



**Making life better,
together**
Belfast Strategic Partnership

Mapping Isolation and Loneliness Amongst Older People in Belfast Easy Read Summary



*A city where older people
live life to the full*

Background

Belfast City Council and Belfast Strategic Partnership aim to make Belfast an age-friendly city by adopting the World Health Organisation approach and developing an Age-friendly Belfast Plan 2014-2017 with the support of older people across the city. An age-friendly city would offer opportunities for all older people to have an active social life.

If someone is socially isolated they have limited contact with other people during the day, and often those contacts are very limited in nature. Loneliness is a state of mind and may be caused by isolation, but it ultimately depends on how isolated they *feel*. The perceptions and needs of each older person can be quite varied, requiring a flexible response based on listening carefully to each individual and offering support which is tailored to them. Loneliness and social isolation are known to have a negative impact on a person's health and wellbeing. They can be as harmful as smoking 15 cigarettes a day and more damaging than obesity. Lonely individuals are at a higher risk of the onset of disability; they have an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, cognitive decline and depression; as well as having an increased risk of malnutrition. Some researchers propose that addressing isolation and loneliness may be one of the most cost-effective ways of improving health and wellbeing.

A report published by the Campaign to End Loneliness and Age UK in 2015 entitled '*Promising Approaches to Reducing Isolation and Loneliness in Later Life*' recommended using data to identify areas where older people were most likely to suffer from social isolation and loneliness. However, as many individual and community characteristics have been associated with vulnerability to social isolation and loneliness, it is very difficult to identify and understand the causes. For example, some risk factors may reinforce each other to heighten vulnerability.

In Belfast we followed the approach taken by Gloucestershire County Council and the University of Kent, and commissioned Queen's University Belfast to develop Isolation Maps. These maps show areas where older people may be more likely to experience isolation and loneliness.

Households Vulnerable to Isolation and Loneliness

Previous research has suggested that an individual's vulnerability to social isolation and loneliness may be associated with the following core risk factors:

- Being aged 75 or older;
- Living in single person households;
- Being poorly educated;
- Having a low household annual income;
- Not having access to a car; and
- Living in areas of higher social deprivation.

The CACI Acorn Customer Segmentation Dataset groups households according to multiple features. Using the variables above, it was possible to identify households within this dataset who are most at risk of isolation and loneliness. These households were characterised as containing older adults from lower income backgrounds and living in social housing across the city, and more specifically purpose-built accommodation in the eastern and southern parts of the city. More vulnerable households were commonly found in the following social groups:

- Pensioners in social housing, semis and terraces;
- Pensioners and singles in social rented flats;
- Elderly people in social rented flats;
- Elderly singles in purpose-built accommodation.

Postcodes with households in these groups who were most vulnerable to isolation and loneliness were mapped. Each dot on Map 1 represents a postcode of approximately 15 households.

Area Isolation Index (Core and Additional Factors)

In addition to the core risk factors above, additional risk factors have also been identified as being useful indicators of higher vulnerability to isolation and loneliness. The following list was identified:

- % SOA population aged 65-74 in socially deprived areas;
- % SOA population aged 75+ in any area;
- % SOA population living in One Person Households ;
- % SOA population with no formal qualifications;
- % SOA population with no access to motorised transport;
- % SOA population with a sensory impediment (sight/hearing);

% SOA population with long-term mental health condition;
% SOA population whom are carers and aged 65+;
SOA Income Deprivation Rank;
Number of households in SOA requiring assistance with bin collection.

Each SOA in the city was ranked into deciles according to each risk factor. These were summed to give a total risk-rating score for each SOA (see table 1). Map 1 shows the relative risk in each.

Taken together the Isolation Indexes suggest that the more socially deprived areas with a higher proportion of older residents were more likely to be at the greatest risk of becoming socially isolated. However, it also showed that households at increased risk are found across the city, including those areas that have higher average household incomes and car-ownership levels. This highlighted that social isolation is a complex city-wide phenomenon, with risk-factors which do not simply follow obvious demographic and socio-economic profiles.

