



Loneliness and Social Isolation:

The Role of Social Enterprise



Foreword

This is the first in a series of Senscot Briefings which aim to showcase the approach that social enterprise is taking to address a range of complex social issues across Scotland. This first Briefing highlights the contribution of Social Enterprise Network (SEN) members to addressing social isolation and loneliness – demonstrating a distinct social enterprise approach by developing sustainable, person-centred solutions and creating capacity.

What is a social enterprise?

A social enterprise (SE) is a trading business – selling goods and services – whose primary objective is to achieve social and/or environmental goals. Senscot recognises SEs in Scotland based on the criteria set out in the Voluntary SE Code of Practice.

Who are we?

Senscot is a third sector intermediary established in 1999. Along with others, we have helped to develop a support infrastructure for SEs over the last 15 years. A key part of our work, is to continue to support SENs – geographic and thematic - across Scotland. See www.senscot.net to find out more.

The context of this briefing

The Scottish Government's recent communications have provided a clear message to the third sector about their commitment to developing a national strategy to tackle loneliness and social isolation.

Engagement in developing the strategy has taken place over recent months and SEs are pleased to have had the opportunity to contribute. With the national strategy to tackle loneliness and social isolation due to be drafted later this year, SEs are keen to provide further input and connect with partners to ensure the delivery of a successful, robust strategy.

This briefing paper aims to increase partners' awareness of the role that social enterprise can play in tackling loneliness and social isolation through a wide range of interventions, as well as demonstrating added value that the social enterprise model provides for the public purse.

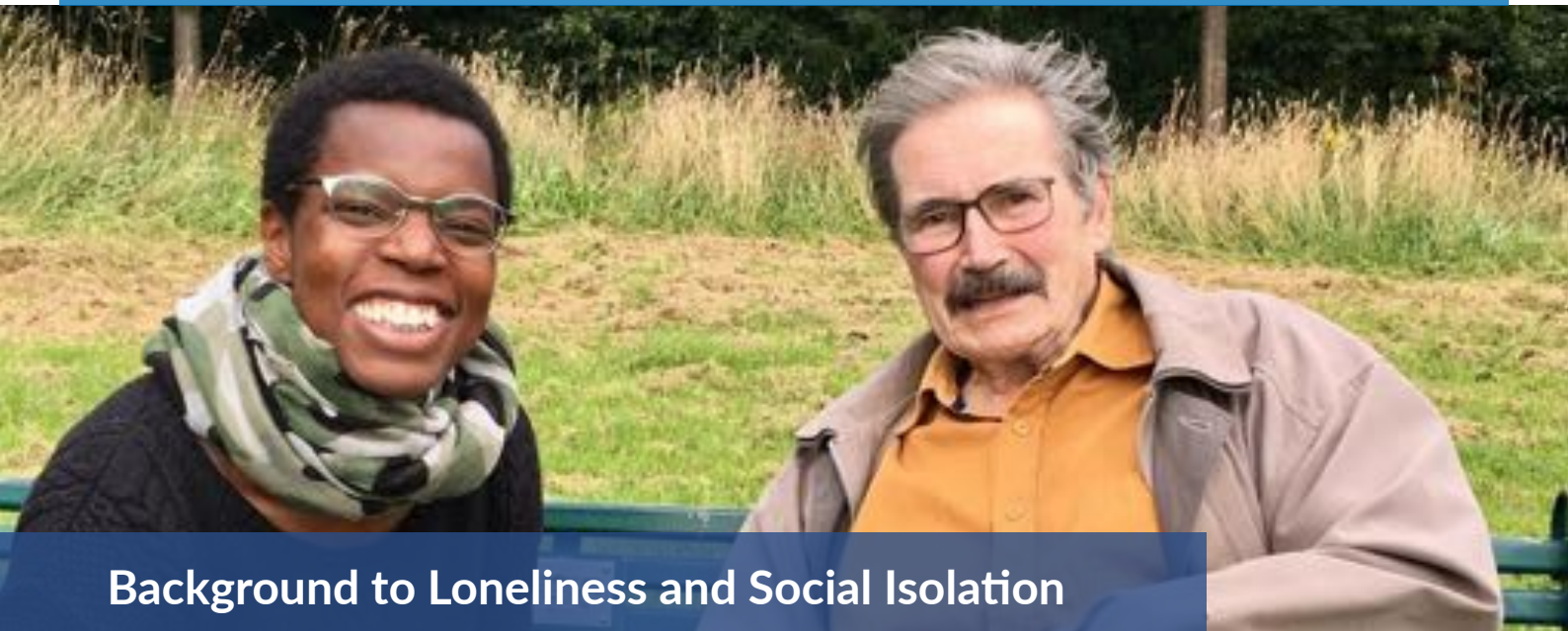
Defining Loneliness and Social Isolation

