

A CONNECTED SCOTLAND



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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Tackling social isolation and loneliness and building stronger social connections



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“ *Young or old, loneliness doesn't discriminate...
it is something many of us could easily help with.* **”**

- Jo Cox, MP

MINISTERIAL FOREWORD



Social isolation and loneliness can affect anyone - at all ages and stages of life. As society changes, there is increasing recognition of social isolation and loneliness as major public health issues that can have a significant impact on a person's physical and mental health.

That's why we have committed to develop a national strategy to tackle it. I am delighted to present this draft for consultation, and I want to hear from everyone with an interest in this important subject.

Let me be clear at the outset that the Scottish Government recognises it has an important role in creating the conditions for change to happen and supporting communities to flourish and we are committed to doing that. That is why we're using this Strategy to articulate the range of areas across Government where we are taking forward work to address social isolation and loneliness and are asking for your views on what is needed to help change happen.

But the biggest impact can only be delivered if we enable communities themselves to lead this work. This is a key aspect of our approach to community empowerment and public service reform which recognises that people and communities know what is best for them. So we want communities themselves to tell us what would make that difference and to use this Strategy as a platform to drive change in their localities.

We know that getting support into local communities can make a difference. Last year's social isolation and loneliness funding demonstrated that grassroots initiatives, run by organisations firmly rooted within communities, can have a hugely positive impact on people who are socially isolated, or experience regular feelings of loneliness.

But this is about more than money or projects. The reality is that we all have responsibility to ensure that our communities are more connected and cohesive, and that principles like kindness get greater traction in society. Whether it is saying hello to your neighbour, taking the time to get to know a regular customer at work, reaching out to someone you haven't seen in a while, or just a small act of kindness that can make a strangers day - all of this can go a long way to helping everyone feel part of their community.

I hope that you will take the time to respond to this consultation. This is an important issue, and together, I believe that we can build a more connected Scotland where all of us feel welcome, connected in our communities and valued.

Jeane Freeman
Minister for Social Security

INTRODUCTION



This draft strategy has been developed following the last Scottish Parliament's Equal Opportunities Committee Inquiry into Age and Social Isolation¹ which set out a number of findings and recommendations. One of these recommendations was to produce a national strategy to tackle social isolation and loneliness. The other recommendations highlight specific areas that need attention, and we evaluate the progress we have made to date at the end of this document. Subsequently, a commitment to take this work forward was made in the 2016 Programme for Government².

In that context, this draft Strategy seeks to:

- articulate a vision of the kind of Scotland we want to see, where community connections are increased and no one is excluded from participating in society for any reason
- define what we understand concepts of social isolation and loneliness to be, and the degree to which they are prevalent in Scotland today

- highlight what we've heard so far in our process of engaging with stakeholders throughout the development of the draft Strategy
- set out how we want to empower communities to lead efforts to tackle social isolation and loneliness, in the context of our approach to community empowerment
- highlight the Government's own work in this area and clearly link this to the broader policy context in which we're operating
- facilitate discussion amongst organisations and individuals about what needs to be done to effectively tackle social isolation and loneliness in Scotland

1 Equal Opportunities Committee. Age and Social Isolation. Scottish Parliament, 2015. URL: <http://www.parliament.scot/S4EqualOpportunitiesCommittee/Reports/EOS042015R05.pdf> (Last Accessed: 04/01/18).

2 The Scottish Government, *A Plan for Scotland 2016 -17: The Government's Programme for Scotland*. The Scottish Government, 2016. p.76. URL: <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00505210.pdf> (Last Accessed: 04/01/18).

As this is a consultation, we want to hear from you. There are **three key questions that form the basis of this consultation.**

Question 1:

What needs to change in your community to reduce social isolation and loneliness and increase the range and quality of social connections?

Question 2:

Who is key at local level in driving this change, and what do you want to see them doing more (or less) of?

Question 3:

What does Government need to do nationally to better empower communities and create the conditions to allow social connections to flourish?

In addition to these broad questions, we have posed a number of more specific questions throughout the document and we invite you to answer any that are relevant based on your knowledge, experience or interests. We appreciate that you may find some of the questions difficult to answer, and would ask that you use them as a guide whilst focusing on telling us what you feel is important to you.

CONTEXT



Our vision

We want a Scotland where individuals and communities are more connected and everyone has the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships regardless of age, status, circumstances or identity

Scotland is a country which aspires to be inclusive in all areas of life. We want to build a modern, welcoming nation where everyone has the opportunity to flourish and live a high quality life. The strength of our social relationships and connections has a central role in determining our quality of life. Because of this, we want to help create a Scotland where individuals and communities are more connected, in which everyone has the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships regardless of age, status, circumstance or identity.

Ultimately, change happens on the ground. Whilst the Scottish Government has an important role to play, we want to let communities lead. We want them to take charge, to effect change, and to tell us what they need to do that. Creating connected and social communities is the business of everyone – whether you're an individual, a community group or delivering a public service. We want to reduce social isolation and loneliness because it's the right thing to do; it will help us become the Scotland we want to be, and because it will contribute to improving health, wellbeing and quality of life for the people of Scotland.

What is social isolation and loneliness?³

Definitions

- **Social isolation** refers to the quality and quantity of the social relationships a person has at individual, group, community and societal levels.
- **Loneliness** is a subjective feeling experienced when there is a difference between an individual's felt and ideal levels of social relationships.

We know that despite the strong link between social isolation and loneliness, they can be experienced independently from one another: it is possible for people who are well connected socially to feel lonely and for people with relatively small social networks to rarely experience loneliness. However, because humans are inherently social beings, we can all experience periods of loneliness from time to time. This temporary state is referred to as transient loneliness and often arises when someone who has strong social connections is unable to interact with their networks for a period of time. Typically, this is relieved once social interactions return to normal. However, prolonged periods of loneliness can lead to a permanent state of chronic loneliness which is much more difficult to address. People can lose their social connections for a variety of reasons, including major life transitions, bereavement and disability. In order to alleviate feelings of chronic loneliness, cultural and systemic change must be brought about and opportunities have to be made readily available that encourage people to build new social connections.

Question 4:

Do you agree or disagree with our definitions of (i) social isolation and (ii) loneliness? Please provide comments, particularly if you disagree.

What we know

Social isolation and loneliness are issues that can affect anyone at any point in their life. Different factors can place individuals at greater risk, including major life transitions, personal characteristics and health conditions. The broad nature of social isolation and loneliness makes them difficult problems to tackle, especially as the responsibility does not lie with a single policy area within government, or a single organisation.

The reality is that social isolation and loneliness permeates all ages, stages and groups in our society. Children and young people increasingly report feelings of loneliness, and far from it being the 'best days of their lives', students entering further or higher education can often find building and maintaining their first adult social networks challenging. Significant life events such as becoming a parent for the first time, retirement from employment and loss of family and friends can leave many in a place where they feel alone and isolated. Moreover, traumatic events – be it abuse, a period of imprisonment, homelessness or addiction – can lead to a situation where isolation compounds the challenges of recovery or reintegration into society.

Globally, we are more connected than ever before – with greater access to information and technological resources that enable us to keep in touch across time zones and continents. Yet, technology has also presented significant challenges despite the prospects it holds for social progress. Many people increasingly feel that digital convenience has overtaken face to face contact, and technology can actually become a factor in increasing isolation⁴. Those who do not utilise technology or feel less comfortable doing so can easily be left feeling excluded in a world where online communication is quickly becoming the norm.

³ These definitions are drawn from the review of Social Isolation and Loneliness prevalence and trends undertaken by NHS Health Scotland.

