



# Helping people who are lonely and find it difficult to meet other people

Please tell us what you think by 15 January 2019



This is an easy read version of **Connected Communities: Tackling Loneliness and Social Isolation**.

October 2018



# How to use this document

This is an easy read version. The words and their meaning are easy to read and understand.



You may need support to read and understand this document. Ask someone you know to help you.

Some words may be difficult to understand. These are in **bold blue writing** and have been explained in a box beneath the word.

If any of the words are used they are shown in **normal blue writing**. You can look up what they mean in **hard words** on page **41**.



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Where the document says **we**, this means the **Welsh Government**.



This document was made into easy read by **Easy Read Wales** using **Photosymbols**.

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# What this document is about

This document is about loneliness and **social isolation** in Wales.



**Social isolation** is when people find it difficult to meet other people. This might be because of where they live or because they have difficulty getting out and meeting people.



In this document we talk about what we think we need to do to help stop people being lonely or **socially isolated**.



We link what we want to do with the laws in Wales and **Welsh Government** policies.



We explain what people have told us we need to do about loneliness and **social isolation**.



We talk about the work we have done already.



We explain what we think we should do and why.  
And how we think we should be working with others  
to help stop loneliness and **social isolation**.



We have written a questionnaire to find out what  
people think we should be doing about loneliness  
and **social isolation**.

If you want to let us know what you think, you can  
fill in the easy read **questionnaire** and send it to:



Loneliness and Social Isolation Team  
Social Services Directorate  
Welsh Government  
Crown Buildings  
Cathays Park  
Cardiff, CF10 3NQ



Or you can fill in the questionnaire on our website:  
<http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/?lang=en>



**Please send your completed questionnaire by 15  
January 2019.**



If you would like this document in Braille, large  
print or other languages, please contact us at the  
address above or by:

**Email:** [lonelinessandisolation@gov.wales](mailto:lonelinessandisolation@gov.wales)

**Phone:** 03000 251107

# Message from Huw Irranca-Davies

Being lonely or **socially isolated** can affect our **mental health** and **well-being**.



**Mental health** means how someone is feeling in their mind.



**Well-being** means a person is happy, healthy and is comfortable with their life and what they do.



People can be lonely or **socially isolated** whatever age they are.



The Welsh Government has done a lot of work to help improve the **well-being** of people in Wales.



This is through laws like the **Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014** and the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**.



These laws help make sure organisations do more to help people's [well-being](#).



The Welsh Government also has a plan called **Prosperity for All** that tries to help stop people being lonely.



We want to do more work to make sure we help people who are lonely or [socially isolated](#).



We need to work together to deal with these problems.

Thank you for reading this document and telling us what you think.



**Huw Irranca-Davies Assembly Member**

Welsh Government Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care





# 1. Introduction

Loneliness and **social isolation** are big problems in Wales, the United Kingdom and the world.



These problems can affect anyone.



They can affect someone's physical health and their **mental health**.



We want people in Wales to have the best health and **well-being**.



This will also mean fewer people need support from health and social services.





A lot of **research** has been done into loneliness and **social isolation**.

**Research** is a way of finding out information about something.



The **research** shows that a lot of older people in Wales are lonely or **socially isolated**.



But it also shows that lots of other people in Wales are lonely or **socially isolated**.



We need to make sure that our plan to stop loneliness and **social isolation** helps people of all ages. Not just older people.

## This document explains:



- The work we want to do.



- What we mean by loneliness and [social isolation](#).



- The [research](#) that has been done.



- The work we have already done.



- Why we should be working with other organisations.



- The questions we want to ask people and organisations about what needs to be done.



## 2. What we want to do

We believe there are 5 parts of life where we can help make a person's **well-being** better.



We think these will also help people be less lonely and **socially isolated**.

**The 5 parts of life are:**



### 1. Early years

This means supporting people well when they are young.



### 2. Housing

We think it is important that people live in the right home and in the right area.



### 3. Social care

Making sure people have the best social care will help people be independent and well. This will help stop loneliness and **social isolation**.



## 4. Mental health

Making sure people have the best **mental health** services to help with their **well-being**. This will also help people to be less lonely and **socially isolated**.



## 5. Skills and work

Having a good job can help people to be less lonely and **socially isolated**.



Some of the laws we have made in the last few years are about making people's **well-being** better. These laws are also about making sure that people come first.



We want to help make sure people are involved with making choices about their health and **well-being**. And we want to help people be more independent.



We want to help people build healthy relationships with others.



And we want people to have the chance to be involved with their communities.

### 3. What is loneliness and social isolation?

Loneliness and **social isolation** are different things.



Loneliness is when people feel they do not have enough good relationships with other people. It can make people feel very sad.



**Social isolation** is when people do not have enough contact with other people.



Some people might have a lot of contact with other people but still feel lonely.



And some people may not have much contact with other people but do not feel lonely.



Everybody is different.



People may feel lonely or **socially isolated** at different times in their lives.



Helping to make sure people are able to have important relationships with other people can stop loneliness and **social isolation**.

## 4. Why is it important to help people feel less lonely and socially isolated?



Research shows that loneliness and social isolation can cause a lot of health problems.



People who are lonely or socially isolated often die younger than people who are not lonely or socially isolated.



The effects on people's health can cost services a lot of money.



## 5. The causes of loneliness and social isolation in Wales



Research shows that about 440 thousand people in Wales feel lonely.



More young people between the ages of 16 and 24 said they were lonely than older people.



The main reason was that they did not have enough good relationships with other people.

The way we live today can cause us to feel lonely and socially isolated. Some of the reasons are:



- Many people live alone.



- People often work from home or travel a long way to work.



- People sometimes do not feel safe going out in their communities.



- More people get divorced than in the past.



- Many people do not live near their families or the friends they grew up with.



- Many people use social media like Facebook more than meeting up with people.

There are some groups of people who are more likely to feel lonely. They are:



- People aged 18 to 34 years old.



- **Veterans.**

**Veterans** are people who used to work in the armed forces like the army, navy or air force.



- Disabled people.



- People with serious health problems.



- People with **mental health** problems.



- Carers.

- People who are **lesbian**, **gay**, **bi-sexual** or **transgender** (LGBT).



People who are **lesbian** or **gay** fancy people who are the same sex as them.

People who are **bi-sexual** fancy people from both sexes.

People who are **transgender** are born as one sex and want to live as the other sex. For example a person who looks like a man may feel like a woman inside.





- People from **Black, Asian** and **Minority Ethnic (BAME)** communities.

People from **Black, Asian** and **Minority Ethnic (BAME)** communities may come from another country or have a different skin colour to other people in the community.



- People who are shy.

Other things that can cause people to feel lonely are:



- Where you live. For example not liking where you live or not feeling safe to go out at night.



- Not being married or in a relationship.



- Not having much money.



- Using the internet.



- Not feeling part of the community.



- Getting divorced.



- When someone close to you dies.



- Becoming a new parent.



- Not enough public transport.



- Not enough services and activities in the community. For example libraries or day centres.

## 6. The job of Welsh Government



We need to work with other people and organisations to help make sure people are less lonely and **socially isolated**.



We want to support people and communities to find the best ways to help themselves.



We want to share the good ways that people and communities are helping to make people feel less lonely and **socially isolated**.



We want to check how using our laws and policies is helping people to feel less lonely and **socially isolated**.



And we want to find out what else we can do to help now and in the future.



## 7. The work we are doing now



### Early years and education



We are working to help make the **mental health** and **well-being** of children and young people better.



We want to help children and young people have good relationships.



Schools are important for helping to make sure that children and young people have good **mental health** and **well-being**.



If children feel lonely or **socially isolated** it can affect their **mental health** and how they do in school.



We want to do more work with communities to support children and young people.





Children who go through difficult times in their lives are more likely to have health problems.



This is also likely to affect their **well-being** and their relationships with other people.



We are doing a lot of work to help children who have been through difficult times in their lives.

## Housing



We are working to make sure housing, public transport and access to computers and the internet are better.



When people feel safe in their home and their community they are less likely to feel lonely or **socially isolated**.



It is also important for people to live in good quality housing.



This is very important for older people as they often spend more time at home.



We are also doing work to help make sure fewer people are homeless.

## Public transport



We are spending a lot of money to make public transport in Wales better.



We are also trying to make walking and cycling routes better.



All of these things will help people to get around more easily and to be less lonely and **socially isolated**.

## Using the internet



We want people to be able to use the internet. We think this can help people to stay in contact with others.



But we also know that sometimes using the internet and social media can cause people problems.



We want to make sure people know how to use the internet and social media so it can help them.

## Social care



Good quality social care helps people to be more independent.



We want people to have a say in the support they get.



We want people to come first in the services they get.



We support a website called **DEWIS Cymru**. This gives people information about [well-being](#).



We are working with other organisations to give people more information about [well-being](#).

## Health



We think that doing more exercise is very important for people's health and [well-being](#).



It can also help to make people less lonely and [socially isolated](#).



We are working with other organisations to help people to be healthier.

# Mental health



People who are lonely or **socially isolated** are more likely to have **mental health** problems.



A lot of work is being done in Wales to help make people's **mental health** better.



Organisations are working together to make sure people can get different types of help and support.



People can find out more about these services from their GP or other health staff.



We are also working with the **Alzheimers Society** to help people with **dementia**.

**Dementia** is a condition that affects the brain. People have problems with memory and can be confused.



People with **dementia** are at risk of becoming lonely and **socially isolated**.



We want to make communities better for people with **dementia**.

## Volunteering



**Volunteering** means doing work without being paid.



**Volunteering** can be helpful for people as they can meet new people and learn new skills.



This is a good way of helping a person to feel less lonely or **socially isolated**. **Volunteering** can also help communities and organisations.



In June 2018 a new service started in Wales called **Volunteering Wales**.





This helps people to find **volunteering** jobs.



Organisations can get money from the Welsh Government to help them offer more **volunteering** jobs.

## Charities and community groups



Charities and community groups are sometimes called the **Third Sector**.



There are lots of **Third Sector** organisations in Wales.



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Welsh Government

The Welsh Government knows that these organisations do a lot of good work that helps people's **well-being**.



The **Welsh Government** gives a lot of money to charities and community groups to help them run important services.



## Skills and jobs



Having a job can help people to feel less lonely or **socially isolated**.



We have a plan to make more jobs and bring more money into Wales.



But we also know that some jobs can make people feel more lonely or **socially isolated**. For example when people work at home.



We want there to be more support for people's **mental health** and **well-being** at work.



We hope that this will help people who might be feeling lonely or **socially isolated**.



We have also given money to help companies support people who work for them who are carers.



Companies work with people who are lonely and **socially isolated** every day. For example customers or staff.



We want to find different ways that companies could help people who are lonely or **socially isolated**.

## Poverty



**Poverty** is not having enough money. For example to pay your bills, feed yourself and your family, heat your home or get around.



People who do not have much money may find it hard to go out.



They might not have enough money to pay for transport or to take part in activities.



This means they may feel lonely or **socially isolated**.



We think there is going to be more **poverty** in Wales in the next few years.

This could affect these groups of people the most:



- Families.



- Single parents.



- Disabled people.



- **Black, Asian** and **Minority Ethnic** groups.



Children can also be affected by **poverty** when their parents do not have a job.



We want to do more work to help children who are living in **poverty**.



We want more parents to have jobs.



We want parents and young people to get the skills they need.



We want all children to have the same chances in life.



We want families to have more money.

We want to help with:



- childcare



- housing



- food



- the effects of cuts to services and benefits.



We run services that give extra support to people affected by **poverty**.



We also give people help and advice on how they can get more money. For example by paying less Council Tax or getting an emergency payment.

## Where you live



People who live in the countryside can be at risk of becoming lonely. Or **socially isolated**. This is because there are fewer chances to socialise in the countryside.



But people who live in towns and cities can also be lonely and **socially isolated**.



It can be hard for people to get around. And use public transport. And there are not as many community services now for people to socialise.



We have a 7 year plan for spending money to make life better in the countryside. 1 part of this plan is a project called **LEADER**. This project helps make communities stronger in the countryside.



We are carefully planning how we spend money to best support people and places. We will make sure projects help the people and places that need it most.



We also have a special group of people working on making the South Wales Valleys a better place to live.



## 8. Help in the community



Organisations and community groups are also helping to stop loneliness and [social isolation](#).

For example projects like:

### Connecting Communities



This is a partnership between the **British Red Cross** and the **Co-op**. [Volunteers](#) work with people to help them find things they enjoy doing and get involved with the community.

### Time Credits



People give up some of their time to help in the community or in a service. They then get to do other things for free like swimming or training.





## With Music In Mind

This is a singing group for people aged 50 and over.

## Ffrind i Mi



**Aneurin Bevan University Health Board** works together with other organisations to find new ways to stop loneliness and [social isolation](#).



People of all ages can [volunteer](#) to help others to feel less lonely.

## Monmouthshire County Council



The council is writing a plan to help people who are lonely or [socially isolated](#).



They are asking people what they think needs to be done.

## 9. Our plan



We think it will take a long time to make sure people in Wales are less lonely or **socially isolated**. This plan will be the first step to help make that happen.



More **research** is being done to help us understand loneliness and **social isolation**.



We want to find ways to make sure people do not get lonely or **socially isolated**.



We want to help people as quickly as possible when they do get lonely or **socially isolated**.



We also want to help people who have been lonely for a long time.



This will mean that people will have better **well-being** and not need as much support from health and social care.

## 10. Finding out how lonely or socially isolated people in Wales are



We can find out about people who are lonely through a survey called **National Survey for Wales**.



The survey asks people questions about how lonely they feel.



But we need to find ways to check how often people feel lonely.



We also need to find ways to find out how many people are **socially isolated**.

## 11. How you can help



We want you to share your ideas on how we can help people in Wales to be less lonely and **socially isolated**.



Please send us your answers by **15 January 2019**.



We will then write and send out our plan by **31 March 2019**.

# Hard words

## Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME)

People from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities may come from another country or have a different skin colour to other people in the community.

## Dementia

Dementia is a condition that affects the brain. People have problems with memory and can be confused.

## Lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender

People who are lesbian or gay fancy people who are the same sex as them.

People who are bi-sexual fancy people from both sexes.

People who are transgender are born as one sex and want to live as the other sex. For example a person who looks like a man may feel like a woman inside.

## Mental health

Mental health means how someone is feeling in their mind.

## Poverty

Poverty is not having enough money. For example to pay your bills, feed yourself and your family, heat your home or get around.

## Research

Research is a way of finding out information about something.

## Social isolation

Social isolation is when people find it difficult to meet other people. This might be because of where they live or because they have difficulty getting out and meeting people.

## **Veterans**

Veterans are people who used to work in the armed forces like the army, navy or air force.

## **Volunteering**

Volunteering means doing work without being paid.

## **Well-being**

Well-being means a person is happy, healthy and is comfortable with their life and what they do.