In an attempt to draw a clear distinction between loneliness and social isolation, a 2017 Scottish Public Health Network (ScotPHN) report states: “Definitions of social isolation tend to focus on the lack of social structures and social interaction with other people, whereas loneliness is subjectively experienced by someone who feels the lack of intimate, supporting, or nurturing relationships with others. This creates the situations where individuals can be socially isolated without being lonely or a socially

connected individual who does experience loneliness.”

While loneliness and social isolation are closely linked, it is clear from this definition that to confuse them as one and the same issue would be problematic.

The development of a national strategy must therefore take a nuanced approach to tackling the causes of loneliness and social isolation at a community level, acknowledging that the overlapping symptoms have multiple sources.



Background to Loneliness and Social Isolation

It is now recognised that loneliness and social isolation represent a major challenge within our communities today.

Voluntary Health Scotland (VHS) has taken a lead on the negative impact that these issues can have on an individual's physical and mental well-being, highlighting the correlation between poor social networks and health inequalities. VHS cites research conducted by the University of York, which identified a direct link between loneliness and/or social isolation and negative health outcomes. The findings, published in the British Medical Journal, suggested that “deficiencies in social relationships are associated with an increased risk of developing coronary heart disease and stroke.”

The ScotPHN report also highlighted the increased likelihood of frequent GP visits, depression, lack of self-worth and lack of ability to make new or pick up old social connections. To be clear: loneliness is not solely the reserve of older people – it can strike anyone at any stage of life.

However, Age Scotland has estimated that 100,000 older people are dealing with loneliness in Scotland today, while the number of pensioners per 1,000 in Scotland is projected to rise from 311 in 2015 to 397 in 2039.

Loneliness and isolation are major social issues and they're here to stay unless we can support an array of fresh and novel approaches at a community level.

Contributory factors to loneliness and social isolation

Individuals can experience loneliness or social isolation at any age or stage of their life; it's not only older people that are affected. A wide range of contributory factors were reported by SEN members in early 2017, while further factors have been identified in recent reports, including:

- Experiencing poverty or financial insecurity
- Experiencing health issues, including mental health
- Having physical disabilities or limited mobility
- Unemployment
- Parents of young children
- Living alone
- Geographical location
- Poor housing conditions
- Bereavement
- Retirement and aging
- Bullying
- Break up of relationships



Key Organisations & Documents



2015 - Scottish Parliament's Equal Opportunities Committee, Age and Social Isolation Report
2015 - Scottish Government's Response

2016 - Age UK, Testing Promising Approaches to Reducing Loneliness
2016 - Voluntary Health Scotland, Loneliness: A threat to Scotland's Health

2017 - Carnegie Trust UK & Joseph Rowntree Foundation, The Place of Kindness
2017 - Scottish Public Health Network, Social Isolation & Loneliness: What is the Scope for Public Health Action?

The Contribution of Social Enterprise

Earlier this year, 39% of SEN members indicated that they are currently active in addressing loneliness. Following on from this, SEN members came together to discuss their contribution to tackling loneliness.

Their meeting revealed that a wide range of activities and approaches have been implemented by SEs in Scotland, with variation

in terms of the type of intervention, beneficiaries and whether the focus was specifically on social isolation or loneliness or part of the wider work they do.

Based on this and recent reports, there appear to be four types of intervention commonly deployed to confront loneliness and social isolation in communities.

Types of intervention:



One-to-one support

Befriending can offer an immediate reprieve from acute loneliness, while guidance and signposting can ensure people do not become cut off from vital services.



Community connections

Providing opportunities for people to maintain existing connections or develop new ones within their community, whether through group based shared interests or common experiences is hugely important.