⁴ Lin, L. et al. (2016), *Association Between Social Media Use And Depression Among U.S. Young Adults*. *Depress Anxiety*, 33: 323–331. URL, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ggi.12711/full> (Last Accessed: 04/01/18); Kross E. et al. (2013) *Facebook Use Predicts Declines in Subjective Well-Being in Young Adults*. URL, <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0069841> (Last Accessed: 04/01/18).

But even those who are fully engaged with digital forms of communications can feel isolated. The concern that social media can undermine wellbeing and lead to increased mental health issues in vulnerable people has been widely publicised in recent years⁵. In order to embrace the transformative potential of technology, and to realise Scotland's full potential in a digital world, we have to explicitly develop the online resilience of our citizens to lessen the impact technology can have on social exclusion.

Social isolation and loneliness can affect people in a number of ways. There are well documented mental health impacts, including becoming more susceptible to depression, and a greater likelihood of developing clinical dementia for older people who are lonely. There are also surprising physical health impacts that are comparable to obesity or smoking⁶.

We also recognise that there are a series of complex needs that human beings have. If we focus our strategy on any single group or need, then we are limiting the effectiveness of our interventions. In order to make a tangible difference to people who are socially isolated, our approach has to take the full spectrum of needs into consideration. One of the starting points for developing this draft strategy was therefore gaining a comprehensive understanding of the prevalence of social isolation and loneliness in Scotland.

Acting on the recommendations of the Equal Opportunities Committee report, the Scottish Government commissioned an evidence review which was completed by NHS Health Scotland⁷. This told us that:

- 11% of adults in Scotland often feel lonely, and 38% feel lonely sometimes (**Mental Health Foundation 2010**)
- 6% of adults have contact with family, friends or neighbours less than once or twice a week (**Scottish Health Survey 2013/15 data combined**)
- 18% of people have limited regular social contact in their neighbourhoods (**Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2013**)
- 22% feel that they don't have a strong sense of belonging to their local community (**Scottish Household Survey 2015**)⁸
- 48% of people exhibit a degree of social mistrust, which is connected to level of social contact and feelings of belonging to the local community (**Scottish Social Attitudes survey, 2015**)
- 27% of people volunteer (**Scottish Household Survey 2015**), and 46% have been involved in some kind of community action to help improve their local area (**Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2015**)
- a significant minority of children are vulnerable to social isolation because of poor peer support or bullying (**Health Behaviours in School Age Children, 2014**)

There are a range of other evidence sources. These include:

- the Our Voice Citizens' Panel indicated that 1 in 10 people in Scotland often feel lonely⁹
- particular groups of people may be at increased risk of social isolation and loneliness – socio-economic disadvantage, young mothers, those with poor physical

5 Lin, L. et al. (2016), *Association Between Social Media Use And Depression Among U.S. Young Adults*. *Depress Anxiety*, 33: 323–331. URL, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ggi.12711/full> (Last Accessed: 04/01/18); Kross E. et al. (2013) *Facebook Use Predicts Declines in Subjective Well-Being in Young Adults*. URL, <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0069841> (Last Accessed: 04/01/18).

6 Campaign to End Loneliness. *Threat to Health*. URL: <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/threat-to-health/> (Last Accessed: 04/01/18).

7 Teuton, J. *Social isolation and loneliness in Scotland: a review of prevalence and trends*. NHS Health Scotland; 2017.

8 Since this study was commissioned, more recent figures shows that the number of people who don't have a strong sense of belonging to their community is down to 21% (Scottish Household Survey 2016)

9 Our Voice Citizen's Panel (2017). *Survey on relationships with health and social care professionals, shared decision making, how loneliness affects people in Scotland, and how well services are working locally*. p.46. URL: <https://www.ourvoice.scot/697/documents/1058> (Last Accessed: 04/01/18).

and mental health, people with disabilities, children with few friends, those living alone, those who have been bereaved, men over 50, minority ethnic groups, and those from LGBTI communities¹⁰

- research suggesting that “8 out of 10 carers have felt lonely or socially isolated as a result of looking after a loved one”¹¹
- figures from Childline revealed that last year there were 295,202 counselling sessions (2016-17), of which 4,063 were about loneliness. The majority of the sessions concerning loneliness (73%) were with girls
- in the first half of 2016, 31% of the 16,000 calls received to Silver Line Scotland included loneliness as a key theme
- in the second half of 2016, 33% of calls to the National LGBT Helpline were from people experiencing loneliness and social isolation
- in 2010, Samaritans commissioned a UK-wide evaluation of its emotional support services (telephone and email)¹². It found that 6% of respondents cited loneliness and/or isolation as their main reason for contacting Samaritans. Some callers describe themselves either having no access to informal support networks or considering the other people in their life to be unsupportive. Poor social relationships and/or relationship breakdowns were often cited as the start of their problems, as many felt they had no one to talk to
- GoWell carried out a study of loneliness in deprived areas of Glasgow which found that:
 - 31.5% of working-age adults who were disabled or off work for long periods due to illness were “frequently lonely”
 - people that reported high levels of anti-social behaviour in their community

and those who did not feel safe walking alone at night “were more likely to report loneliness by between 30 and 50%”

- 17% of men and 15% of women living in deprived areas reported “frequent loneliness”¹³

Question 5:

Do you agree with the evidence sources we are drawing from? Are there other evidence sources you think we should be using?

In developing this Strategy, we are conscious that whilst the Equal Opportunities Committee’s Inquiry was the first of its kind in the world, there are distinctive approaches to tackling social isolation being taken both elsewhere in the UK and in other parts of the world. Examples include:

- in Wales, the Health Social Care and Sport Committee conducted an inquiry into loneliness. It highlighted a number of issues, including the benefits of social prescribing, transitional support for retirement, exploring different housing models, and the potential for legislation to make a difference. It has recently published its report, which sets out a number of recommendations for the Welsh Government to take forward¹⁴
- in Northern Ireland, the then Executive published a framework to tackle rural poverty and social isolation in 2016. This focused on promoting positive mental wellbeing, increasing opportunities for social engagement and support at risk groups (including farmers and disengaged young people)
- in the United States of America, the national suicide prevention strategy recognises ‘connectedness’ as a theme, and the US Air

10 The British Red Cross and the Co-op (2016). *Trapped in a Bubble: An Investigation into Triggers for Loneliness in the UK*; Antrobus, S. et. al. (2014). *Alone in the Crowd: Loneliness and Diversity*. The Campaign to End Loneliness and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

11 Carers UK. *No one Should Have to Care Alone: Break Isolation*. URL: <https://www.carersuk.org/breaking-isolation> (Last accessed: 04/01/18).

12 Samaritans. (2010) *Evaluation of Samaritans Emotional Support Services January 2008-January 2010*. URL: <https://www.samaritans.org/about-us/our-research/research-report-evaluation-samaritans-emotional-support-services> (Last accessed: 04/01/18).

13 Kearns, A. *Loneliness in Glasgow’s Deprived Communities*. GoWell, 2015. URL, http://www.gowellonline.com/assets/0000/3722/GoWell_Briefing_Paper_BP_22_Loneliness.pdf (Last Accessed: 04/01/18).

14 Health, Social Care and Sport Committee. *Inquiry into Loneliness and Isolation*. National Assembly for Wales, 2017. URL: http://www.gowellonline.com/assets/0000/3722/GoWell_Briefing_Paper_BP_22_Loneliness.pdf (Last Accessed: 04/01/18).

