

Early consideration of impacts

'Connected Communities delivers the *Taking Wales Forward* commitment to develop a strategy to address loneliness and social isolation. This is a consultation that seeks to start a discussion about what works in communities and asks what more can be done and by whom.

Connected Communities is embedded within the framework of *Prosperity for All*. The opening lines of *Prosperity for All* talks about prosperity meaning **a good quality of life, and living in strong, safe communities** and the themes of this consultation link closely with the goals of prosperity, resilience, good health, equality, community cohesion, culture and language. Reference is made throughout the consultation to the links the alleviation of loneliness and social isolation has to achieving all of these goals.

We know from the wealth of research, information and data available we have analysed, that the economic and social impacts of loneliness and social isolation on individual and community health and well-being, are significant and that these impacts affect people of all ages, living in all places and from all walks of life. The recent Wales National Survey on Loneliness revealed that around a fifth of the population feel lonely, which is close on half a million people. These people live in **cities and the countryside**, they represent all of the **protected characteristics**, there is evidence which points to high rates of loneliness and social isolation among **children and young people** and there is projected evidence which shows that there will be a 50% increase in the number of people over 50 experiencing loneliness. Ultimately, different life events can trigger the experience of loneliness and social isolation, at any time in the life course. Anyone can be affected. This is why a central element of our thinking and what we want others to think about is how we build and maintain the social fabric in localities and individual and community resilience.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 provide clear legislative frameworks within which this consultation is set. The themes that are central to these laws, of **early intervention and prevention** and **integrated service design and delivery** have been central to our thinking in the developing work and how we can facilitate local action within these frameworks. Within the context of 'austerity', we have been looking at **how we make best use of our resources** in relation to our existing funding mechanisms and grant schemes, to consider ways in which they can be adapted in respect of loneliness and social isolation.

It is necessary to produce a consultation and a final strategy which recognises the wide ranging, **cross-government and cross-sector** responses to loneliness and social isolation. Therefore, we have **collaborated with and involved** policy divisions from across Welsh Government and with organisations working in communities and representing them. All of our partners are well represented on the Loneliness and Social isolation Strategy Development Board and we have met separately with them and many other individuals and organisations.

Connected Communities links closely to the PfA commitment to *'expand the community health and social care workforce, with innovative new roles, such as*

‘community connectors’ that support social prescribing and more formal partnerships with volunteers and the third sector.’ We are working with colleagues leading on the response to it. This commitment recognises the value of work which takes place at the local and hyper-local levels, within communities and early evidence tells us that the ‘community connector’ and related models are having a positive impact on people’s lives.’

A full Integrated Impact Assessment is being carried out and will be published alongside the final strategy. This statement provides an opening framework for that Assessment.