Transport

Ensuring people have access to adequate transport not only increases their levels of social interaction, but it can act as a link to social and healthcare services.



Whole system approach

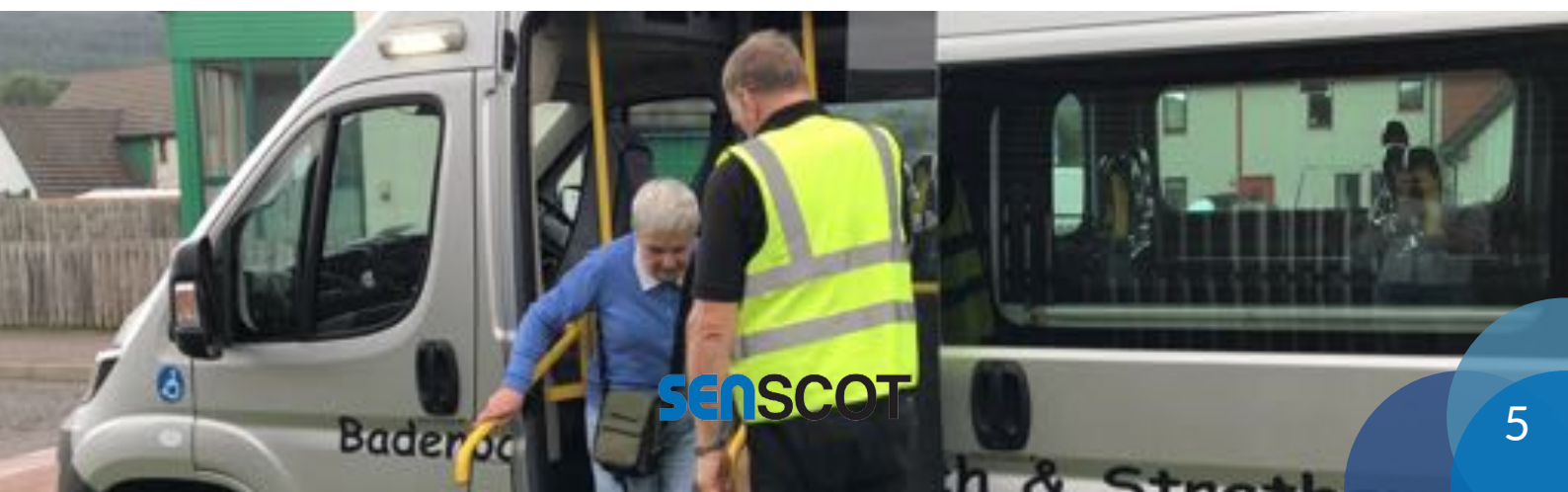
Many factors contribute to loneliness and social isolation, so it is vital that comprehensive, integrated solutions are devised which take the complexity of the issue into account.

A Social Enterprise Strategy

To provide an insight to how these interventions can be enacted using a social enterprise model, this paper includes five SEN member case studies which outline the activities undertaken, the social impact achieved and the enterprising approach adopted by each case study.

