former social housing and the area is ranked 1,605 out of 32,844 in the IMD 2015. This is the 13th most deprived area in the county.

E01026968 Corby 006G - Corby 006G consists of the streets to the North of Dunedin Road and is located to the South West of Corby town centre. It is part of the Kingswood Ward. Property here is mostly social housing. This LSOA is 362nd most deprived area in the country and the 3rd most deprived in the county.

E01027231 Northampton 009D - Northampton 009D is situated to the east of Kingsthorpe’s commercial centre around St Davids Road. This area is ranked 2,177 out of 32,844 in the national IMD 2015 and 17th most deprived in Northamptonshire. Property here is mostly smaller terraced housing.

E01032980 Northampton 028E - Northampton 028E forms part of the Delapre ward and comprises of the area known as Far Cotton. Property here is mostly social housing. This LSOA is 10,572 out of 32,844 LSOA’s in the IMD and 117th in Northamptonshire.
LONELINESS RISK FACTORS

The Campaign to End Loneliness\(^{22}\) have identified a number of loneliness risk factors that may affect people in old age. They are categorised into Personal risk factors and Wider Society risk factors. Here we will examine the Wider Society risk factors in more detail.

The Wider Societal risk factors are Fear of Crime, Lack of Public Transport, Physical Environment (for example a lack of public benches or toilets), Housing, High Population Turnover, Demographics and Technological Changes.

In order to establish the impact of these factors on loneliness and isolation, 10 LSOA’s were chosen to provide as wide a spectrum of the different types of areas in Northamptonshire as possible. Areas were chosen in urban and rural locations, in areas where a lot of development may have taken place and the community is newer, contrasted with more established communities. The areas chosen are as follows.

- **Northampton 017E** – In the top ten in the isolation index, Kings Heath has a non central location, an estate of 1950’s social housing, some still owned by housing associations, others by owner occupiers.
- **East Northamptonshire 009C** – 54th in the isolation index, small town location covering the North and Eastern areas of Rushden.
- **Kettering 005E** – 95th in the isolation index, located on the outskirts of the medium sized town.
- **Northampton 029G** – 146th in the isolation index, new suburb (Upton) on the western outskirts of a large town.
- **Northampton 004B** – 162nd in isolation index, mostly comprising Southfields, located to the North of a large town centre. Established community.
- **Northampton 019C** – 192nd in the isolation index, this LSOA is an established suburb of a large town, the area is known as Old Duston.
- **South Northamptonshire 008C** – 230th in the isolation index. This area is Deanshanger, a village at the edge of the county but very close to a large town in another authority area.
- **Daventry 010A** – 284th in the isolation index, a largely rural area containing 5 small villages to the South of a medium sized town.
- **Kettering 008C** – 346th in the isolation index, this LSOA contains the large village of Barton Seagrave which is located at the eastern edge of Kettering.
- **South Northamptonshire 003G** – The lowest ranked LSOA in the isolation index, this LSOA contains the eastern half of Grange Park, a new housing development on the outskirts of Northampton, although cut off from the town by a borough boundary and high speed roads.

\(^{22}\) [http://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/](http://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/)
FEAR OF CRIME

The top 10 areas when ranked in the Isolation by LSOA index all feature highly in the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015, eight of the 10 areas are in the most deprived deciles, one is in the second decile (Wellingborough 006A) and the 10th listed LSOA in the isolation index features in the 4th decile. One of the issues that might contribute to isolation in the elderly is a high crime rate, encouraging people to remain safely indoors in the evenings rather than venturing outside to socialize.

The crime levels between the top ten LSOA’s for isolation were compared with the most deprived area in the county, Northampton 011A (Billing, including Billing Aquadrome) which is ranked 136th in the isolation index, and also with the area with the lowest level of deprivation, South Northamptonshire 009B (an area on the northern outskirts of Brackley) and the area that achieved the lowest isolation index score, South Northamptonshire 003G (the eastern part of Grange Park). An area featuring in the 5th decile in the IMD 2015 was also chosen, Corby 004F (an area on the western outskirts of the town).

The chart below shows the crime levels in the areas described above. It is worth noting that this exercise has generated some outlying results; the areas marked with an asterisk, Kettering 007B, Northampton 021F and Wellingborough 006A include town centres and the resultant crime associated with such areas. Data from [http://www.ukcrimestats.com/](http://www.ukcrimestats.com/).

