

# Response ID ANON-8H41-QXNY-N

Submitted to **A Connected Scotland: Tackling social isolation and loneliness and building stronger social connections**

Submitted on **2018-04-30 11:58:24**

## Key questions for everyone

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

#### Input your answer here::

Scottish Care strongly believes there needs to be significant changes made to the perception, planning and delivery of social care services to ensure they can act as valuable community and individual supports rather than solely being used at late stages in someone's life or care journey to provide task based, complex care. This applies to both care home settings and home care services. These community assets can play invaluable roles in ensuring that individuals within a community are connected, achieving their personal outcomes and leading fulfilling lives but only if sufficient value and resource is allocated to them to do so. Within an integrated health and social care landscape, it is also important that services and individuals who have contact with people at risk of or experiencing social isolation and loneliness are able to identify this and signpost these individuals to other supports and services which can help to alleviate this. This requires effective communication, information sharing and partnership working so that those operating in a local community know what supports are available to people and how to access them. It also requires each of these services being resourced appropriately so that they have the capacity and time to offer these sorts of social supports, which are as important as those which address physical health and safety. This integrated approach must also extend to looking at supports beyond social care, including transport services and local infrastructure. It is often barriers such as the lack of social mobility because of limited bus services, for example, or local services which are not dementia friendly which prevent people from remaining connected. This is of particular issue in rural and remote areas but applies in all geographies.

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

#### Input answer here::

Integrated Joint Boards, Strategic Planning Groups and specifically commissioners of social care services play an important role in tackling social isolation and loneliness through their influence over what social care services are available and what they are resourced to do. They must better recognise and implement Self-Directed Support as a mechanism for enabling people to exercise choice and control over the sorts of supports they want and need, which may well include those which enhance social connection. They must also adopt new ways of commissioning services, particularly care at home services, to move away from time and task approaches to support and promote far more holistic, flexible and relationship based care and support that allows people and the services in their lives to work together to identify what they need help with to live a fulfilling life. There must also be increased recognition of the value of preventative approaches to care and support. In the current landscape where only those with the highest level of need qualify for care and therefore lower-level, preventative support is effectively eradicated, it is inevitable that others will access 'upstream' support instead or receive no support, hence worsening their social isolation and loneliness. If models of care planning, funding and delivery promote a return to relational care approaches, often the triggers and issues which would cause someone's health and wellbeing to deteriorate could be identified at an early stage and would mean supporting their social needs, which we know can significantly improve health concerns and the sense of feeling 'well'.

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

#### Input answer here::

The response provided in question 2 applies equally to Government, to whom local Health & Social Care Partnerships are accountable. It is only through national leadership and direction that enables and encourages flexibility around local solutions to social isolation and loneliness that change can be meaningfully implemented. This must include a means of assessing and measuring impact which is not target driven. The existence and prioritisation of health targets means that inevitably, services and supports are planned and valued around the meeting of these. This in turn means that 'softer' approaches to care and support, which are preventative and relational in nature and which may not improve someone's health or prognosis but which significantly improve their experience and sense of wellbeing, are stripped out and undervalued. Without recognising the inherent connection and impact between health and social care and between physical, mental and social needs and planning supports accordingly, we will be unsuccessful in tackling social isolation and loneliness.

**Do you want to answer any of the detailed questions?**

## Detailed questions

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

#### Input answer here::

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

#### Input answer here::

### 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?

#### Input answer here::

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

**Input answer here::**

**8 How can we all work together 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?**

**Input answer here::**

**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?**

**Input answer here::**

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

**Input answer here::**

**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?**

**Input answer here::**

It is positive that the Strategy recognises older people as a particular group at risk of experiencing social isolation and loneliness, and Scottish Care would want to see clear and practical steps being taken through the Strategy's implementation to better understand these risks. Too often, the particular needs of older people and the ways in which their mental health can be impacted in later life are overlooked and under-resourced.