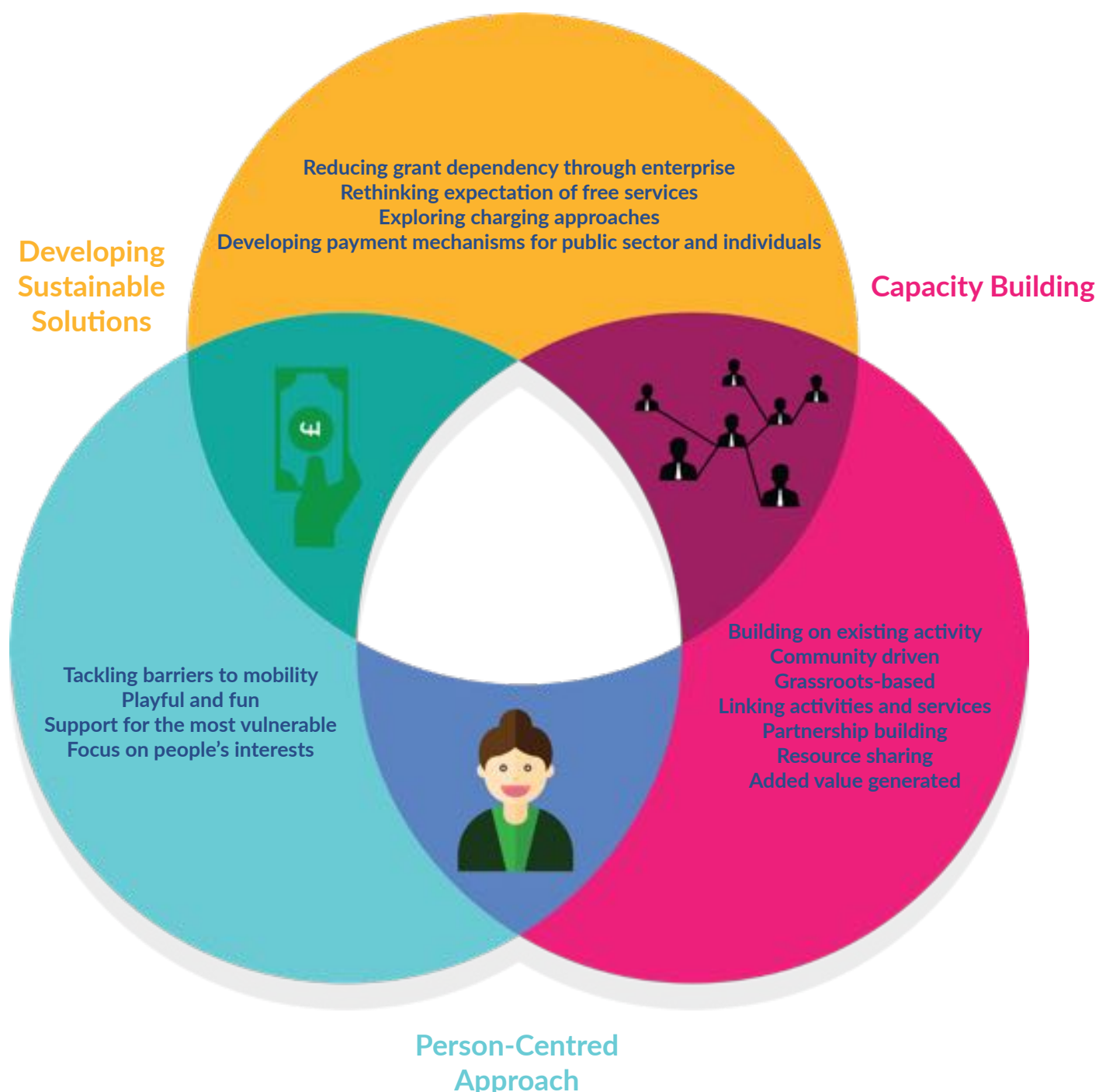
Committed to supporting social enterprise, Scottish Government published its Social Enterprise Strategy in December 2016. The supporting three-year Action Plan, published

March 2017, supports the government's Economic Strategy and highlights social enterprise's role in delivering inclusive growth. One of the key actions within the Action Plan is to realise market opportunities in health and social care. This includes working with public partners to highlight the benefits that social enterprise bring for choice and sustainability in local communities and to realise associated opportunities.



Through the SEN discussion and compiling a series of case studies, we begin to see a combination of three inter-related elements that create the distinct social enterprise approach.

Distinct Social Enterprise Approach



If you would like any further information about any of the social enterprises case studied in this briefing, or any other general enquiries, please contact Senscot's Health & Social Enterprise Coordinator Mary Sinclair - mary@senscot.net.

Case Study 1

Community Food Initiatives North East

"None of our work is specifically titled 'tackling loneliness', but CFINE's experiences is that a very significant proportion of our beneficiaries have few or no families and friends. Loneliness is a feature for many beneficiaries. So, through our range of activities, tackling loneliness is an integral part of what we do."

Dave Simmers, CEO



Mission

To positively impact on health and well-being, the environment and unemployment by creating work opportunities for and with disadvantaged, vulnerable, low income individuals, families and communities in the North East of Scotland.

Main activities

CFINE runs a range of initiatives aimed at creating work opportunities through food provision and education programmes. They have established a large network of community food outlets across Aberdeenshire, and facilitate a food bank at their head office in central Aberdeen.

