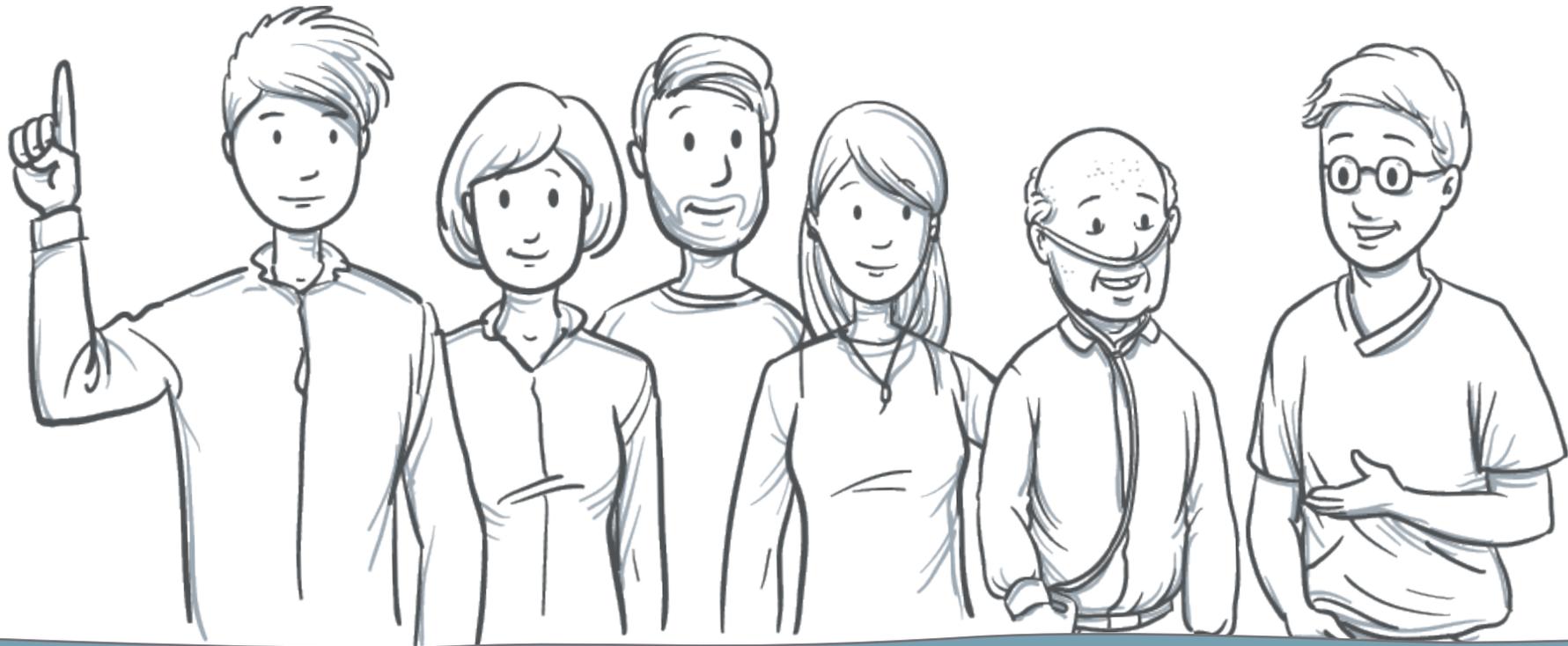


# Connecting Communities

A strategy for tackling loneliness and social isolation



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government



A youth and community version

# Hello

Loneliness and social isolation can happen to anyone, at any age, from any background. They are different but connected.



**Loneliness** is about:

- not having someone to talk to
- feeling like you don't fit in
- feeling sad or anxious
- finding it difficult to make friends.

Loneliness isn't easy to see. People can feel lonely even if they have lots of people in their lives.



**Social isolation** is about:

- not having enough contact with people in life
- not having social networks.

Social isolation can lead to loneliness.

We can measure contact to see when social isolation is a problem.

The Welsh Government wants to tackle loneliness and social isolation.