Force programme focuses on strengthening social support for serving officers and veterans. There is a similar programme targeted at American Indian and Native Alaskans

- in the Republic of Ireland, Respond! Housing Association undertook research into how to combat social isolation and loneliness within social housing. It emphasised the importance of consultation, flexibility in devising solutions, partnership working and human contact
- in Japan, social isolation and loneliness are recognised as an increasing issue and strategies focus primarily on older people. Promoting 'worry free living environments' community based activity, and access to cultural facilities like libraries are all seen as important
- in New Zealand, research has highlighted the importance of volunteering, quality of relationships (as opposed to quantity) and contentment with life. Befriending was also recognised to be valuable following an evaluation by the Minister of Health

Question 6:

Are there examples of best practice outside Scotland (either elsewhere in the UK or overseas) focused on tackling social isolation and loneliness that you think we should be looking at?

What we've heard

The Equal Opportunities Committee of the last parliamentary session made an important contribution to kick starting this work. The evidence it received during its inquiry led it to conclude that social isolation and loneliness are significant problems in Scotland and that individual citizens, public services and the Scottish Government should take collective responsibility for improving the situation. The Committee stated that: social isolation and loneliness is everyone's issue; it should not be ignored or tolerated; and that a change in attitude is needed to consider it as part of the public health agenda in Scotland alongside issues such as poverty and poor housing.

Befriending Networks held a national summit on loneliness in 2016, and Voluntary Health Scotland hosted a breakout seminar at 'The Gathering' earlier in 2017. On 15 December, the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness published a call to action¹⁵ for Governments and society to tackle loneliness. The Scottish Government held an event in April 2017 to ask stakeholders what they thought a National Strategy on social isolation and loneliness should contain. Some of the contributions highlighted that:

- a Strategy should be joined up and have clear indicators for improvement – measurement of change is important. These issues cut across many areas of policy and practice, so setting the Strategy within context is essential
- it is vital to frame the discussion and the work undertaken in a positive way – talking about social connections, community cohesion and building a kinder society
- definitions are important, including understanding the difference between chronic and transient loneliness

¹⁵ Jopling, K. *Combatting Loneliness One Conversation at a Time*. The Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness, 2017. URL: https://www.jocoxloneliness.org/pdf/a_call_to_action.pdf (Last Accessed: 04/01/18).

- it should focus on preventing social isolation and loneliness from happening in the first place, and work to raise awareness of the issues. Culture change and embedding kindness are important
- understanding the way social interaction works today is necessary, along with some of the opportunities and barriers
- this agenda should be prioritised at a local level
- there are tools we can use to effect change, including digital technology
- there needs to be recognition that these issues are relevant at different ages and stages of a person's life, and a person's individual characteristics (like age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability and race) are also relevant
- there are many groups, ranging from those with dementia to former offenders, who require attention. Geography is relevant, as there are issues depending on whether a person lives in an urban or rural area
- things that can make a difference include volunteering, education around relationships, allocation of resources in the right way, addressing stigma, encouraging contact and sharing skills between different groups and communities, accessible communications, and training for front line professionals

In all of this, there was a very strong passion and commitment to tackle these issues, as well as a great deal of front line expertise. We want to harness this and support it.

PRIORITY 1 - EMPOWER COMMUNITIES TO LEAD



Community: a social group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, share government, and often have a common cultural and historical heritage

We believe it is **communities themselves** - whether they are geographical communities or communities of interest - that are best placed to ensure that individuals have the opportunity to connect, and people who may be at risk of becoming lonely or isolated have access to support networks. That's why we want to empower communities to lead in this area.

Community empowerment and public service reform

We're already working to ensure that communities can make a difference on their own terms. The **Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015** gives communities more opportunities here, and by creating new rights for community bodies and placing new duties on public authorities, the Act strengthens the voices of communities in the decisions that matter to them and makes it easier for communities to take on public sector land and buildings.

Amongst other things, the Act provides a mechanism for community organisations to seek dialogue with public service providers when they feel they can help to improve outcomes. We want to do more though. The recent Programme for Government clearly sets out our ambitions for creating truly meaningful local decision making through the decentralisation of power: we have already taken steps to achieve this through the launch of our comprehensive review of local governance, and the planned introduction of a Local Democracy Bill later in this Parliamentary term.

Actions to improve health and wellbeing, the lived and built environment and accessibility to transport demonstrate the importance of a relational, person centred approach that tackles the root causes of poor outcomes like social isolation and loneliness. This kind of approach is crucial if we are to improve wellbeing and life chances for people across Scotland and successfully contribute to the delivery of national outcomes.

The Scottish Government's **Public Service Reform** agenda applies this approach across

public services generally. It is one of our key strategic drivers for policy development and delivery, with the core aim of delivering improved outcomes, both nationally and locally by targeting the specific needs and aspirations of communities.

This agenda challenges Scotland's public services to work together creatively in conjunction with community, third sector and private sector partners, so that our collective resources best meet people's needs, with a focus on prevention, performance, people and partnership.

We focus on prevention in order to ensure that as many of our citizens are able to enjoy happy and healthy lives with a lessening need on crisis interventions. We focus on performance to emphasise the need for continual improvement and to remind us all that we can and should do better. We focus on people in order to create conditions where our communities are genuinely empowered, where people and communities are able to co-produce services around their needs and are supported to utilise their assets, skills and networks. We focus on partnership in order to emphasise that success is dependent on a range of organisations working collaboratively together, and with communities, to deliver the outcomes that will make a difference.

Building cohesive communities

We know that building **cohesive, resilient and supportive** communities requires strong social networks. Communities, and the people within them, need to be protected and feel safe; they need to have strong networks; there must be good access to appropriate community facilities and places to meet; towns and high streets act as a focal point for social and economic interactions, and communities need to be fair and inclusive, where everyone has a voice and can participate. That's why

we are working to promote inclusive growth, champion community participation and ownership, ensure stability and flexibility of funding for third sector organisations, and support integrated working through community planning partnerships.

Investing resources

We've already invested **significant resources** in local community based projects. Our £500,000 Social Isolation and Loneliness Fund (2016-17)¹⁶ supported a wide variety of local initiatives across Scotland, ranging from basic life skills to creative activities, friendship groups and support for vulnerable communities. The projects that received grants from this fund demonstrated that small grassroots projects located within communities can have a profoundly positive impact on people's lives.

Other funding streams also support work to build social connections, including the Promoting Equality and Cohesion Fund¹⁷, the People and Communities Fund¹⁸ and the Community Choices Fund¹⁹. But this is about more than just money. Especially in a challenging financial climate, we have to ensure we work closely with the range of independent funders operating in Scotland to focus on what works whilst avoiding duplication, as well as making funding more accessible to smaller organisations with a greater emphasis on promoting the sustainability of funded projects.

Question 7:

Are you aware of any good practice in a local community to build social connections that you want to tell us about?

16 Voluntary Action Fund. (2017) *Social Isolation and Loneliness Fund 2016 – 17* (Voluntary Action Fund), URL: <http://www.voluntaryactionfund.org.uk/funding-and-support/social-isolation-and-loneliness-fund/> (Last Accessed: 04/01/18).

17 <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/equality-funding-pecf-2017-2020/>

18 <https://beta.gov.scot/policies/regeneration/community-led-regeneration/>

19 <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/engage/CommunityChoicesFund>

PRIORITY 2 - PLAY OUR PART



We think that the role of Government in reducing social isolation and loneliness is to foster the right environment and create the conditions for people and communities to design and deliver the solutions that best meet their needs. We're taking forward work across a range of areas – including improving health, building the capacity of the third sector, and improving digital participation – that makes a real difference here. We want to continue this work and to establish a clear link between progress across these fields in reducing social isolation and loneliness. But we also want to hear from you about what's important in tackling social isolation and loneliness, and what you want us to be doing

Reduce stigma

This starts with working to raise the profile of these issues across Scotland. We know that **stigma** continues to attach itself to these issues and people are generally reluctant to admit that they may experience loneliness, or that they may be socially isolated. Having

a strategy is a step in the right direction towards addressing this, but we need to do more. So we want work with key partners to identify innovative ways in which we can raise awareness through education and public facing initiatives.

