

## **Example of small group exercise facilitator notes from workshop 1**

**FOCUS:** Understandings of patterns and causes of social isolation and loneliness.

### **PART A – INDIVIDUAL THINKING TIME (10 MINS)**

1. Facilitator describes the templates and invites participants to choose a diagram to work with – whichever you like – [stick person, timeline or system map]
2. Thinking about people who are migrants and/or of minority ethnic identity, consider the following questions and make notes or draw on your sheet to capture your thoughts:-
  - a. Which types of positive social connections and interactions are important in relation to feeling lonely? Why?
  - b. Which types of negative social connections and interactions are important in relation to feeling lonely? Why?
  - c. Who do you think is most at risk of being isolated and/or lonely? Why?

### **PART B – DISCUSSION IN THE SMALL GROUP [50 MINS TOTAL] [RECORDER ON]**

1. Each person to explain their thoughts on the first 3 questions.
  - a. Facilitator to prompt for examples or illustrations (no need to name people, but stories can help to illustrate the points)
  - b. Facilitator to pick up on and explore heterogeneity in experiences, and reasons for this e.g. by gender; by life-stage; by education
  - c. Facilitator to explore possible differences between ‘fleeting’ loneliness or lack of belonging (e.g. at particular times or in particular places) versus more chronic and persistent loneliness (a feeling that stays with the person most of the time and across space/place)
2. Group discussion - move on to addressing the following questions:-
  - a. What factors help to protect against social isolation or help to connect people in positive ways?
  - b. What factors help to protect against the feelings of loneliness?
  - c. What factors get in the way of connections or make isolation more likely?
  - d. What factors make loneliness more likely?
  - e. Why is it that in the same circumstances some people feel lonely and others do not?

Facilitator to prompt the group to think at all levels – individual, family, community, services, wider society and so on.

One note-taker to use system diagram to record factors and relationships as far as possible.

One note-taker to record commentary/discussion as far as possible.

3. Prepare to share main points with the whole group. Agree on the main things to be mentioned.

## Example 3 Vignettes used in Workshop 2

### SECTION 1: SUPPORT GROUPS

#### Support group 1

This group was set up at a community centre in a medium sized city. The group was open to any women who were new migrants to the country, and met on a weekly basis in the early evening. A volunteer facilitator, who was herself a migrant, convened the group and asked the women for their ideas on what the group sessions should cover. Sessions were held in English and involved a mixture of information giving by the facilitator and sharing of stories, experiences and food among the group participants. From time-to-time, the group also went on excursions to parts of the city. Most group members reported that their sense of belonging had increased and feelings of loneliness lessened after three months of attending the group. For instance, Aamra told us that she had exchanged phone numbers and started to meet group members outside the sessions. She felt more confident to go out and she had shared what she had learned about life in the UK with other people in her community. However, for a few women, the group had less of a positive impact. For instance, Nafisa enjoyed the group sessions but struggled to attend sometimes and said that she did not feel any less lonely or isolated after being in the group for three months.

Why do you think this group was generally quite successful?

Why do you think that it did not work for some women?

How might you change it to make it more successful for women like Nafisa?

What else would you like to know? What details are missing that are important to consider?

## SUPPORT GROUPS (continued)

### Support group 2

This group was set up for Black British men with 'low mood' who were considered socially isolated. Group members were referred to the group by their GP or social worker. The group involved a structured 12 week programme using psychological approaches. The weekly sessions were delivered by a health professional. Participants were encouraged to get to know each other and share their experiences. One-to-one support was available at the end of sessions or via telephone in between sessions, so that participants could discuss individual issues. The last session included a 'celebration', with refreshments. At the end of the 12 week programme most participants reported that they thought the group was 'helpful' but they did not feel any less isolated or lonely.

Why do you think this group was generally not successful in reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness?

What aspects of the support group do you think were promising / good?

How would you change it to make it more successful?

What else would you like to know? What details are missing that are important to consider?