Overall the chart demonstrates that crime and antisocial behaviour is most probably a key factor in isolation and loneliness in communities, the
areas with high placings in the isolation index have higher levels of crime than those with lower isolation index rankings.

Looking at the ten areas chosen for comparison, the amount of reported crime in an area does increase with the isolation index score. A positive correlation of 0.79 was found with antisocial behaviour, a more conclusive correlation of 0.89 was found when the crime statistic included all types of crime. The chart below shows the 10 LSOA’s in descending order of their isolation index score.

**Figure 21: Reported ASB and All Crime Rates Jan-July 2015**

![Graph showing total reported crime (ASB and all crimes) between January and July 2015](23)

**LACK OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

For the top 10 LSOA’s in the isolation index, the lack of public transport is not an issue. Most of these 10 locations are very central and will enjoy the same public transport links enjoyed by town centres. In this instance, comparison has been carried out between 10 locations across the entire spectrum of the isolation index.

With the Northamptonshire Interactive Map[^24], it is possible to see bus stops and bus routes across the county. Traveline[^25] also contains a search function so users can find routes, stops and timetables for transport services.

- Northampton 017E – Public Transport in this area is generally good. The housing estate is built around an oval loop and this is the main bus route through this LSOA. Two bus routes operate through Kings Heath, the Stagecoach number 12 and Meridian’s number 31 route. Kings Heath lies at one end of route 12, the service operates every 15 minutes and passes through Northampton town centre and onto a large

[^23]: http://www.ukcrimestats.com/LSOA/
[^24]: http://maps.northamptonshire.gov.uk/#x=479000,y=269000,zoom=0,base=NCC,layers=,search=,fade=false,mX=0,mY=0
[^25]: http://www.traveline.info/
supermarket on the outskirts of town. This service runs until 20.28pm, the last bus on this route returning to the area is at 20.24. Weekend services are less frequent, but regular buses still operate during the day on Saturdays and Sundays. The number 12 route passes by Northampton’s railway station allowing links across the country. The number 31 route runs only between Kings Heath and Northampton’s Northgate Bus Station, services are once again frequent and run later into the evening, it is possible to get a bus back to Kings Heath from the town centre at 21.30.

- East Northamptonshire 009C – A limited service exists in the area defined by this LSOA, the Expresslines R1 service. This service operates hourly 6 times a day on weekdays and Saturdays. The Villager Minibus VL13 route operates at the southern part of the LSOA, this is a very limited service that operates on the second and fourth Monday of the month, taking passengers to two supermarkets in Wellingborough and returning them around 90 minutes later. Regular bus services to places such as Wellingborough and Kettering are available in Rushden which is around a 15 minute walk from this LSOA and may prove prohibitively long for those with physical limitations.

- Kettering 005E – This area of Kettering is served by the Stagecoach 15 and ‘B’ routes, operating every 20 minutes between Kettering town centre and a large supermarket. To access Kettering Railway Station, residents in this LSOA will have a walk of at least 20 minutes, combined with walks both before and after the bus journey which may prove a deterrent to travel for people with mobility issues.

- Northampton 029G – Upton has a bus route that runs around the outside of the estate and is served by two buses, Stagecoach’s 15 and 15A. This route runs from the West of Northampton past the train station into the town centre and up to an area North of the town. Services run every 20 minutes on weekdays and Saturdays, every 30 minutes on Sundays and operate until 22.54. For some parts of the LSOA, accessing this service may involve a walk of dissuading distance.

- Northampton 004B – Two Stagecoach routes serve this area, the 5 and 54 services. The route enters the housing estate in a half circle before turning back on itself and leaving the same way it entered. This does mean that half of the area doesn’t have a bus that passes through, requiring a short walk to access the service. Service 5 operates every 30 minutes on weekdays and Saturdays and passes the rail station and hospital on its journey to the town centre. The last service back from the town centre is at 19.50.

- Northampton 019C – This area is well served by buses, routes 9, 9A, 9B run along the road that bisects the LSOA on a North/South axis and the number 5 service operates along
the road that bisects on an East/West axis. Both the 5 and 9 services run between the LSOA and the town centre and pass the rail station and hospital. Services are regular throughout the day and extend until well into the evening in the case of the number 9 service. The route covers much of the area as although for some residents a walk to access the service is necessary, the distance isn’t excessive.