Map 1

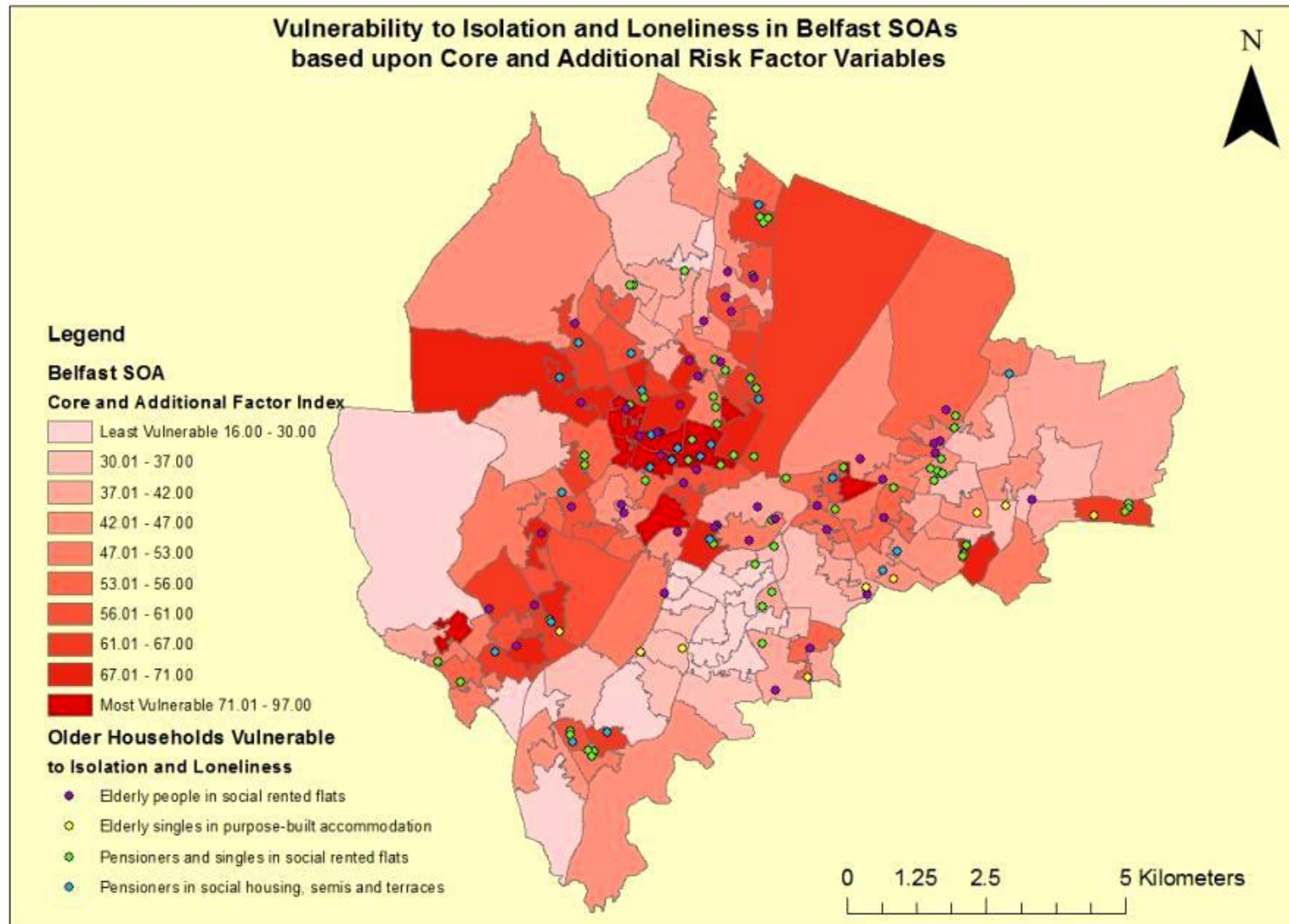


Table 1

The Table below shows where isolation and loneliness are likely to be concentrated in Belfast

Belfast SOA	Core and Additional Risk Index and (nos aged 65+ in 2016)	Belfast SOA	Core and Additional Risk Index
Crumlin 1	97 (517)	Shaftesbury 3	70 (271)
		Glencairn 1	70 (360)
		Upper Springfield 3	69 (217)
		Knock 1	69 (296)
Shankill 2	93 (490)	Water Works 2	68 (233)
Woodvale 3	92 (289)	Falls Park 2	68 (454)
		Ardoyne 2	68 (245)
Woodvale 2	79 (259)	Upper Malone 2	67 (219)
Shankill 1	79 (270)	Legoniel 2	67 (282)
New Lodge 2	79 (228)	Duncairn 2	67 (305)
		Castleview 3	67 (328)
		Ardoyne 1	67 (246)
		Andersonstown 1	67 (445)
Falls 1	77 (225)	Cherryvalley 3	66 (419)
		Andersonstown 3	66 (299)
Woodvale 1	76 (219)		
Ballymacarrett 3	74 (230)	New Lodge 3	63 (156)
		Glen Road 1	63 (387)
		Duncairn 1	63 (357)
		Ardoyne 3	63 (268)
Glencolin 4	73 (292)	Legoniel 3	62 (314)
		Highfield 3	62 (225)
		Falls 2	62 (201)
New Lodge 1	71 (367)	Musgrave 1	61 (244)
		Fortwilliam 1	61 (363)
		Ballymacarrett 2	61 (186)
Glencairn 2	71 (390)		
Crumlin 2	71 (354)		
Andersonstown 2	71 (358)		

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