



**New Year: New Experience.
Sign up to help reduce
Loneliness & social isolation
in Plymouth.**

For the last two years more than a hundred people across the city have shared their experiences and feelings of loneliness and social isolation as part of a project called *Belong* in Plymouth. It's part of an ongoing national initiative which is using the information gleaned to better look after people and find ways to ensure no one feels excluded. Already several valuable insights have been revealed from the research, for example, the need for communication (you can't join something if you don't know it exists; the need to feel 'safe' and the importance of 'mobility', particularly public transport, to people's wellbeing).

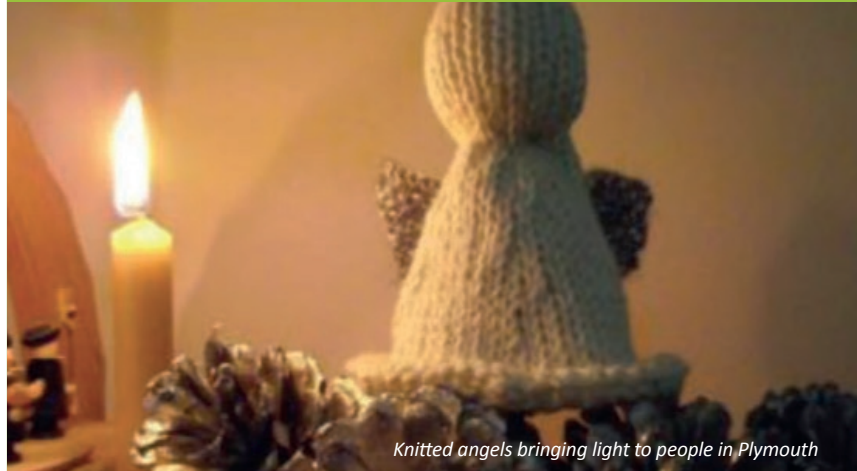
A team of community researchers from the wider POP community has conducted more than 125 interviews with individuals from all walks of life and from all areas of the city. Now the project is looking to recruit another cohort who will be trained in interviewing and listening techniques. It's particularly exciting, as the project strives to reach as many people as possible, that ten young people (from Exim Dance and Connecting Youth UK) will be part of the new team. Slain McGough Davey, who was one of the first community researchers, says it has been fascinating:

"I've carried out more than forty interviews, all of them in my kitchen. I've talked to people who are straight; gay; trans; unemployed, students and people with addictions. People from the ages of eighteen to seventy."

If you have some time available and like talking with people (no experience is needed) then email rebecca@plymouthoctopus.org Training will be held in January and February. You will be paid for your time and for those conversations you have with, for example, your friends, family and colleagues.

Belong in Plymouth has received more than half a million pounds in funding from Healthy Communities Together (from the National Lottery) and The Kings Fund (a health charity which focusses on research) to tackle social isolation in Plymouth.

Hark the knitted angels sing



Knitted angels bringing light to people in Plymouth

A band of festive knitters is on a mission to ensure that a host of a thousand angels will descend across the city this Christmas. They will be delivered to people, public spaces and community centres across the land as part of the call from POP member, the Plymouth Methodist Central Hall (PMCH), to spread joy and celebrate the birth of baby Jesus.

The Christmas Angels Project will see a 1000 knitted angels created in time for Christmas. Much of the hard work has already been done by the ladies of the Knit and Natter group which meets at PMCH every Wednesday. Gill Rolfe, one of the small army of knitters deployed for action says it's been a labour of love:

"We started at the end of September and by the time I'd finished I was doing them in my sleep!" she says. "It's been a really nice thing to do, especially to be doing it in a group with the other ladies, and to be able to create something with love that can be given away has been just such a nice thing to do."

The angels will take flight from mid-December and settle among individuals who may be more challenged than most this Christmas. They'll be delivered to people making use of the Foodbank Hub in Stonehouse; those receiving sustenance on 'the soup run' and to women and children who may have been victims of domestic abuse. Gareth Higgs, Superintendent Minister, at Plymouth Methodist Central Hall wishes the knitted angels will deliver 'blessings' and spread a little cheer this Christmas:

"We want them to bring hope and joy to those who see or receive them," says Gareth. "And that they might bring a smile to someone's face, as well as give them a reason to consider some of the elements of the Christmas story as the Bible tells it."

Now the call is out for all knitters, young and old, to take up their needles to ensure that the host of a thousand angels is complete by the Twelfth Day of Christmas.

New recruits are being sought to take up the challenge and ensure that the angels are ready for action. Anyone wishing to join in can come along to the Knit and Natter group on Wednesday's between 12:00 and 2:00 pm or can download the pattern here: www.pmch.org.uk/christmasangels

Please note:
Angels need to be dropped off so that they might gather at PMCH ready for deployment.

"It is wonderful already to see so many people getting onboard," says Minister Gareth, "And we'd love the number of people we could encourage to multiply further."

What You Will Need to Knit your Angel:

- Wool (in any yarn or colour)
- Knitting needles (size 10-8, approximately 3.25mm to 4mm)
- Darning needle (a large sewing needle)
- And a small amount of stuffing

Design: The angel is knitted in sparkly cream (but you can use any wool you have at home). A basic knowledge of knit and purl is recommended. The pattern, which has been designed for all skill levels, can be adapted to incorporate different colours and/or to create larger angels.

The Christmas Day Service at Plymouth Methodist Central Hall will take place at 11am. There is a Christmas Day Lunch for anyone who is alone or in need.

Please contact the church office on **01752 660997** before the 18th of December if you would like to book a place. www.pmch.org.uk/christmas

Celebrating Winter Together



Winter Solstice

The Park Pharmacy Trust is inviting individuals on the afternoon of Christmas Day and Boxing Day to hear stories of winter festivals from around the world.

The Trust is hoping to bring people together, particularly those who may be on their own, to experience how different cultures come together to celebrate winter festivals, such as the winter solstice. As with the best of celebrations, there will be food & drink available and the opportunity to make decorations.

The Park Pharmacy Trust is at Thorn Park Lodge in Mannamead and the festivities will take place between 3.00 and 8.00 pm. If you'd like to join then please email:

enquiries@parkpharmacytrust.org.uk or phone **01752 565676**.

The POP team would like to wish all our members; our communities and our grassroots organisations a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.