South Northamptonshire 008C – Deanshanger is serviced by routes to nearly Milton Keynes and to Northampton. Service 89 operates between Milton Keynes and Northampton twice hourly and passes through the village. Service 83 operates in the mornings and evenings only, Service 90 to Milton Keynes operates twice hourly at peak times, hourly at other times and allows a return at 19.50 from Milton Keynes (this is extended until 23.45 at weekends). Routes passing through the village pass Milton Keynes rail stations and terminate a short walk from Northampton rail station. The route loops around the village so most homes will be a short walk from a stop, however for residents of the few houses outside the village in this LSOA will have a fairly lengthy walk along a narrow and unlit road (please note there are only a handful of dwellings along this road).

Daventry 010A – Only one scheduled service operates in this LSOA, the 65 between Daventry/Banbury and Leamington. This route passes through the village of Staverton every 2 hours or so on weekdays and Saturdays. There is no Sunday service. No scheduled routes run through the other villages in the LSOA, Hellidon, Upper Catesby, Badby and Newnham, however they are served by Northamptonshire County Council’s County Connect service. County Connect is an on-demand bus service which doesn’t have a scheduled timetable, it’s hours and routes are determined by it’s users and their requirements. Residents of these four villages could face a long walk to access the scheduled bus service if they are unaware of, or reluctant to use, the County Connect service.

Kettering 008C – This LSOA seems split into two sections in relation to bus services. The northern part of the LSOA is served by one route, 19, between Kettering and Corby, and the southern section has a greater variety of services, travelling to Kettering, Bedford, Rushden, Raunds and Corby. The routes pass Kettering and Corby rail stations and Kettering General Hospital. These routes are regular and operate into the evenings. For residents in the North of this LSOA, there is a not inconsiderable walk to access these more varied services. The area is made up of two separate housing estates and with the exception of a footpath through some woodland, there is no pedestrian or road connection.

20 http://www.county-connect.co.uk/
between the two areas. This footpath might prove unattractive to older people, particularly in the evenings. The alternative is to use the local service to change buses in Kettering if other destinations are required.

South Northamptonshire 003G – Grange Park has services between the estate and Northampton town centre, the number 7 route. This service operates every 30 minutes and terminates at an industrial area on the eastern edge of the town. This service doesn’t pass the hospital or rail station, a short walk will be necessary to access these facilities. The route through the LSOA takes a loop, one edge of which passes along the western edge of this LSOA. The design of the streets on the estate means some residents may have a fairly lengthy walk to access this service.

The analysis of public transport links above has failed to find a conclusive link between isolation and a lack of public transport provision. The area with the poorest provision of public transport links, Daventry 010A, is one of the areas least likely to house lonely and isolated residents, whilst the area appearing highest in this index, Northampton 017E, contained regular and varied public transport links. Whilst lack of public transport can not and should not be disregarded as a factor related to isolation, a clear link could not be identified in Northamptonshire in this analysis.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The ideal way to investigate the impact of physical environment would be to visit each of the 10 LSOA’s we have chosen at random and see at first hand what the area is like and to talk to residents. Within the time and cost constraints of this exercise that is not practical, but Google Maps gives us an opportunity to see what an area looks like and it is this tool that was used to provide these limited descriptions of the physical environments present in these LSOA’s. The descriptions are based on the view from the Google Streetview car and are based on the latest available imagery.

Northampton 017E – This LSOA consists of post war social housing, the kind found all across the country. The area feels spacious as there are large expanses of green space, grass verges for example and a large open park. Whilst some areas appear to be well cared for, there are others where weeds are growing and there are examples of rubbish being left by the side of the road and in quiet corners. The layout also contains numerous alleyways and pedestrian areas which can appear intimidating to an elderly person, particularly at night. The area has provision for children, a play park, a community building and a large open green space but there doesn’t seem to be much provision for older people. The former site of a pub remains empty and overgrown and with the exception of a couple outside the parade of shops, there were no public benches or seating observed. Of
the shopping parade, whilst it is hard to tell from the Google Streetview as the square is pedestrianised, it seems that a good proportion of the shops are vacant. Overall this isn’t a particularly welcoming environment for an elderly person who feels isolated or vulnerable.

East Northamptonshire 009C – This part of Rushden, to the immediate North East of the town centre, consists of pre war terraced housing with modern infill. Some former industrial buildings provide evidence of the area’s past, however the industry has gone and the larger buildings are falling into some disrepair. The terraced housing is adjacent to the pavement with a small front yard which means the footpaths are for transportation and movement rather than a social space. To the east of the LSOA is an area consisting of post war social housing which has a more open feel but there is still limited scope for social interactions in these streets. No social seating or benches were visible on Google Streetview. There is a pub in the centre of the housing in this LSOA, however in August 2015 it was displaying ‘For Sale’ signs and it is not clear if the pub is still operating. There are long, straight streets with clear views and the junctions are in the main open with good visibility, however the streets are occupied by parked cars which could prove intimidating for some elderly people.