Question 8:

How can we all work together to challenge stigma around social isolation and loneliness, and raise awareness of it as an issue? Are there examples of people doing this well that you're aware of?

Encourage kindness

The concept of **kindness** may seem an unusual one for inclusion in a Government strategy. However, recent work by the Carnegie UK Trust²⁰ has identified that kindness can go a long way to reducing social isolation and loneliness, and has also identified what contributes to creating kinder communities. This work has helped to kick start a real conversation about the importance of

²⁰ Ferguson, Z. *The Place of Kindness: Combating Loneliness and Building Stronger Communities*. Carnegie UK Trust, 2017. URL: <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/carnegieuktrust/wp-content/uploads/sites/64/2017/07/LOW-RES-3110-Kindness-Overcoming-Risk-Report.pdf> (Last Accessed: 04/01/18).

kindness, and we want to ensure that the ambitions of this Strategy are rooted in that conversation as it progresses.

Question 9:

Using the Carnegie UK Trust's report as a starting point, what more should we be doing to promote kindness as a route to reducing social isolation and loneliness?

Tackle poverty

Recent studies have suggested that social isolation can interact with socio-economic status²¹: living in poverty can lead to feelings of loneliness and social isolation, but it is also true that people suffering from social isolation are at risk of experiencing poverty. We remain committed to **tackling poverty and inequality**, and our Fairer Scotland Action Plan sets out 50 concrete actions that we will take in this Parliamentary term. We're making considerable progress on delivery of these actions²²; and in December 2017, the Scottish Parliament passed the Child Poverty (Scotland) Bill into law which will establish Scotland as the only part of the UK with ambitious statutory income targets to reduce child poverty by 2030.

We have also consulted on a socio-economic duty, which will ensure that public bodies take full consideration of socio-economic disadvantage when making important decisions. Other key actions include the expansion of early learning and childcare provision and the establishment of a national poverty and inequality commission. The Fairer Scotland Action Plan already makes clear links to this Strategy, and we want to do further work to understand both the opportunities and barriers that exist within relatively deprived communities as well as how tackling social isolation can contribute to tackling poverty and inequality.

Question 10:

How can we ensure that those who experience both poverty and social isolation receive the right support?

Addressing inequality

As well as creating the conditions nationally and empowering communities to reduce social isolation across the whole population, it's also vital that we seek to **address inequalities** that impact at different stages of people's lives and on particular groups of people within society. We want to ensure that our approach takes account of different identities and characteristics, addressing the specific barriers faced by groups protected under equality legislation²³.

We also recognise that older people and younger people can be at risk for different reasons, and that long term health conditions (both physical and mental) can play a part. People may be at greater risk when they have gone through a significant life transition and find themselves in a new situation with a changed social network. Examples are common to many and include changing school; starting and ending further/higher education; entering work; becoming unemployed; parenthood; retirement; the end of an intimate relationship; and bereavement.

In order to effectively tackle social isolation, we must focus on key life stages and consider how to best support those affected. We also need to consider the wider range of vulnerable groups - including carers, the unemployed, survivors of abuse, homeless people, those with addictions and offenders.

We'll therefore take forward a broad impact assessment that seeks to capture the evidence available around the experience of different population groups, and consider the merits of

21 Payne, S. *Mental Health, Poverty and Social Exclusion*. PSE UK, 2012. URL, <http://www.poverty.ac.uk/sites/default/files/attachments/Conceptual%20note%20No.%209%20-%20Mental%20Health%20%28Payne%20Dec2012%29.pdf> (Last Accessed: 04/01/18).

22 <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/fairer-scotland-action-plan-first-annual-progress-report/documents/00527488.pdf>

23 <https://beta.gov.scot/policies/equality/mainstreaming-equality/>

tailored interventions as well as how we can seek to build inclusion across services and target hard to reach groups.

Question 11:

What do we need to be doing more of (or less of) to ensure that we tackle social isolation and loneliness for the specific life stages and groups mentioned above?

Promote and improve health and wellbeing

We know that social isolation and loneliness can contribute to poor **health and wellbeing**, and conversely, people with poor physical and/or mental health may become more isolated due to the barriers their conditions present. That's why the new Health and Social Care Standards take a human rights based approach to ensure that care is tailored to the individual. The standards include points such as "I am asked about my lifestyle preferences and aspirations and supported to achieve these," as well as "I am supported to participate fully and actively in my community." These standards are applicable to all health and care services and can inspire innovative practice which can help reduce isolation and ensure the individual remains connected to the things that matter to them. The new Integration Authorities have an important role in ensuring that people in the community are supported to improve health and wellbeing, and we want to work with them to consider how they might address these issues in their localities.

We're also committed to **improving mental health** as set out in our 10 year strategy published in 2017, which recognises distinctive experiences of isolation within rural communities, and commits to support the further development of the National Rural Mental Health Forum to reflect the unique challenges presented by rural isolation. We'll continue to support front line initiatives such

as Breathing Space, a telephone service for people experiencing anxiety or low mood, and will commence a refresh of our anti-suicide strategy this year.

The changing landscape around health and social care, as well as an ever greater focus on initiatives like realistic medicine²⁴, presents an opportunity to consider how community based care can be delivered to reduce social isolation and loneliness, and how health services more broadly can build in a holistic approach to improving health and wellbeing that recognises the social conditions of an individual's life. We funded a pilot community links worker programme²⁵ in Glasgow and Dundee and have committed to introducing 250 link workers by the end of this Parliament.

We also recognise that deterioration in **physical health** can contribute to someone becoming socially isolated. The myth that falls are simply a part of the ageing process normalises an event that can lead chronic loneliness. It is also true that the fear of falling is extremely common and can in itself lead to people becoming socially isolated. The Scottish Government sponsored National Falls Programme has had a focus on falls prevention since 2010. The '*Prevention and Management of Falls in the Community: A Framework for Action 2014-16*' aimed to aid the prevention of falls and put a support network in place for older people who have had a fall and have been identified at risk of further unintentional harm. We are currently taking forward work to build on this framework by encouraging a whole system approach to fall prevention and management in partnership with a multi-agency group through the Active and Independent Living Programme, and linking the fear of falling with social isolation.

Good quality **social care** can go a long way to alleviating social isolation and loneliness

²⁴ <https://beta.gov.scot/news/realising-realistic-medicine/>

²⁵ NHS Health Scotland. *Evaluation of the Links Worker Programme in 'Deep End' general practices in Glasgow*. NHS Health Scotland, 2016. URL: <http://www.healthscotland.scot/media/1201/27362-evaluation-of-the-links-worker-programme-in-deep-end-general-practices-in-glasgow-07-16.pdf> (Last Accessed: 04/01/18).

by enabling people to continue living independently within their communities²⁶. The Self-directed Support Act (2014) enshrines in law that the cared for person must be involved in decisions about their care and support. This transfer of power from practitioner to the individual seeks to ensure that the supported person is able to direct their care in a way that meets their outcomes and makes their life fulfilling. Many people now opt to move away from traditional home visits and use this support creatively for night classes for example or to employ a Personal Assistant to get them out and about. This way of delivering care and support can help to reduce social isolation and loneliness as well as increasing social connectedness.

