

CONNECTING FOR BETTER HEALTH PROJECT STUDY 1 FOLLOW-UP WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Version 1: 12 December 2024

WHAT IS THE CONNECTING FOR BETTER HEALTH PROJECT?

The [Connecting for Better Health project](#) is a 5-year National Health and Medical Research Council funded project to help decision-makers implement acceptable, targeted, fair and cost-effective strategies to decrease loneliness, social isolation and chronic disease in Australia. The project has [8 sub-studies and 3 Work Streams](#). The aim of Study 1 is to understand how loneliness and social isolation affect people who are at risk of, or who already have, a chronic disease such as heart disease, diabetes or depression.

STUDY 1 FOLLOW-UP WORKSHOP

The [Study 1](#) Follow-Up workshop was held on Thursday 12 December 2024 from 1.30pm – 4.30pm at Monash University, 553 St Kilda Road, Melbourne. This was a follow-up to the [initial Study 1 workshop](#) conducted on 29th April 2024.

The objectives of the Follow-Up workshop were to:

- Provide an opportunity for stakeholders to provide feedback on the draft causal loop diagram on loneliness, social isolation and chronic disease.
- Ensure the diagram reflects the lived experience and expertise of relevant stakeholders.

Ten people with an interest in loneliness and social isolation research attended, including 4 community members, 5 service providers, 1 researcher, and 4 Monash University staff. Organisations represented included Ending Loneliness Together, Relationships Australia, Mind Australia, South East Public Health Unit, Bolton Clarke Research Institute, Uniting AgeWell and AIA Insurance. Six attendees were present at the previous workshop.



Co-Chief Investigator Dr Lidia Engel explained how the research team developed the draft causal loop diagram, based on the 100+ concepts identified at the initial workshop in April. Dr Michelle Gooley, Dr Lidia Engel, Dr Fikru Rizal and Associate Professor Michelle Lim facilitated large and small group discussions which gave attendees the opportunity provide feedback on the draft model. These included missing concepts, missing links between concepts, accuracy of relationships between concepts and any concepts that should be removed. A discussion on the most and least important concepts concluded the workshop. Those who were invited to the workshop but couldn't attend were sent the draft model and invited to submit feedback via email.

WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

Our workshop evaluation survey showed that most attendees were very satisfied or satisfied with the workshop and felt they had the chance to put forward their opinions and ideas. They enjoyed being able to review and discuss the model with the variety of stakeholders in the room and the interactive nature of the process. Suggestions for improvement included better explanation of the most and least important concept exercise and more information on the impact of the workshop on the final project outcomes.

WORKSHOP DATA ANALYSIS

The research team will collate the table activity sheets, group discussion notes and feedback received after the workshop to update the causal loop diagram.

NEXT STEPS

The team are aiming to present the findings in an academic paper published in 2025. The paper will include the diagram of loneliness, social isolation and chronic disease, illustrating the complexity of these relationships. The results of the workshop will also assist with [Studies 2 and 3](#) of the project, which aim to determine the areas in Australia with the highest levels of people experiencing loneliness and social isolation and the cost and quality of life impacts associated with loneliness and social isolation.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like any further information on the workshop or the Connecting for Better Health project, please contact Sharon Clifford, C4BH project Manager on (03) 9902 4474 or connecting4betterhealth@monash.edu