Northampton 029G – This area is a modern, newly built housing estate constructed by multiple developers, in fact some areas are still under construction. The area is bordered by a dual carriageway and open fields. There is a slightly older estate to the North East that doesn’t form part of this LSOA. Access to the estate without a car is difficult, the main roads bordering the area require pedestrians to walk to subways or traffic signal controlled crossings which may be prohibitive in terms of distance. Infrastructure within the estate is limited, there is no pub for example and just one small newsagents shop. There are play areas for children and a school situated in the centre of the estate but provision for older people is minimal. There are no benches or public seating areas apart from in the central square area. Many parts of the estate have long, clear street aspects but in some parts the streets are winding and have secluded areas that older residents may find unnerving. Due to the age of the housing and the relatively high proportion of privately rented
property, it’s unlikely that a strong community has formed at this
time.

Northampton 004B* - An area with 1980’s housing stock, the area
is built on a gradient. Footpaths are separated from the roads by
grass verges but the proximity of trees could make these
footpaths uneven through root growth and make progress
uncertain for someone with mobility concerns. There are large,
open, green spaces which could be intimidating at nighttime and
some sheltered pathways may not appeal when darkness falls.
Again there are few items of street furniture to encourage social
interactions. There is a pub to the South of the LSOA and a
convenience store in the same area.

Northampton 019C* – This area consists of two distinct parts, to
the East lies an estate of 1950’s style social housing and to the
West is an estate of 1960’s, 1970’s housing in the form of houses
and bungalows. The area is gently undulating with grass verges
and wide footpaths. A small parade of shops borders this area to
the East and although there is no pub, there is a church.

South Northamptonshire 008C – Deanshanger has a variety of
housing as you would expect from a village. As the LSOA area
covers most of this small community, it includes more amenities
than the areas examined above. In this LSOA, there is a
community centre, post office, local shop, pharmacy, a takeaway
restaurant and just outside the boundary of this particular LSOA is
a village pub and a church. Much of the housing stock in this
LSOA appear to be 1960’s and 1970’s constructions, however part
of the LSOA features the older centre of the village. Some of the
pedestrian access in the older parts of the village is less than
ideal, narrow footpaths, carts parked on footpaths and
sometimes no footpaths at all. Whilst opportunity to move
around and engage with others may be plentiful in the centre of
the village, for those living on the outskirts or in the area of open
countryside things could be very different (however there are
very few houses outside the village in this LSOA).

Daventry 010A – This LSOA consists of a handful of small villages.
Most of the villages feature a pub, village shop and a church.
Aside from this, there are few public amenities such as benches
or social spaces for older people. Access around the larger
villages is good, footpaths on both sides of the road although cars
are parking on them in some instances, but in the smaller villages,
Catesby is an example, there are no footpaths at all and single
carriageway lanes.

Kettering 008C – This LSOA contains a variety of newer housing,
from the 1970’s to recently completed developments. Access for
older people is good in the older of these developments,
pavements are wide and separated from the road by grass verges
in places. In the newest areas, footpath provision is less
generous, forcing pedestrians to cross the road and in some
instances no footpath exists at all. The streets where this occurs
are quiet, but nevertheless it makes moving around more difficult
for the elderly or physically impaired. In other parts of the area consideration has been given to pedestrians by measures to prevent cars from parking on footpaths. The area is designed mainly for housing and there are few opportunities for socialization, there is a convenience store and a pub is within walking distance, but there are no benches or other public spaces that would encourage socialisation between older people.

South Northamptonshire 003G – This area is a newly built housing development on the outskirts of Northampton. This community is unusual in that it is quite isolated from Northampton, access is only really convenient by road due to the area’s location at the meeting point between the A45 and M1. Pedestrian access to another outlying area of Northampton is possible but the distances and unlit nature of part of the journey may make this trip unappealing. The area consists of a number of cul de sacs and there isn’t a clear main route through. Footpaths are often obstructed by parked vehicles. There is limited infrastructure for social interactions, there is a parade of shops on the other side of the estate which is quite a walk from the extremities. The pub is likewise located on the edge of the housing estate. However there are a small number of areas where benches and seating have been provided and the location is close enough to houses and the road network to prevent the area being isolated and unwelcoming.