Physical activity interventions have a number of benefits for a person's health and wellbeing, including becoming physically fitter and improving mental health. However, they also provide valuable opportunities for people who are socially isolated or lonely to meet new people and build their social network. We fund Paths for All through our Active Scotland Division to develop and deliver an action plan for *Let's Get Scotland Walking - the National Walking Strategy*, and to ensure that their broader activities deliver against other national policy imperatives relating to physical activity, including the Active Scotland Outcomes. During the Equal Opportunities Committee's inquiry into age and social isolation, Paths for All presented evidence that demonstrated people who were socially isolated benefited from taking part in local walking groups²⁷.

Question 12:

How can health services play their part in better reducing social isolation and loneliness?

Question 13:

How can we ensure that the social care sector contributes to tackling social isolation and loneliness?

Question 14:

What more can we do to encourage people to get involved in local groups that promote physical activity?

Give our young people the best start in life

2018 marks the **Year of Young People**, which provides an opportunity to celebrate the contribution of young people in Scotland whilst redoubling our efforts to tackle the issues that inhibit our young people from fulfilling their true potential and creating a climate that allows them to succeed.

Supporting the development of **strong and positive relationships** is important, so that as people move through life they're better able to establish and nurture their social connections. We've already published guidance which focuses on improving relationships and behaviour in learning establishments, and we have recently completed the first phase of a national review of personal and social education (PSE) and the role of guidance in local authority schools²⁸.

We know that **bullying** can lead to children becoming isolated, which is why we've recently published our National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People²⁹. This framework sets out our desire for all children and young people in Scotland to grow up free from bullying with the ability to "develop respectful, responsible and confident relationships with other children, young people and adults."

26 Sense. "Someone cares if I'm not there": Addressing loneliness in disabled people. The Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness, 2017. p.34.

27 http://www.parliament.scot/S4_EqualOpportunitiesCommittee/Inquiries/Paths_for_all.pdf

28 <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/HLivi/PSEreview/psereviewdeskstudy>

29 <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00527674.pdf>

The growing evidence on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) demonstrates the ways in which childhood experiences can have significant impacts on a person's ability to form and maintain relationships in childhood and with long-lasting impacts into adulthood. This is why it is so important to ensure children have positive relationship experiences. The 2017-18 Programme for Government set out a commitment to prevent ACEs occurring and to mitigate the negative impacts where ACEs do occur and support the resilience of children and adults to overcome ACEs³⁰. This commitment is part of the wider **Getting it right for every child** national approach to safeguarding the wellbeing of our children and young people.

As part of the Year of Young People, we'll also look at what more we can do to develop **intergenerational practice** and encourage contact between people of all ages. This will help to challenge ageism and discrimination and ensure that people of all ages are more included in their communities.

Question 15:

How can we better equip people with the skills to establish and nurture strong and positive social connections?

Question 16:

How can we better ensure that our services that support children and young people are better able to identify where someone may be socially isolated, and capable of offering the right support?

Promote the third sector and volunteering

The **third sector** has an important dual role to play in tackling social isolation and loneliness. Third sector organisations are generally rooted within their communities and are well positioned to offer interventions and support in a different way to statutory services. They also help to ensure that the voices of individuals and communities are heard in the design and development of services. We're working to develop the third sector and have sought to protect investment in the sector.

Social enterprises, as businesses that trade for the common good, provide support to people traditional sectors can struggle to reach. Because of this, social enterprises have a key role to play in strengthening social capital in our local communities and tackling social isolation and loneliness. To ensure that social enterprises continue to play an increasingly significant role, the Scottish Government has developed a world-leading eco-system of support for social enterprise: developing a ten-year national strategy³¹ and action plan³², and providing free business support for individual social entrepreneurs.

Volunteering, in all its forms, is central to ensuring that Scotland successfully achieves ambitious and meaningful change for those facing social isolation and loneliness. We know that volunteering has wide ranging benefits for the individuals involved, both those who give their time to help and people who use services. But it also has a positive impact on communities, and can go a long way to help building the connected Scotland we want to see.

Levels of volunteering in Scotland have been stable since 2009 for adults, and increasing in younger people. However there remains a challenge in engaging people who are elderly or disadvantaged, with areas of deprivation consistently having lower levels of volunteering

30 The Scottish Government, *The Government's Programme for Scotland*, p.71, 73, 84.

31 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/12/4404>

32 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/04/8804/0>

than more affluent areas³³. Many older people (73%) recognise that choosing to volunteer would have positive impacts for them, yet less than half report to have volunteered in the last year³⁴. Our Volunteer Support Fund³⁵ seeks to improve the diversity of volunteers, and in 2016-17, resulted in 3,505 new volunteers being recruited from disadvantaged backgrounds.³⁶

Question 17:

How can the third sector and social enterprise play a stronger role in helping to tackle social isolation and loneliness in communities?

Question 18:

What more can the Scottish Government do to promote volunteering and help remove barriers to volunteering, particular for those who may be isolated?

Working with business

People spend a significant amount of time at work, and we see the role of **employers and business** as important. Our **Fair Work Framework**³⁷ sets out our vision for a Scotland where fair work drives success, wellbeing and prosperity and offers employees an effective voice, opportunity, security, fulfilment and respect. By adopting these principles, employers can begin creating the very best type of workplace culture that will aid the building of strong relationships with colleagues and provide rewarding work. Part of that is about creating a culture that is truly inclusive and is a crucial step to ensure no one becomes isolated in the workplace and that they have a balanced approach to work which enables the building and maintenance of relationships

outside of work. This is an area that the Scottish Government has sought to lead by example, introducing flexible working patterns that allow employees to work in a way that suits their personal circumstances. This is good for employers too – it is estimated that loneliness and social isolation leads to an estimated £2.5 billion annual cost to employers in the UK through absence, caring activity, reduced productivity and staff turnover³⁸.

Businesses can also be a place where some people experience the bulk of their social interactions. Research has shown that those that use local amenities regularly are less likely to experience social isolation³⁹. The Joseph Rowntree foundation's report, *Between Kith and Kin and Formal Services*, also highlights some examples of people going above and beyond in their job role to help people who are at risk of becoming socially isolated⁴⁰.

Question 19:

How can employers and business play their part in reducing social isolation and loneliness?

Create high quality places

The extent to which people interact is heavily determined by their **lived environment**. Older people and those with disabilities need particular support, and we'll be bringing forward a refreshed "Age Home & Community" Strategy in 2018 to ensure this.

The **planning system** also has a vital role to play in delivering high-quality places for Scotland, and delivering high-quality

33 Scottish Household Survey. *Scotland's People: Annual Report 2016*. Scottish Government, 2017 p.189, URL, <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00525075.pdf> (Last Accessed: 04/01/18).

34 Charities Aid Foundation (2016), *A Post-careers Advice Service: Giving People the Tools to Go On Giving*, p.10. URL: <https://www.cafonline.org/docs/default-source/about-us-publications/a-post-careers-advice-service-giving-people-the-tools-to-go-on-giving.pdf> (Last Accessed: 04/01/18).

35 <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/15300/Localism/VolunteerSupportFund>

36 532 of these volunteers came from a low-income household, 432 were older people and 231 suffered from mental ill health.