We believe there needs to be more work undertaken to understand the various life stages and changes which can impact on older people and their wellbeing . There are particular factors relating to older people which may prompt or exacerbate social isolation and loneliness. For instance, older people are more likely to experience bereavement through the loss of friends, spouses and relations. Additionally individuals who go through transitions such as moving into a care home or another care setting may experience difficulties in adjusting to a loss of home or a perceived loss of identity, particularly if this involves moving to a different town or local community, if adequate support is not present. The impact of living with dementia, frailty and other conditions also needs to be considered as these very much relate to social connectedness and mobility.

Social isolation and loneliness must therefore become a more explicit part of the assessment process for social care for older people through social work and commissioning departments to ensure that these are recognised as important areas of concern which can directly impact on someone's access to and required intensity of other health and social care supports. By recognising social isolation and loneliness in conjunction with life changes, a more effective preventative approach to support can be enabled with likely financial benefits to the health and social care system but even more importantly, better outcomes for older individuals.

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

**Input answer here::**

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

**Input answer here::**

The social care sector already makes significant contributions towards tackling social isolation and loneliness among the people it supports, wherever it is possible to do so. For instance, many care homes are undertaking innovative intergenerational projects to foster new connections between residents and others in the community such as school children. Others are progressing other examples of community connectedness including running Sunday Lunch clubs or offering spaces for other community groups to meet. In terms of home care, it can be difficult for services and their staff to address this challenge to the extent they would want to given the current time and task commissioning environment but many still go above and beyond, often in their own time, to support clients' social connectedness either themselves or by researching other available services on clients' behalf.

The social care sector could do far more in this area if, as previously mentioned, it is enabled to deliver relationship centred, outcomes focused and time flexible care rather than only delivering complex interventions. Whilst care staff offer this already, it cannot continue to be presumed that this will be done in workers' own time or in manner with no resourcing attached to it as this is to the detriment of workers' own wellbeing. It also inevitably means that support around social isolation and loneliness is variable, piecemeal and uncoordinated. This requires commissioners of health and social care services to buy into the Strategy and recognise the role of these services in achieving its outcomes, therefore resourcing local services appropriately.

It is also important that regulatory bodies act as facilitators and not barriers to innovative community-based approaches to tackling social isolation and loneliness within social care settings. This includes reviewing legislation such as the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010, particularly the categories of care it defines, to ensure that future services can be planned around the needs of a community, not to fit a traditional service model.

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

**Input answer here::**

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

**Input answer here::**

**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?**

Input answer here::

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

Input answer here::

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

Input answer here::

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

Input answer here::

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

Input answer here::

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

Input answer here::

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

Input answer here::

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

Input answer here::

Access to and use of digital technology is a significant issue for older people amongst who there remains a considerable level of digital poverty. Technology can play an important and beneficial role in preventing against social isolation and loneliness but only if it is properly implemented and is not utilised as a replacement for human support but as helpful addition to it. No piece of technology can replace the social and psychological benefits of person to person relationships, including between older people and care staff.

In terms of older people who access social care, prioritising and resourcing learning at the point of use would be a positive way of promoting access to and use of technology. For instance, if a home carer was able to spend some of their time in someone's own home helping them to use a piece of technology that supports them to have choice, control and independence.

However it must be recognised that meaningful equity around digital technology to tackle social isolation and loneliness can only be achieved through investment by Scottish Government and Health & Social Care Partnerships. This need for investment is not only in terms of the technology itself but in learning and development around its use for individuals, communities and health and social care services.

## **Any other comments**

**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?**

Input answer here::

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

Input answer here::

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

Input answer here::

## **About you**

**What is your name?**

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**Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?**

Organisation

**What is your organisation?**

**Organisation:**

Scottish Care

**Are you responding on behalf of a community discussion that has taken place?**

No

**If you used our facilitation guide, please upload the Event Registration form here.**

**Upload:**

No file was uploaded

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

Publish response with name

**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

## **Evaluation**

**Please help us improve our consultations by answering the questions below. (Responses to the evaluation will not be published.)**

**Matrix 1 - How satisfied were you with this consultation?:**

Very satisfied

**Please enter comments here.:**

**Matrix 1 - How would you rate your satisfaction with using this platform (Citizen Space) to respond to this consultation?:**

Very satisfied

**Please enter comments here.:**