*For other areas, street view imagery is available for 2015, however for these areas the latest imagery is from 2012

Overall, the areas examined are quite similar in terms of their physical environments. All are areas of housing and lack informal social infrastructure such as benches. Only the last area, the area with the lowest score in the isolation index, provides any clear public seating space. It is possible that this amenity exists in the other LSOA’s, but it wasn’t visible from the Google Streetview searches carried out.

The main differences noticeable were in the upkeep and appearance of an area. If the streets appear cared for and looked after, the more likely the area was to have a low score in the isolation index. Areas that were untidy with unkempt greenery, litter, fly tipping and broken kerb and paving stones were more likely to experience isolation. The areas likely to exhibit this physical environment are also the areas where crime levels are highest so it is hard to differentiate the impact of physical environment from the impact of crime, if indeed there is a differentiation at all.

What was interesting was the lack of social infrastructure in modern residential developments aimed at older populations. The newer developments had provision for children in the form of segregated play facilities, but little or no areas for older residents. The older neighbourhoods may have had these provisions in the past but they are
closing down, pubs and clubs are closing and being converted into dwellings and commercial buildings are dormant.

To help combat isolation, thought should be given to either providing activities or providing the space for activities for older residents but also how they would access the activity or space. Vehicles obstructing footpaths, tree roots making pavements uneven, long dark pathways or areas with little or no street lighting all make a trip out unappealing for an older resident, particularly at night.

**HOUSING, HIGH POPULATION TURNOVER AND DEMOGRAPHICS**

Lack of a sense of community can contribute to feelings of isolation and loneliness. The isolation index contains five indicators relating to interaction with others and local communities are key in providing that interaction. The sense of community is lost if there is frequent turnover within an area and the levels of potential turnover can be gauged by the type of tenure of property. An area with more owner occupiers is likely to see residents stay for longer than in an area with high proportions of rented property. The chart below looks at our ten sample LSOA’s by tenure of property.

The area highest in the isolation index is on the left and the axis continues in descending order of appearance in the index, ending with the area that scored the lowest value in the index. The chart shows an upward trend in home ownership (this includes owned outright as well as owned with a mortgage) as the potential for isolation decreases. The proportion of social rented property shows a decreasing trend across this spectrum, starting at 70% in the area most likely to see isolation and loneliness, falling to 3% at the other end of the index. The proportion of private rented accommodation fluctuates across the spectrum and shows no overall trend, indicating that this factor has less of an impact in promoting or reducing isolation.

**Figure 21: Tenure of Property 2011**

[Image of chart showing tenure of property for different areas]

[Link to data source: http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadAreaSearch.do?a=7&r=1&i=1001&m=0&c=144378936224&enc=1&areaSearchText=northampton+017e&extendedList=false&searchAreas]
CONCLUSIONS
This exercise has demonstrated that it is older people in urban environments that are most at risk of feeling isolated and lonely, rather than people living in more rural communities. We can see that the main societal factors that contribute to a sense of isolation, rather than personal factors such as bereavement, physical impairment etc., are crime, and a fear of crime, and a lack of community brought about by housing stock that promotes transience rather than a long term residency. Public transport may well be a factor, it is indeed cited as one by the Campaign to End Loneliness, but in Northamptonshire it appears that good transport links are no panacea to loneliness just as poor links don’t appear to promote isolation. A focus on crime reduction in areas where older people are likely to feel isolated would go some way to helping people in this situation find ways to improve their social life without the fear of crime or anti social behaviour. Older people living in areas with high proportions of social housing and rented accommodation are more likely to feel lonely or isolated than those living in areas with higher levels of owner occupation. Targeting activities at older people in these areas could help to rebuild the community networks for these residents that have been lost over time. These two factors are embodied in the physical environment which on its own can’t be described as a factor prescribing loneliness, but is certainly a visible manifestation of the fear of crime and a lack of community and community pride.

Voluntary services for the socially excluded are based in urban areas, which would appear to be the optimum location based on this exercise. However the variety of services for socially excluded people listed in the Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire (VIN) directory is small, half the listings relate specifically to housing. Of the voluntary services aimed at older people, only a small proportion, around 10%, are focused on getting older people more socially active.

Focusing on crime reduction to make the world outside the four walls of home a more attractive and appealing place would be an excellent place to start, then activities designed to cultivate community relationships in areas with a high population turnover would allow older people to create networks and communities of their own.