37 <http://www.fairworkconvention.scot/framework/FairWorkConventionFrameworkFull.pdf>

38 Co-op & New Economics Foundation. *The Cost of Loneliness to UK Employers*. New Economics Foundation, 2017. p. v.

39 Kearns, A. *Loneliness in Glasgow's Deprived Communities*. p. 7.

40 Anderson, S. *Between Kith and Kin and Formal Services*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

buildings, infrastructure and spaces in the right locations helps provide choice over where to live and style of home, choice as to how to access amenities and services and the choice to live more active, engaged, independent and healthy lifestyles. We're reviewing the planning system and are proposing a range of measures to give communities a stronger voice in decisions about the future of their places through our 2017 Planning Bill.

We've also developed the **Place Standard** tool in partnership with NHS Health Scotland and Architecture & Design Scotland which allows communities to work together constructively to assess the quality of their place and to prioritise areas for action.

We will look to roll out this initiative further, as well as develop thinking on how the lived environment both helps and hinders efforts to socially connect.

Question 20:

What are the barriers presented by the lived environment in terms of socially connecting? How can these be addressed?

Promote Scotland's culture and heritage

Scotland's **culture and heritage** provides an opportunity for people to come together, appreciate the arts and connect through shared interests. To make the most of our assets, we're developing a culture strategy for Scotland to build on the existing strengths of the cultural and creative sectors, highlighting the intrinsic value these areas have in promoting societal cohesion and aiding integration. We want to look at increase access to culture and make sure everyone has an equal opportunity to take part in or contribute to culture in Scotland.

Recognising the importance of **libraries**, we're investing in the Public Library Improvement Fund to support innovative ways for people to use public libraries, and are also taking forward the development of the first strategy for public libraries in Scotland. We will work to ensure

that our approach to increasing access includes hard to reach groups, and consider further how to build on what libraries already offer as community hubs with a role in tackling these issues.

Question 21:

How can cultural services and agencies play their part in reducing social isolation and loneliness?

Improve infrastructure

Accessible transport is vital to people being able to meet face to face and stay socially active, particular for those in rural areas or later in life. We're taking forward a review of our National Transport Strategy, with accessibility identified early on as an important theme. We'll also bring forward a new Transport Bill to lock in improvements to the system. We're investing in bus services to keep fares affordable, and are continuing to support the National Concessionary Travel Scheme to allow older and disabled people improved access to services, facilities and social networks by free scheduled bus services.

We're also supporting local community transport in partnership with local authorities, including providing funding for the Community Transport Association to develop the sector and investing in major trunk road improvements. In rural areas and the Islands, we recognise that high air fares pose a challenge and are committed to addressing this through the Air Discounts Scheme. We've also introduced Road Equivalent Tariff fares on Clyde and Hebrides which includes discounts for those with mobility needs.

Question 22:

How can transport services play their part in reducing social isolation and loneliness?

Access to **digital technology** for people clearly has a role to play in building social connections, and technology provides new and innovative opportunities to support

people who may be isolated. Our aim is to ensure that everybody has the opportunity to participate in the digital world and to use the power of the internet to enable social mobility and tackle persistent inequalities. This starts with basic digital skills, but also requires infrastructure in place to allow access to digital technology.

We're investing heavily to extend **superfast broadband access** to all premises in Scotland by the end of 2021, and over that period will be developing prototype affordable internet access at home and in other trusted settings.

Emerging technology presents both opportunities and challenges, and we will look at different opportunities to harness the opportunities to allow people to connect with each other. We also recognise that the digital world poses challenges and risks - that's why we're investing in a number of programmes and initiatives that promote internet safety for children and young people, including Police Scotland's Choices for Life Online Peer Mentoring Programme and the Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme.

Technology is a critical aspect of efforts to tackle social isolation and loneliness - and we will look carefully at what works as well as how we can build online resilience and protect people from threats.

Question 23:

How best can we ensure that people have both access to digital technology and the ability to use it?

CASE STUDIES

Befriending Networks

Research into befriending services shows that older people stand to benefit from volunteering services whether they are a volunteer or a service user. On average, people who used a befriending service reported feeling more connected, more interested and more mentally resilient than they did before the service. People also reported a significant change in lifestyle as a result of the volunteers who had befriended them.⁴¹

“ I joined a group with my befriender and although she does not come each week now, we meet at the group and I have made more friends within the group. ”

Tesco, Maryhill

The Maryhill branch of Tesco has become a well cited example of people going the extra mile to help tackle social isolation and loneliness. Research has shown that supermarket staff can play a huge role in promoting community cohesion simply by spending a little time to get to know the people that regularly visit the store. There is also a part time community champion employed by the company to understand issues in the community and use the resources of the supermarket to help.

Hillhead Community Library

Libraries have been identified as an important service in addressing loneliness in old age⁴², and the Hillhead Library demonstrates that there is the ability for these services to have wider impacts in the communities. The staff describe the library as more of a “social space”, and believed book lending to be a “tiny” part of their job:

“ The majority of what we do is customer service in a much bigger sense. Some of these people have nobody else to talk to, so they come in here, which is nice, that they feel comfortable enough to come in and chat. ”

41 [http://www.befriending.co.uk/assets/downloads/publications/wemwbs_study_report_final_\(with_covers\).pdf](http://www.befriending.co.uk/assets/downloads/publications/wemwbs_study_report_final_(with_covers).pdf)

42 Janet Morisson. (2017) *Loneliness is Everyone's Business* (Campaign to End Loneliness), URL: <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/blog/loneliness-is-everyones-business/> (Last Accessed: 04/01/18).

Link Up

In 2017-18 the Scottish Government awarded Inspiring Scotland a total of £660,000 to deliver the Link Up programme with local charities in deprived communities across Scotland. Link Up is focused on tackling social isolation head on by building positive relationships and strong social connections in local communities. It stimulates social participation and community-led action that increase community empowerment and resilience. At its core, Link Up strengthens social capital and local support networks which are essential to enhancing individual capacity to deal with complex challenges, such as those surrounding mental and physical health, and increasing personal resilience. Link Up's work supports the aims of the Building Safer Communities programme to help national and local partners and communities work together to make Scotland safer and stronger.

PLUS Perth and Kinross

PLUS received £17,033 through the Social Isolation and Loneliness Fund and aimed to target people experiencing mental health problems in rural areas of Perthshire. The project organised a variety of events, including poetry appreciation sessions, lunch clubs and a gardening project. Interviewees stated that the flexibility and focus of equality between organisers and attendees was an encouraging attribute of the PLUS events, making service users feel more comfortable participating. The evaluation of the project demonstrated a total increase in the social connections of participants of 960%, rising from 20 to 212 for the entire group.

Heart and Sound

Heart and Sound received £10,850 through the Social Isolation and Loneliness Fund to run a breakfast club for 16-24 year old males who were not in employment, education or training and were socially isolated for a variety of reasons. The project ran breakfast clubs twice a week and provided opportunities for the participants to plan their week in terms of volunteering and applying for jobs, making friends or socialising. Some sessions were aimed at allowing the participants to share what they had been doing to utilise their time positively. Heart and Sound also invited guest speakers with the aim of developing the skills and opportunities of the participants. The programme demonstrated clear successes with the number of connections reported by the participants increasing by 193%.

TAKING ACTION AND MEASURING CHANGE

The Strategy aims to set the context for activity in this area, but we also need to ensure that it translates into real change for people. We want everyone to take action for the short, medium and long term to reduce social isolation and loneliness, and build a more connected Scotland.

Question 24:

Taking into account answers to questions elsewhere, is there anything else we should be doing that doesn't fall into any of these categories?

In taking forward the implementation of the Strategy, we want to be able to measure ourselves against ambitious outcomes and clear indicators to demonstrate progress. We have set out a framework for this on page 24 as a starting point.

Question 25:

Do you agree with the framework we have created to measure our progress in tackling social isolation and loneliness?

