

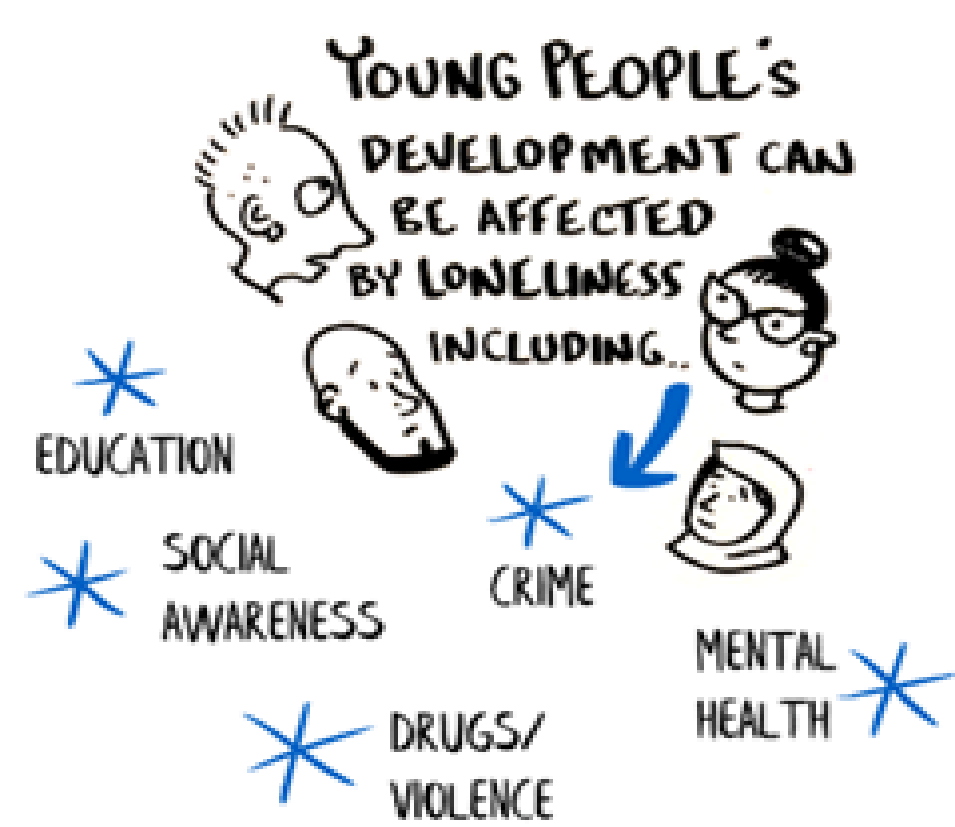
Loneliness and the Voice of Young People in Rotherham

Introduction

'Loneliness affects people of all ages. Younger adults aged 16 to 24 years old are at particular risk of feeling lonely more often.'¹

Loneliness is a priority area within Rotherham's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2018-2025). In Rotherham there has been little consultation with young people into their experiences of loneliness. Rotherham Public Health wanted to explore with young people what the issues were for them.

Public Health approached Rotherham Children, Young People and Families Consortium to ask if they would work with young people to provide a snapshot of youth loneliness in Rotherham. The consortium work together on common issues where possible and appropriate and were happy to take the lead on this.



Materials and Methods

The five organisations of the Children, Young People and Families Consortium held focus groups with **130** young people aged **10-25 years** of age, between April and June 2019. These organisations were:

- Endeavour
- Clifton Learning Partnership
- YWCA Yorkshire
- Rush House
- United Multicultural Centre

The focus groups asked the young people the following questions:

- **What the issues are for young people in relation to loneliness?**
- **How common is loneliness amongst young people?**
- **Are any triggers or sub-groups that can predict loneliness?**
- **What is working well and what could be done to alleviate the problems?**