A community training kitchen, Cook at the Nook, offers advice on nutritional home cooking as well as offering training and development opportunities for beneficiaries.

CFINE also provides a range of support services including: financial capability and education support, the Roots & Shoots programme offering support and volunteering opportunities to ex-offenders, a Cash

in Your Pocket referral scheme helps get access to pensions, benefits and debt relief, while also offering assistance in setting up and paying fuel bills, council tax and other administrative tasks.



Fruit and veg is a major revenue stream for CFINE

Business Model

CFINE have successfully developed a number of independent revenue streams to sustain their social activities. Having suffered from the recent slump in oil prices after building up an impressive array of

contracts with local oil companies, CFINE are well on the way to replenishing their income streams by selling fruit, vegetables and healthy snacks to retailers, offices, hotels and restaurants. They derive rental income from spare office space at their head office and are currently looking into refurbishing IT equipment to sell on at a profit. Cookery training classes are sold to those who can afford it at their Cook at the Nook community kitchen, while their new Tuk-In scheme will see a tuk tuk selling pre-made, healthy lunches to corporate clients.

Social Impact

CFINE's mix of food provision and employability programmes combine to bring about a considerable social impact both locally and regionally. Cooking classes and training opportunities improve self-worth and provide a robust social network to reduce the effects of loneliness and isolation. Skill acquisition is continually supported, with vacancies filled, wherever possible, from priority groups including those who suffer from poor mental health; learning difficulties; homelessness; addiction; unemployment; and with a criminal record.

CFINE Fact File

Established:
2004

Workforce:
28 staff equating to 21FTE
250 volunteers/work
experience placements/adults
in supported training

Turnover:
Year to end 2016 - £1.2m

Legal Structure:
Co. Ltd by Guarantee, with
a wholly owned trading
subsidiary

www.cfine.org



@CFINEAberdeen



facebook.com/CFINEAberdeen

Case Study 2

Lingo Flamingo

"I've always been a big believer in the idea that success should be measured not just by how much money you can make, but also by your contribution to society. I love the model of social entrepreneurship, where the social impact is just as important as being a sustainable organisation. I think it's a good mix of having a bit of business acumen and also making a contribution to society."

Robbie Norval, Director



Mission

To become the most successful and accessible provider of interactive language learning experiences across the UK.

Main activities

While working in a care home, director Robbie Norval witnessed the acute effects of loneliness and isolation. Drawing upon this experience and his language expertise, he fashioned a fresh approach to tackling dementia and the social isolation which can ensue as a result.

Lingo Flamingo now delivers professional-standard foreign language classes to older adults in care homes and day centres to increase well-being, stimulate the brain and slow the progress of dementia.

Classes incorporate an element of nostalgia to aid the process of language learning, making use of music, touch, scent, feel, and taste to make language learning fun and accessible for all.

They also facilitate community

projects, reaching out to older people who live in their own homes and aren't often afforded the opportunity to get out and socialise with peers.

These sorts of projects bring people who might normally be socially isolated into a fun, lively class atmosphere, providing a platform to build a social network.

"We teach foreign languages as a way of bringing older adults together...it increases their sense of belonging and sense of self worth."



Robbie Norval and his team of language teachers

Business Model

Initially developing pilot projects for local authorities with Big Lottery's 'Investing in Ideas' funding, Lingo Flamingo also received grant funding to undertake work in deprived areas, especially in Glasgow.

Lingo Flamingo also adopts a 'Robin Hood' model, charging for classes in affluent areas of the city, which then allows them to provide community projects free of charge for people in underprivileged areas.

"We've worked hard at building our relationship with local authorities and the care sector, and word of mouth has been very important," Robbie said.

"Providing free 'try before you buy' sessions has been valuable in showing individuals that it isn't too difficult, and that they're not too old to learn. It also helps by letting local authorities see that it is successful."

Social Impact

Lingo Flamingo works with Edinburgh University to measure the cognitive impact of the language classes.

While the classes are tailored towards dementia sufferers, Robbie observed: "Bringing people together in a class setting using praise-based learning increases self-confidence and self-worth. People are much more likely to make friendships within that class setting: it's a new platform, a new way of making friends."

