Loneliness Awareness Week 2023: new report by The Cares Family sets out how to build social connection in communities

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One of the UK's leading social connection charities, The Cares Family, has published a new report that sets out ten techniques to build meaningful connection between people from different generations and backgrounds.

Building Connection: Exploring What Works explains the ten techniques that have helped The Cares Family bring together 26,000 older and younger people in London, Liverpool and Manchester over the past 12 years. It also draws on the expertise of the UK's leading civic innovators such as Ivo Gormley, founder and CEO of Good Gym, and Ruth Ibegbuna founder of the RECLAIM Project and The Roots Programme.

The report zeroes in on 'Authenticity' and 'Reciprocity' as key principles that underpin meaningful social connection. It emphasises the importance of the power of place, inspiring self-expression and proactively finding disconnection in the community as some of the techniques that are most effective in building social connection across difference.

The publication of the report comes at an important moment. Last month, the US Surgeon General released an Advisory highlighting how **improved social connection can decrease the risk of developing and worsening heart disease, anxiety, dementia and diabetes.** In the UK, 31% of people feel lonelier than they did before the COVID-19 pandemic and only 45% of younger people feel as though they belong within their neighbourhood.

Sam Dalton, Head of Policy and Campaigns at The Cares Family said:

"Now more than ever we need to bring people together. After 12 years of learning about what works when it comes to meaningful social connection, we are delighted to share key techniques and approaches through this report. We hope it will help policymakers understand the skills, focus, intention and investment needed to build connection in our communities. The UK's crisis of social disconnection is a personal crisis, a public health crisis, and a political crisis - it simply cannot be ignored. Connection really does matter."

Kim Leadbeater, MP for Batley and Spen said:

"The publication of US surgeon general's Advisory last month reinforces what many of us have been saying for a long time. Like in the US, the effects of social disconnection are having a profound impact on the physical, mental and social health of individuals and communities across the UK. There is a fundamental need for us to look at the ways we support meaningful social connection. Reports like this by The Cares Family show that we already have the knowledge, expertise and experience out there in communities to help bring us together, support each other, bridge divides and find common ground."

Jon Yates, Founder, National Citizen Service (NCS) programme and author of 'Fractured' said:

"There are deep divides across age, race and class in the UK. The pandemic exposed this. The work of The Cares Family and other community-based initiatives to bring people together across division shows that we have the will and the know-how to be more united. Building social connection is vital for everyone that wants to see a healthier, safer and more prosperous society."

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The PDF is an copy of the Building Connection: Exploring What Works report

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