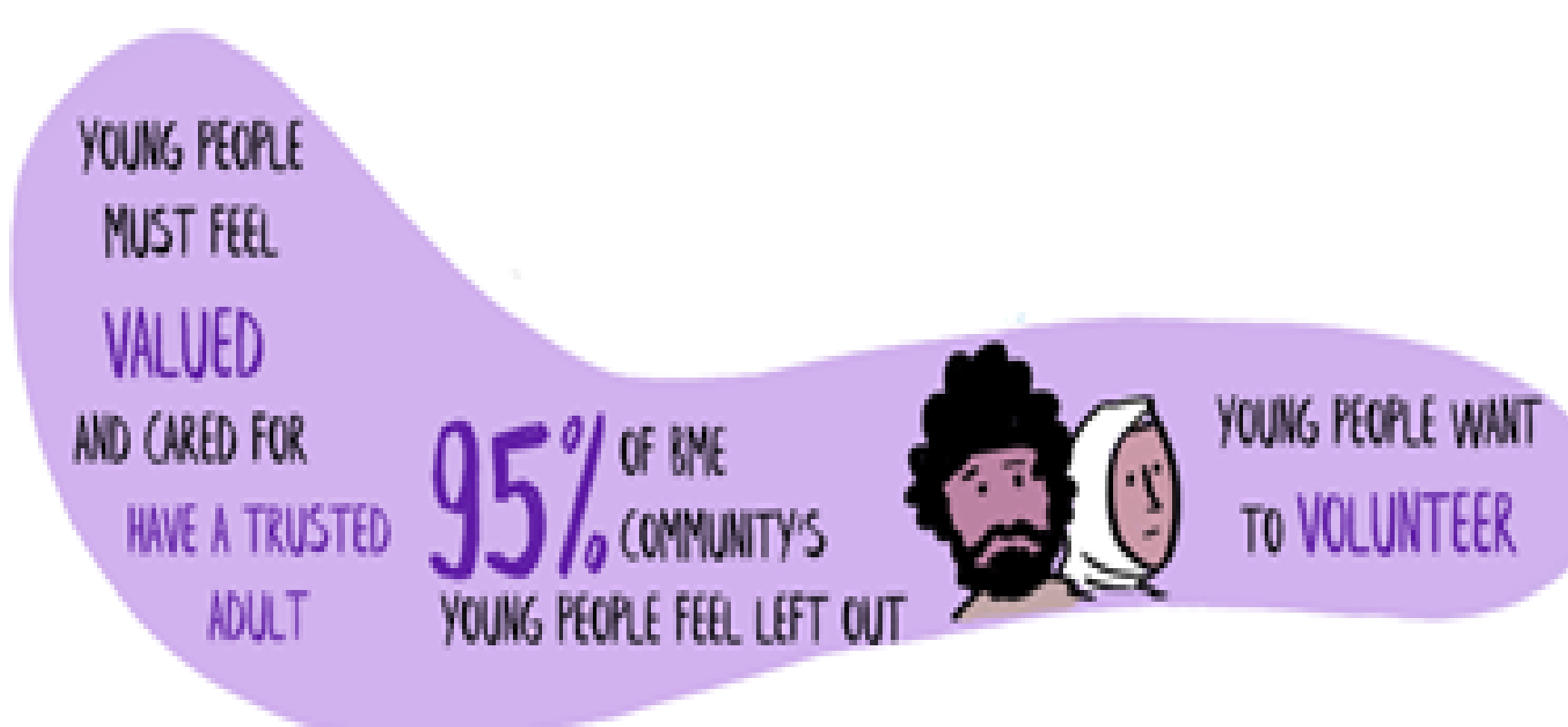
Literature cited

1. Office for National Statistics (2018) What characteristics and circumstances are associated with feeling lonely? cited in HM Government (2018) A connected society: a strategy for tackling loneliness

Results

Who were the young people?

- 39% identified as male and 61% as female.
- 13% of the children and young people identified as having SEND.
- 27% identified as having English as an additional language
- 18% of the participants were young parents and 8% were Looked After Children.



What they told us?

"Everyone, of any age, can feel lonely."

- Loneliness is linked to feeling valued, cared for, having friendships and being supported.

"When others are against me and nobody is in my corner."

- 63% of young people confirmed that they had felt lonely at one time or another.
- 95% of young people in one organisation where the children and young people were from BAME communities experienced feeling left out or lonely.

"some of my friends miss their country like me"

- In the supported housing project 20% of the cohort felt lonely, 7% stating this was always and 13% a lot of the time.
- Young people cited a variety of life events and individual/community and societal triggers which led to them feeling lonely.
- Social media could be a good way of connecting young people and also a means of perpetuating loneliness.

"Social media can be your friend and your enemy."

Conclusions

"I think everyone can feel lonely sometimes. They might feel lonely because they are different."

Loneliness was an important issue for the young people.

These were the things in relation to loneliness that they felt would make a difference:

- Having a **relationship with a trusted adult**.
- Having **opportunities to celebrate diversity and difference**, allowing young people to learn about each other.
- Giving young people **opportunities to take on responsibilities**, fundraising was given as an example.
- **Educating others about loneliness** and the signs and symptoms young people may present with.
- Supporting **young people's emotional wellbeing** since mental health and loneliness are inextricably linked.



Findings of this consultation are informing the Health and Wellbeing Board's '**Loneliness Action Plan**'.

Acknowledgments



The Consortium comprises 30 charitable organisations within the borough of Rotherham, from smaller community-based organisations to larger national charities.
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