Question 26:

Is there anything missing from this framework that you think is important for us to consider?

NEXT STEPS

We will consult on this draft over the spring of 2018. You can contribute to the consultation in a number of ways:

- fill out the questionnaire at our Citizenspace portal
- use our toolkit to facilitate an event with a local community group
- attend one of the community engagement events we're organising up and down the country

We want you to be open, honest and constructive in sharing your thoughts with us. And we want to hear from a diverse range of voices - whether you're an individual in a community, a local community group, a third sector organisation or a public service. Social isolation and loneliness will not be reduced by top down Government direction - but neither can we just expect communities to go and make this happen by themselves. So we want to hear from communities - what do you need to be able to reduce social isolation and loneliness, and build more connected communities? We all have a part to play in tackling social isolation and loneliness and building a more connected Scotland.

DRAFT PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

Vision:	A Scotland where individuals and communities are more connected and everyone has the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships regardless of age, status, circumstances or identity			
Outcomes:	Improved understanding of social isolation and loneliness and its main causes and impacts	Fewer causes of social isolation and loneliness	Reduced harm from the effects of social isolation and loneliness	Communities are more empowered to directly respond to social isolation and loneliness
Measures of success:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More people are able to recognise it • Stigma surrounding social isolation and loneliness is reduced and people feel more comfortable talking about feelings of loneliness and taking advantage of help available to them • Policy makers and practitioners have a more complete and shared understanding of its prevalence and nature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less poverty and inequality • Better digital infrastructure and training • Closer and engaged communities • More social spaces in towns and cities • Less neighbourhood crime and antisocial behaviour • More people aware of consequences of online behaviour • Better transport links 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved population health • Improved mental health, depression, self-harm and suicide • Fewer hospital admissions/injuries • Improved knowledge and training among frontline professionals across health, education, justice etc. • People know how to access support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger social connections • More people volunteering in their communities • Greater neighbourhood cohesion • Reduced antisocial behaviour
Indicators:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People are more likely to ask for help • People are more aware of the help available to them • More people recognise the triggers and signs of loneliness • Social isolation and loneliness features in more government work at both a national and local level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of households experiencing poverty has been reduced • The number of households with access to super-fast broadband has increased • A reduction in the digital skills gap • People display more resilient behaviour online • A decrease in the number of bullying cases in schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of elderly people admitted to hospital as a result of unintentional harm has been reduced • People more likely to speak to their GP about mental health • More people feel comfortable discussing care/treatment with social care professionals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More people report having regular social contact within their communities • More people report utilising local amenities • More people feel safe in their communities

HOW YOU CAN HAVE YOUR SAY

We are inviting responses to this consultation by 27 April 2018

Please respond to this consultation using the Scottish Government's consultation platform, Citizen Space. You view and respond to this consultation online at <https://consult.gov.scot/equality-unit/connected-scotland>

You can save and return to your responses while the consultation is still open. Please ensure that consultation responses are submitted before the closing date of 27 April 2018

If you are unable to respond online, please send your response along with the completed Respondent Information Form (see "Handling your Response" below) to:

Social Isolation and Loneliness Consultation
Equality Unit
3H North
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ

Handling your response

If you respond using Citizen Space (<http://consult.scotland.gov.uk/>), you will be directed to the Respondent Information Form. Please indicate how you wish your response to be handled and, in particular, whether you are happy for your response to be published.

If you are unable to respond via Citizen Space, please complete and return the Respondent Information Form included in this document. If you ask for your response not to be published, we will regard it as confidential, and we will treat it accordingly.

All respondents should be aware that the Scottish Government is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and would therefore have to consider any request made to it under the Act for information relating to responses made to this consultation exercise.

Next steps in the process

Where respondents have given permission for their response to be made public, and after we have checked that they contain no potentially defamatory material, responses will be made available to the public at <http://consult.scotland.gov.uk>. If you use Citizen Space to respond, you will receive a copy of your response via email.

Following the closing date, all responses will be analysed and considered along with any other available evidence to help us. Responses will be published where we have been given permission to do so.

Comments and complaints

If you have any comments about how this consultation exercise has been conducted, please send them to:

Trevor Owen
Equality Unit
3H North
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ

Scottish Government consultation process

Consultation is an essential part of the policy-making process. It gives us the opportunity to consider your opinion and expertise on a proposed area of work.

You can find all our consultations online: <http://consult.scotland.gov.uk>. Each consultation details the issues under consideration, as well as a way for you to give us your views, either online, by email or by post.

Consultations may involve seeking views in a number of different ways, such as public meetings, focus groups, or other online methods such as Dialogue (<https://www.ideas.gov.scot>)

Responses will be analysed and used as part of the decision making process, along with a range of other available information and evidence. We will publish a report of this analysis for every consultation. Depending on the nature of the consultation exercise the responses received may:

- indicate the need for policy development or review
- inform the development of a particular policy
- help decisions to be made between alternative policy proposals
- be used to finalise legislation before it is implemented

While details of particular circumstances described in a response to a consultation exercise may usefully inform the policy process, consultation exercises cannot address individual concerns and comments, which should be directed to the relevant public body.

Respondent Information Form



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

Please Note this form **must** be completed and returned with your response.

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

- Individual
 Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

Phone number

Address

Postcode

Email

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

- Publish response with name
 Publish response only (without name)
 Do not publish response

Information for organisations:

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.

If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

- Yes
 No

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS: HOW ARE WE DOING?

Recommendation	Action	When
<p>1. We recommend that the Scottish Government develops a national strategy on social isolation that ensures that the issue is integrated within all policy considerations so that the impact of isolation and loneliness is understood and tackled across Scotland.</p>	<p>This draft strategy will be consulted on and finalised in 2018. We will continue to work across government to highlight ways in which other policy areas can address social isolation and loneliness.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>2. We recommend that the Scottish Government ensures that the issues of social isolation and loneliness are built into the plans and strategies of health and social care partnerships across Scotland.</p>	<p>We will continue to work with Health and Social Care Partnerships across the country to ensure that social isolation and loneliness features more prominently on their agendas. Progress is beginning to be made on this: Glasgow Health and Social Care partnership have announced a Wellbeing For Longer fund, running from 2017-18, which has the aim of supporting third sector organisations to deliver projects targeted at helping residents of Glasgow at risk of experiencing social isolation.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>3. We recommend that the Scottish Government should engage with stakeholders to design a national publicity campaign to tackle stigma on loneliness, show what communities can do and highlight the importance of social contact for everyone, no matter what their age.</p>	<p>We aim to raise awareness of social isolation through working with key stakeholders to identify innovative ways we can raise awareness through education as well as public facing initiatives such as social media channels.</p>	<p>Early 2018</p>

Recommendation	Action	When
<p>4. We recommend that the Scottish Government develops and supports a focused campaign for school and youth group settings that promotes a positive message for preventing social isolation and uses a peer-to-peer approach. We would welcome a response from the Scottish Government on how this can sit alongside a range of strategies dealing with bullying.</p>	<p>The Scottish Government is currently undertaking a review of Personal and Social Education in schools, as well as taking forward a review of counselling services within education.</p>	<p>By end 2018</p>
<p>5. We recommend that training on social isolation and its impact is given to “named persons” established under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.</p>	<p>The Scottish Government believes that whilst it is important that named persons are aware of the impacts of social isolation and loneliness, it is a pressing matter for all practitioners working with our children and young people. We will continue to work to make sure that practitioners, as well as policy makers and the general public, have a more complete understanding of the prevalence and impacts of social isolation and loneliness.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>6. We recommend that the Scottish Government should share what is learned from the Deep End project’s evaluation across Scotland.</p>	<p>The Glasgow Centre for Population Health published a report of The Deep End Advice Worker Project in September 2017. This report noted that:</p> <p><i>The Deep End Advice Worker project developed and tested approaches to delivering advice services from two GP practices in Parkhead, Glasgow. Through the delivery of finance, debt, social security and housing advice from a trusted setting (i.e. general practice), the project aimed to improve social and economic outcomes for people in the local area. It also sought to reduce the time medical staff spent on non-clinical issues.</i></p> <p>The conclusions of the report highlighted the positive impact link workers have, both for the people of the community, and for the health care professionals working in the practice:</p> <p><i>GPs suggested this contributed to stronger patient-doctor relationships, helped reduce their non-clinical workloads and freed up time to deliver primary healthcare⁴³.</i></p>	<p>Complete</p>

43 Sinclair, S. *The Deep End Advice Worker Project: embedding an advice worker in general practice settings*. Glasgow Centre for Population Health, 2017.

Recommendation	Action	When
7. We recommend that the Scottish Government includes link worker systems in any national strategy development.	The Scottish Government has committed to introducing 250 link workers by 2021.	By 2021
8. We recommend that the Scottish Government invests in the evaluation of existing best practice in order to develop future interventions and improve the link to preventative health spending decisions that will improve the lives of people affected by isolation and loneliness.	Our Social Isolation and Loneliness fund enabled community projects to deliver successful initiatives which targeted a diverse range of groups. The end of year report, compiled by the Voluntary Action Fund (VAF)A, provided several examples of good practice, and highlighted particular approaches that demonstrably reduced social isolation and loneliness.	Ongoing
9. We recommend that the Scottish Government commissions research on the prevalence of social isolation and loneliness in Scotland and identifies the typical profile of people who are most at risk of being socially isolated and lonely.	<p>We commissioned research to understand the prevalence of social isolation and loneliness which identified that, contrary to the popular image conjured by social isolation of an older person sitting at home alone; high numbers of younger people were affected by social isolation.</p> <p>However, other publically available research has identified a wide range of cohorts that are at risk of social isolation and loneliness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People living in poverty • Young mothers • LGBTI people • Refugees • Minority Ethnic groups • Carers • People faced with bereavement • People going through transition periods <p>It is important to recognise that even people with family connections can become socially isolated. It has been demonstrated that families with disabled children are at risk of becoming socially isolated. A UK wide survey in 2011 found that 72% experience mental ill health due to isolation, 65% reported feeling isolated frequently, and more than half 56% felt their isolation was due to poor support from statutory services⁴⁴.</p>	Complete

44 Contact a Family. *Forgotten Families: The impact of isolation on families with disabled children across the UK*. Contact a Family, 2011. URL, https://contact.org.uk/media/381636/forgotten_isolation_report.pdf (Last Accessed: 04/01/18).

Recommendation	Action	When
<p>10. We also recommend that research is taken forward to assess the physical and mental impacts of social isolation alongside an evaluation of the benefits and experiences of social prescribing.</p>	<p>The physical and mental impacts of social isolation are well documented.</p> <p>The Campaign to End Loneliness has undertaken a literature review exercise to highlight the links between loneliness and health. It found that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loneliness increases the likelihood of mortality by 26% • Loneliness puts individuals at greater risk of cognitive decline • Lonely individuals are more prone to depression⁴⁵ <p>Research has been undertaken on the impact social prescribing has on mental health in a wider sense, which states that:</p> <p><i>There is promising evidence that social prescribing can be effective in increasing access to services such as self-help resources and financial advice; reducing social isolation⁴⁶.</i></p> <p>Recent academic literature focused on 35 social prescribing schemes in the UK found that these schemes have particular benefits for individuals, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in confidence • Greater feelings of empowerment <p>Improvements in mood and psychological or mental wellbeing, linked to reduced depression⁴⁷.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>11. We recommend that the Scottish Government works with local authorities to improve the availability of community and public transport.</p>	<p>We're investing £53.5 million in bus services to keep fares affordable, and are continuing to support the National Concessionary Travel Scheme to allow older and disabled people improved access to services, facilities and social networks by free scheduled bus services. We're supporting local community transport in partnership with local authorities by providing funding for the Community Transport Association to develop the sector. The Scottish Government/Local Authority Concordat ensures that the Scottish network of community transport operators is being shaped by local authority and community planning decisions. We have also committed to bringing forward a Transport Bill this year which will provide local authorities with flexible options to improve bus services in their local areas.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

45 Campaign to End Loneliness. *Threat to Health*. URL: <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/threat-to-health/> (Last Accessed: 04/01/18).

46 NHS Health Scotland, Social prescribing for mental health: guidance paper. NHS Health Scotland, 2016. p.7

47 Thomson, L. J., Camic, P. M. and Chatterjee, H. J. *Social Prescribing: A Review of Community Referral Schemes*. London: University College London, 2015.

Recommendation	Action	When
12. We recommend that the issue of transport policy is included as a strand in any social isolation strategy.	As transport is a central part of enabling people to connect with others in their communities face to face, we're taking forward a review of our National Transport Strategy with accessibility identified as a central priority.	Ongoing
13. We recommend that the Scottish Government encourages the health and social care partnerships to incorporate housing considerations and links with housing professionals in its planning of services.	The Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 already requires housing providers to be represented on the Strategic Planning Group of each local health and social care partnership, the group that oversees the strategic commissioning process. Most current strategic commissioning plans include a Housing Contribution Statement. Ongoing, The Improvement Hub at Healthcare Improvement Scotland has a dedicated housing programme, 'Place, Home and Housing'. The programme aims to make key improvements to strategic planning of housing and related services to provide people with a home environment that supports greater independence and improved health and wellbeing.	Ongoing
14. We recommend that the Scottish Government considers the issue of social isolation and loneliness within care settings and sheltered housing as part of any strategy and campaign work.	We are in the process of refreshing our Age, Home and Community strategy, which is due for publication in 2018. The first version of the strategy, published in 2012, recognised the importance of housing to achieving health and social care objectives, including reducing unplanned hospital admissions and promoting independent living.	Forthcoming
15. To address social isolation and loneliness we also recommend that the Scottish Government promotes innovation in future housing development in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and location • Design and construction • Models of occupancy 	We have developed an 'app' to increase the reach of our Place Standard Tool, which will support more communities to work with stakeholders to assess the quality of their place. We're currently reviewing the planning system and proposing a range of measures to give communities a stronger voice in decisions about the future of their places. To this end, we have recently introduced our Planning Bill to Parliament.	Ongoing

Recommendation	Action	When
16. We recommend that any Scottish Government research on age and social isolation examines the potential positive and negative impacts of technology on people who are socially isolated and lonely.	There is considerable research into the positive and negative impacts of technology on people who are socially isolated. Work by the Carnegie Trust has identified that digital participation has the potential to increase social interaction. However, recent academic studies have identified that technology, and particularly social media, can lead to people becoming socially isolated ⁴⁸ .	Ongoing

⁴⁸ Lin, L. et al. (2016), *Association Between Social Media Use And Depression Among U.S. Young Adults*. *Depress Anxiety*, 33: 323–331. URL, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ggi.12711/full> (Last Accessed: 04/01/18); Kross E. et al. (2013) *Facebook Use Predicts Declines in Subjective Well-Being in Young Adults*. URL, <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0069841> (Last Accessed: 04/01/18).



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This publication is available at www.gov.scot

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

ISBN: 978-1-78851-373-9

Published by The Scottish Government, January 2018

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS317866 (01/18)

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