The Campaign to End Loneliness Measurement Tool

Scale 1

This tool contains the following statements:

1. **I am content with my friendships and relationships**

2. **I have enough people I feel comfortable asking for help at any time**

3. **My relationships are as satisfying as I would want them to be**

To each of these statements, ask your respondents to give one of the following answers:

Strongly Disagree / Disagree / Neutral / Agree / Strongly Agree / Don't Know

In order to avoid a 'response set' – where people give the same answer to a question almost by rote, it is important to alternate the direction of answers. E.g. for questions 1 and 3 you start with the 'Strongly Disagree' end of the scale and for question 2 you start with 'Strongly Agree'.

Asking all three of these questions together produces the most reliable information on people's experience of loneliness. You can see a copy of the questions in full scale form in Appendix A.

Using this scale: how to score and interpret your results

In order to score somebody's answers, their responses should be coded as follows:

Response	Score
Strongly disagree	4
Disagree	3
Neutral	2
Agree	1
Strongly agree	0

The scores for each individual question need to be added together. This gives a possible range of scores from 0 to 12, which can be read as follows:

Least lonely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 → **Most lonely**

So someone with a score of 0 or 3 can be said to be unlikely to be experiencing any sense of loneliness, whereas anyone with a score of 10 or 12 is likely to be experiencing the most intense degree of loneliness. Scores in-between these two extremes are on a spectrum of feelings of loneliness; however it is not possible to say that each point on the scale represents an equal increase or decrease in the degree of loneliness someone might be feeling.

The main purpose of this tool is to measure the change that happens as a result of an intervention to address loneliness. The key thing to focus on is how people's scores change over time. If someone scores "9" at one point, and then "7" three months later (after having been matched with a befriender, for example) it is reasonable to assume that their experience of loneliness has decreased. You should not say "this person's loneliness has decreased by 22%" because it is not possible to say by how much it has decreased – just that it has improved.

SUMMARY

The Campaign to End Loneliness Measurement Tool

Scale 1

Length: 3 Questions

Language: Positive wording

Initially developed for: Service providers

Does it mention loneliness? No

This scale is for you if: you want a short and sensitively-worded tool that is easy to use.

STRENGTHS

- **Positive language about a tricky issue:** The particular strength of this tool is that it is written in language which is non-intrusive and unlikely to cause any embarrassment or distress.

- **Practical:** It is therefore a very practical resource for organisations in the field to use in their face-to-face work with older people.

- **Co-designed:** It has been designed with a number of different people and organisations, to try and ensure it is appropriate for a ranges of contexts.

- **Length:** It has been kept as short as possible and is easy to score.

- **Validity:** The tool has undergone academic tests to ensure it is valid and reliable.

LIMITATIONS

- **Newness:** This tool has not yet been used extensively by services, so we do not yet know how it picks up changes over time – although the Campaign to End Loneliness will be working with services in 2015 and 2016 to monitor how it performs, and it worked well in an initial pilot.

- **Only using positive language:** The use of only positive worded questions could also lead to respondents under-reporting their loneliness, although we cannot test for this.

- **Not a screening tool:** Finally, we strongly advise organisations not to use these questions as a "screening tool" to establish eligibility to their services. It has not been designed for this purpose and may therefore give misleading results.

How was this tool developed?

All tools should be based upon a way of seeing the issue (a conceptualisation) and the Campaign to End Loneliness Measurement Tool is based upon the following definition: loneliness occurs when there is a gap between the number and quality of relationships and contacts that we have, and those that we want. This is sometimes known as a cognitive discrepancy theory of loneliness.[16]

This tool was developed over the course of 2014 by the Campaign, in partnership with over 50 older people, service providers, commissioners and housing associations. Three focus groups were held with older people in Bristol and London. These were followed by three design workshops, during which the organisations and older people present created an outcome 'map' of the steps that can be taken to address loneliness, and wrote questions reflecting these outcomes.

These draft questions were then reviewed and short-listed. Four prototype tools were drafted, and voted upon, and two prototypes were tested across 18 organisations and 785 older people (over 350 people per tool), alongside the De Jong Gierveld Scale which is considered by many researchers specialising in older age as the gold standard for measuring loneliness.

A statistical validation process was conducted on the results, and the tool that was shown to be the most accurate measure of loneliness was selected. You can request a report from the Campaign that explains this validation process in more detail, if you are interested in learning more.[17]

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16 Perlman, D. and Peplau, L. A. Chapter 2: Toward a Social Psychology of Loneliness, in Duck and Gilmour (eds.) 1981. *Personal Relationships in Disorder.* London: Academic Press.

17 Please email info@campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk