

Older People Isolation Index – Results for Wirral.

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Summary

- We mapped postcodes in Wirral by their chance of containing older people who are at risk of social isolation, using an older people isolation index (OPII) based on Mosaic geodemographic data.
- Bidston & St James ward and Birkenhead & Tranmere ward had the highest average older people isolation index score.
- There were three hotspots of potential older people at risk of isolation around Oxton, West Kirby & Hoylake, and New Ferry, Bebington & Bromborough.

Objective

Social isolation is a predictor of adverse health outcomes in older people, such as dying from cancer or dying after heart surgery.¹ We wanted to understand more about which areas in Wirral are likely to have residents who are older people who may be vulnerable or at risk of being socially isolated. These areas could be looked at in more detail to see if they have a good level of provision of social group interventions, which have been shown to be successful in maintaining health in older people.

Methods

We replicated as closely as possible the methods used to create the Essex Isolation Index² which was created by Essex County Council in partnership with the Campaign to End Loneliness. This was produced with variables from Experian Mosaic which is a geodemographic segmentation tool that provides lifestyle data at postcode level. The variables used in this were chosen as being predictive of vulnerable older people who may be at risk of being socially isolated. While most of these variables on their own do not indicate a high risk of social isolation, when taken together they may be useful in identifying patterns of postcodes where older people who are at high risk of being socially isolated are most likely to live. The risk of social isolation may increase through going through life events like retirement (particularly where an individual did not want or expect to retire), bereavement, becoming a carer, suffering from ill physical or mental health, or struggling financially.

¹ Cacioppo John T., Hawkley Louise C. Social Isolation and Health, with an Emphasis on Underlying Mechanisms. *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*. 2003;46:S39–S52.

² <http://campaigntoendloneliness.org/toolkit/casestudy/essex-isolation-index/>

These variables were;

1. Single pensioners
2. Widowed
3. Retired
4. Unlikely to meet friends & family regularly
5. Unlikely to interact with neighbours
6. Poor health
7. Suffering from depression
8. Visually impaired
9. Hard of hearing
10. Struggling financially
11. Suffering from poor mobility

We were able to get data from Mosaic 2013 for each of these variables except for poor mobility. The index was produced based on a weighted average of each of these 10 variables. There is a more recent 2014 version of Mosaic but this version does not include several of these variables, but it may be useful in future to choose some other variables from this that may indicate older people at risk of social isolation, so that this analysis can be updated more frequently.

Results

The Mosaic Types with the highest score on the Older People Isolation Index (OPII) are shown in Table 1. The wards with the highest average OPII scores were the most deprived wards in Wirral, that is Birkenhead & Tranmere, Bidston & St James, and Rock Ferry. However the wards that contained the most 'hotspot' postcodes with the very highest scores were Oxton ward, followed by Bebington, Hoylake and Meols, New Brighton & Bromborough. So population level interventions to reduce social isolation may be most appropriate across Wirral but very precise targeted interventions could be targeted to the hotspots within these wards.

Table 1. Mosaic Types with highest Older People Isolation Index scores (greater than 190).

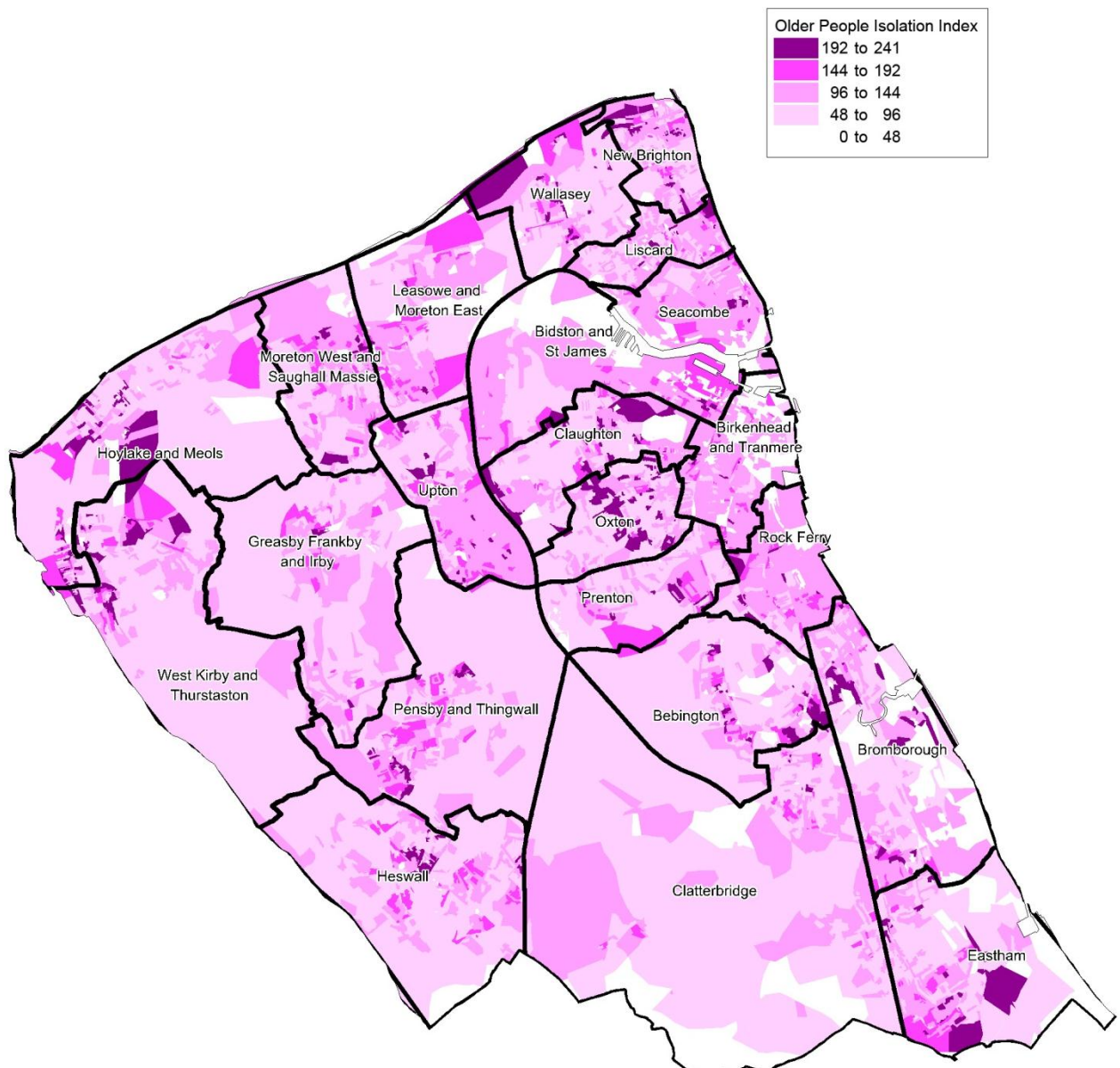
Mosaic Type	Older People Isolation Index Score
M59 People living in social accommodation designed for older people	241
M58 Less mobile older people requiring a degree of care	235
M56 Older people living on social housing estates with limited budgets	212
L55 Capable older people leasing / owning flats in purpose built blocks	196
N66 Childless, low income tenants in high rise flats	194

Table 2. Average Older People Isolation Index scores by Wirral ward, with number of postcodes in the three highest OPII groups and 5 highest OPII groups. Based on Mosaic 2013 data.

Ward	Average OPII Score	Total postcodes in M56, M58, M59 [3 highest OPII Types]	Total postcodes in M56, M58, M60, L55, N66 [5 highest OPII Types]
Bebington	105.7	40	60
Bidston and St James	129.9	4	16
Birkenhead and Tranmere	122.9	12	12
Bromborough	111.1	34	58
Clatterbridge	96.7	6	9
Claughton	108.9	16	46
Eastham	108.4	29	40
Greasby, Frankby and Irby	96.1	4	9
Heswall	99.2	18	36
Hoylake and Meols	100.5	13	59
Leasowe and Moreton East	116.0	14	22
Liscard	109.3	26	36
Moreton West and Saughall Massie	107.2	21	21
New Brighton	108.4	23	59
Oxton	108.1	8	94
Pensby and Thingwall	111.2	38	50
Prenton	103.0	20	30
Rock Ferry	122.8	14	18
Seacombe	120.9	16	17
Upton	120.2	28	42
Wallasey	98.7	24	52
West Kirby and Thurstaston	99.5	24	56
Wirral	109.2	432	842

Figure 1 shows a map of Wirral with OPII scores. Postcodes are not equal in size; they are generally similar in terms of numbers of addresses, so some areas that may look like large areas of high OPII may just be one sparsely populated postcode, such as one that covers a lot of green space or industrial land.

Figure 1. Older People Isolation Index for Wirral postcodes (based on Mosaic 2013 data).



Potential Hotspot Areas for a Pilot Intervention

If Wirral were looking for potential hotspot areas for a pilot intervention there may be three around Oxton ward and Claughton, around Hoylake & West Kirby, and around Bebington, New Ferry & Bromborough, shown in Figure 2-4. The postcode algorithm is not always totally reliable so some of these highlighted areas may contain green space or industrial land rather than residential areas; therefore these maps should be interpreted using local knowledge where possible.

Figure 2. Potential Older People Isolation Index hotspot around Oxton (areas of high OPII shown in purple).

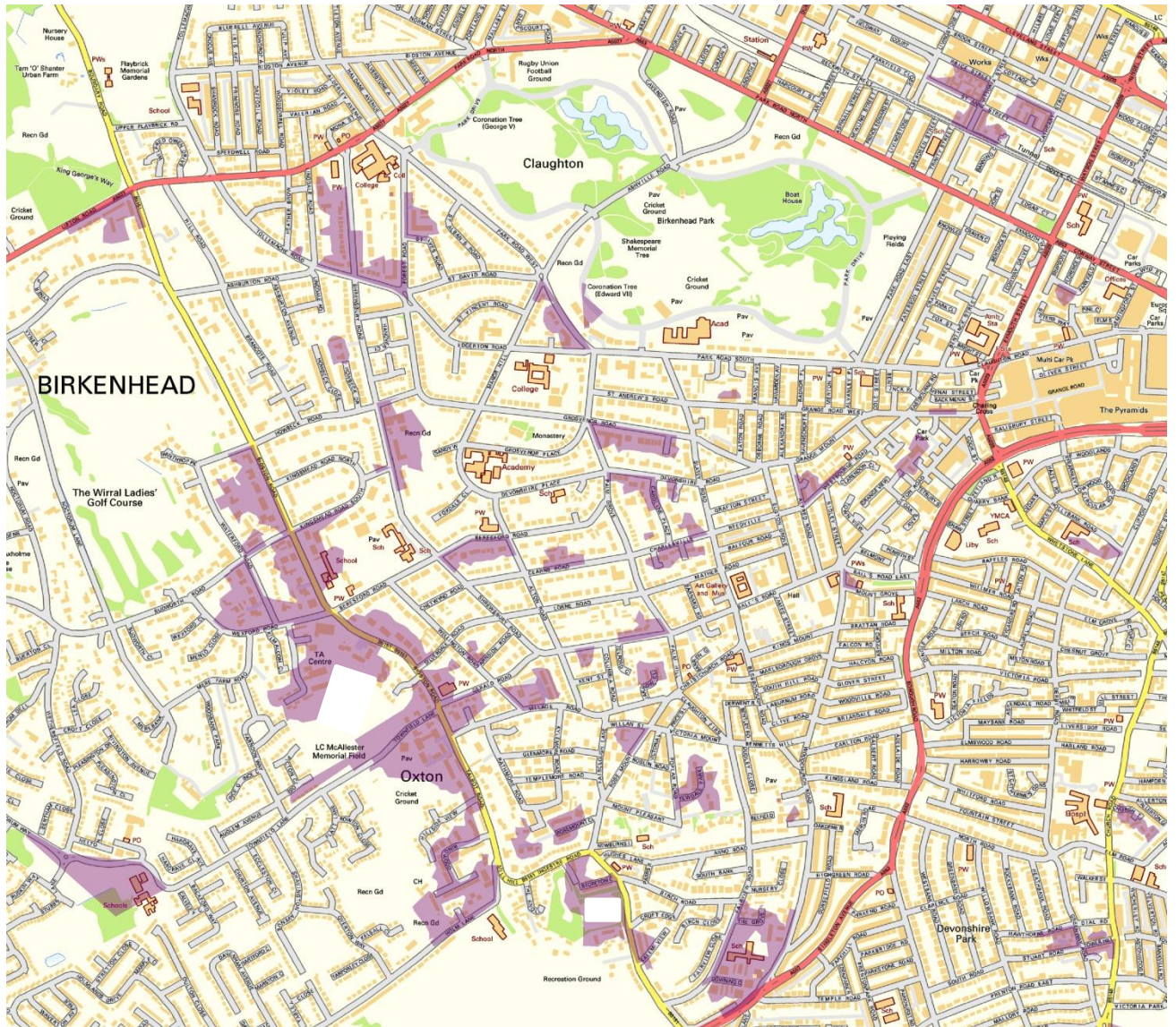


Figure 3. Potential Older People Isolation Index hotspot around Hoylake & West Kirby (areas of high OPII shown in purple).



Figure 4. Potential Older People Isolation Index hotspot around Bebington, New Ferry & Bromborough (areas of high OPII shown in purple).

