

# Innovative housing can help tackle loneliness says new research

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Credit: Bridport Cohousing

People involved in community-led housing (CLH) are significantly less likely to feel lonely than people living in more conventional homes and neighborhoods, according to a new report by researchers from the universities of Bristol, Lancaster, Northumbria and the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), released today (Tuesday 30 November).

The report, ["Those little connections': Community led housing and loneliness](#)," was commissioned by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to explore whether and how innovative [housing](#) can help to tackle loneliness. Its origins lie in the

development of an England-wide Loneliness Strategy following the publication of the [Jo Cox Commission report on Loneliness](#) in late 2017.

The report, led by LSE, found that a sense of belonging for people living in CLH, such as co-housing, Community Land Trusts and Co-ops, emerged from the interaction of several factors including the use of shared space and social and communal activities—although these were not necessarily explicitly aimed at community building.

Residents were more likely to trust their neighbors. The most tight-knit places, where members knew and trusted each other the most, performed best as supportive communities.

This trust emerged over time—a 'slow build-up of a history of kindness' as one resident put it—creating long-term supportive relationships. It was notable that residents did not always form close friendships, but members had a reciprocal, though not necessarily explicit, commitment to look out for each other.

The researchers found numerous instances of neighbors in CLH communities providing practical and [emotional support](#) across age groups or between those sharing similar challenges, such as parents raising young children.

The demanding endeavor of creating a new community with others also played a role in creating long-lasting and meaningful relationships and a sense of belonging that helped prevent loneliness.

Dr. Melissa Fernández Arrigoitia, a lecturer in Urban Futures from the Sociology Department at Lancaster University and co-author of the report, said: "The question of how community-led housing might be linked to people's health and well-being has long been asked, and became even more pressing under COVID-19.

"Our research demonstrates that in addition to promoting [social cohesion](#) and a sense of belonging, living in CLH can also mitigate against all forms of loneliness. Joint activities, the use of shared space and physical design for social interaction all contribute to this benefit.

"Our study makes an evidence-based case for more sustained, long-term support of CLH as part of the Government's joint housing and anti-[loneliness](#) strategies."

The report recommends providing more support for resident control of management and decision-making from the formation stage of CLH schemes and providing well-designed and -maintained spaces for social interaction.

It also recommends investigating how the beneficial features of CLH could be incorporated into existing housing, and conventional new residential schemes.

The researchers undertook an online survey of CLH participants across the UK and in-depth case studies of five CLH communities in England including Lancaster Cohousing; OWCH Cohousing; Tangram Co-op; Bristol CLT, 325 Fishponds Road; Ashley Vale Self- Build.

The evaluation took account of the possibility that members of CLH projects might be more socially engaged than average by comparing them to members of the general public who were equally involved in social and community activities.

Provided by Lancaster University

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