Lingo Flamingo Fact File


Established:
2015


Workforce:
2 FT & 1 PT staff
20 volunteers

Turnover:
Year to end 2016 - £50k

Legal Structure:
CIC Ltd by Guarantee

www.lingoflamingo.co.uk

 [@LingoFlamingo1](https://twitter.com/LingoFlamingo1)

 facebook.com/LingoFlamingoCIC

Case Study 3

The No1 Befriending Agency

"I always wanted to start a business that is meaningful to both me and my clients. We aim to create a culture of friendship in communities. We hope that our 'cup-of-tea' approach to befriending will develop a movement of people in communities who 'catch' the befriending bug and the enjoyment they get from becoming a friend and reducing isolation becomes second nature to them."

Audrey Mutongi, Managing Director



Mission

To reduce loneliness and isolation by creating connections and building confidence. The No1 Befriending Agency are dedicated to improving the quality of life of all the people they support by providing compassionate social support and by promoting inclusion and reorientation.

Main activities

Based in Glasgow, The No1 Befriending Agency provide a one-to-one 'befriending' service, as well as providing personal and social support both at home and in the community.

Other services include domestic care, - providing support with personal care in the home including meal planning and preparation, housework, laundry, shopping assistance or the collection of prescriptions. They can also help with the care of pets, where required.

Their social companionship service is tailored towards the individual's needs, whether it be someone to share a cup of tea with or to provide personal reassurance.

No1 also facilitates regular social outings for like-minded peer groups, assistance in attending religious services, trips to libraries, shops, appointments, hairdressers and more.

Designed to allow people the flexibility to enjoy a holiday, No1 will provide a holiday care scheme, where a care assistant will be provided to afford an individual or family the same service on holiday that they would receive at home.

A respite care service can also be provided by No1, designed to allow regular carers a well-earned break without the disruption of a quality care service.

Where required, No1 can also offer an affordable alternative to residential care or nursing home admission with a full live-in care service.



Befriending services reduce acute loneliness

Business Model

The No1 Befriending Agency split their activities between social, volunteer-based services and paid-for services.

Programmes such as one-to-one befriending, a companionship service where older adults receive visits in their own homes, are sustained by a steady base of volunteers.

Other activities, including assistance with weekly shopping, longer-term companionship programmes, home help and personal care services, are paid-for services in order to ensure The No1 Befriending Agency's long-term sustainability.

Social Impact

The No1 Befriending Agency reduces loneliness and isolation in local communities, and has worked with over 100 beneficiaries since starting up.

Managing Director Audrey Mutongi also stands by the maxim that befriending transforms two lives, not just one.

The No1 Befriending Agency Fact File


Established:
2015


Workforce:
1 FT & 3 PT staff
40 volunteers

Turnover:
Year to end 2016 - £70k

Legal Structure:
CIC Ltd by Guarantee

www.befriend.org.uk

 [@no1auds](https://twitter.com/no1auds)

 facebook.com/Befriend.org.uk

Case Study 4

Badenoch & Strathspey Community Transport Company (B&S CTC)

"You know there's a need out there and it's in your community. You want to develop something but you realise you have to generate an income to do it so you can become less grant dependent. You need to find a balance of generating some income as well as providing the service. It's hugely important to be able to provide a service that is a benefit to the community."

Maggie Lawson, Development Manager



Mission

To provide safe, high-quality, affordable, accessible transport and social inclusion services to those who have a community transport need in Badenoch and Strathspey.

Main activities

Services cover an operating area of 909 square miles, primarily helping people gain access to critical aspects and functions of life, easing the challenges of advanced years and the vulnerability this can bring. The project has become one of the largest and most successful community transport operations in Scotland, with 1650 registered clients supported by around 160 volunteers.

A voluntary car scheme and three wheelchair accessible vehicles support B&S CTC's core community transport activities. Cars can be booked in advance or run on a regular basis, with volunteers providing vital transport links for those with mobility issues.

Meanwhile, a raft of social inclusion services help to provide beneficiaries with better health and well-being outcomes.

A weekly door-to-door assisted shopping service provides heightened independence for people with mobility issues, while prescription collection, weekly lunch clubs and otago exercises are also offered. B&S CTC also run registered bus routes in the absence of adequate services.

Vehicle, wheelchair and mobility scooter hire is also available at responsible rates, while befriending services work in tandem with the community transport aspect to provide a holistic approach to tackling loneliness and isolation.



B&S CTC's door-to-door assisted shopping service

Business Model

B&S CTC generates income through a series of registered bus routes. These are primarily used by local residents, but are also popular with the steady stream of tourists who visit Aviemore. A paid transport service is also

available for people with disabilities who visit the area.

A service level agreement with the local authority and NHS board helps B&S CTC fill gaps in public services. "It links into a lot of the things we do, so we try to get the balance between serving the community and generating income to sustain our activities," Development Manager Maggie Lawson explained.

Currently, 48% of funding comes from the Big Lottery, which Maggie believes helped the organisation become more integrated. "Previously we were funded as a transport company, but the Lottery funding included the social inclusion services. That's been key - if you better integrated services, they would produce better outcomes."

Social Impact

"The social inclusion aspect of community transport helps provide better outcomes for people, and by enabling people to remain in their own homes for longer, it reduces public expenditure on home care services because they can access so many services through transport," Maggie commented.

Badenoch & Strathspey Community Transport Company Fact File

Established:
1999

Workforce:
3 FT & 6PT staff
Approx 160 volunteers

Turnover:
Year to end 2016 - £276k

Legal Structure:
Co. Ltd by Guarantee with
charity status

www.ct4u.co.uk

@BSCTC1

facebook.com/BSCTC

Case Study 5

ROAR: Connections for Life

"There are different barriers that people face in terms of becoming included and less isolated...The challenges that older people face in regard to loneliness and social isolation can be very different from those faced by young people or people from ethnic minority backgrounds. The issue should be tackled using different, motivating messages. That should be recognised in this strategy: there won't be one size that fits all."

Nicola Hanssen, General Manager



Mission

ROAR: Connections for Life's mission is to connect lives and promote health and well-being in later life.

Main activities

There are currently nine health and well-being clubs run by ROAR across Renfrewshire. Acting as a social gathering point for the local community, they run on a weekly basis and generally serve hot food.

Other activities facilitated by ROAR include a befriending service, while volunteering opportunities are provided to promote further social inclusion. Nicola Hanssen, General Manager, stressed the importance of using volunteering opportunities as a means of addressing loneliness: they build confidence, increase the volunteer's social network and help bypass the initial stigma of reaching out for help with loneliness and isolation.

Information and signposting services are also offered to assist people with

accessing vital services or dealing with complex application forms.

ROAR's other activities include:

- Falls prevention services
- Otago exercise classes
- Men's activity group
- Foot care services
- Craft club
- Cooking group
- Cinema club
- Tablet and iPad classes



Hand massages are relaxing and beneficial to health

Business Model

Following a negotiated tender and procurement process, ROAR was awarded a five-year contract by Renfrewshire Council for the delivery of Low Level Preventative Services for older people in Renfrewshire.

This contract supports the nine health and well-being clubs, befriending services, volunteering programmes and information and signposting services.

Grant funding is used to maintain falls-prevention services, otago classes and a men's group. Meanwhile, responsibly-priced enterprise activity (a craft club, foot hygiene care services, cooking groups, a weekly cinema club and an iPad and tablet class for older people) ensures a robust array of income streams. Surplus money can then be redirected to ensure that services remain free, or less expensive, in more deprived areas.

Social Impact

ROAR directly supports over 1000 older people each year. Many beneficiaries regularly access two to three services on a weekly basis, others for only a short period. Internal evaluation also revealed that companionship was found to be the most important aspect of any activity. Increasingly, the spread of people's social network was found to have a profound effect on someone's motivation to maintain aspects of their health and well-being so they could continue to socialise.

ROAR: Communities for Life Fact File

Established:
2011

Workforce:
5 FT & 4 PT staff, plus 1 shared post with Renfrewshire Council
170 volunteers

Turnover:
Year to end 2016 - £420k

Legal Structure:
Co. Ltd by Guarantee with charity status

www.roarforlife.org

[@RoarCommunities](https://twitter.com/RoarCommunities)

facebook.com/1Roar