We want to support communities that give opportunities to bring people together.

**This booklet tells you about our strategy for Connecting Communities.**

It's a plan to:

- tackle loneliness
- tackle social isolation
- build a more connected society that everyone can be a part of.



# Some facts

Over the last year we've been asking people about social isolation and loneliness.

We've talked to professionals, community groups, children, young people and families to find out what matters.

This helped us write this plan.



Loneliness and social isolation can cause:

- physical health problems
- mental health problems
- sleep problems
- depression and other issues.

People said:

- modern life is busy
- many people live alone
- people live and work further from home
- many people have to travel for work
- we seem to socialise and shop more online.

**The National Survey 2017-18 said:**

**21%** of 16-24 year olds were lonely

**11%** of over 75's were lonely.



**Some groups of people experienced higher levels of loneliness and social isolation:**

- young people
- service veterans
- disabled people
- people with serious and long-term health conditions
- unpaid carers
- people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT)
- people from black and minority ethnic (BAME) communities.



# About the plan

## Our Vision

We want Wales to be a place where:

- ✓ everybody has opportunities to develop meaningful relationships
- ✓ people are supported when they're most vulnerable to loneliness and social isolation
- ✓ people can say "I'm lonely" without stigma or shame.

Life has challenges and tough times. This is when we need people in our lives. Having healthy, happy relationships with friends, family and others helps build resilience.

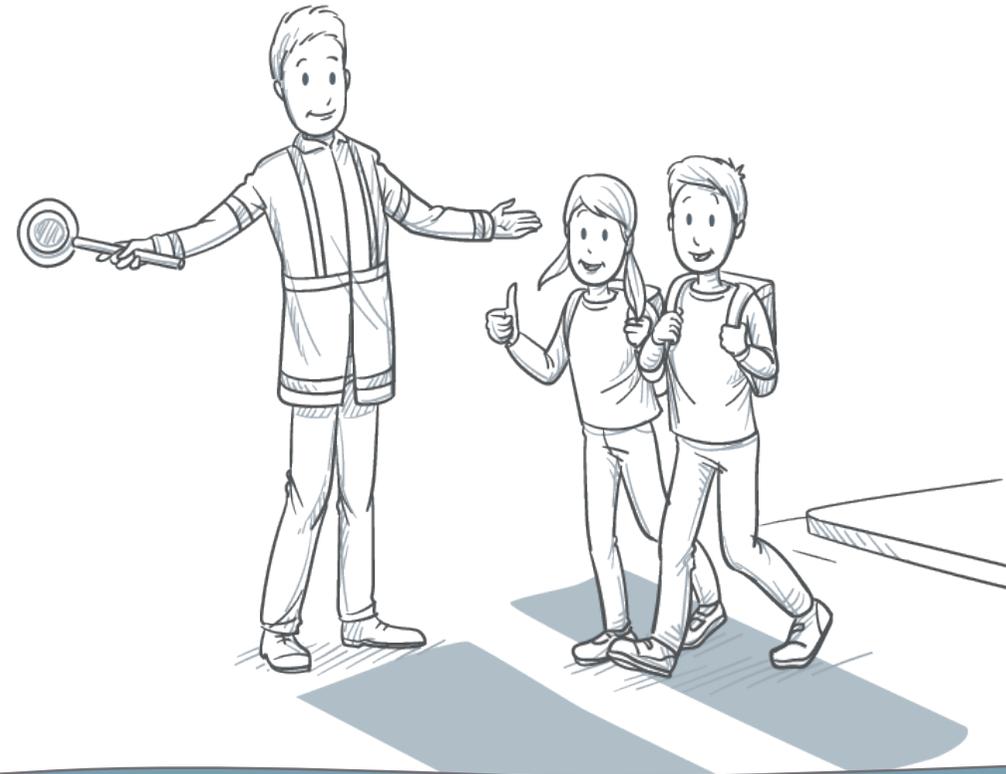
Resilience is about coping and bouncing back when difficult things happen. Mental resilience is about:

- healthy habits
- positive attitudes
- building connections with others.

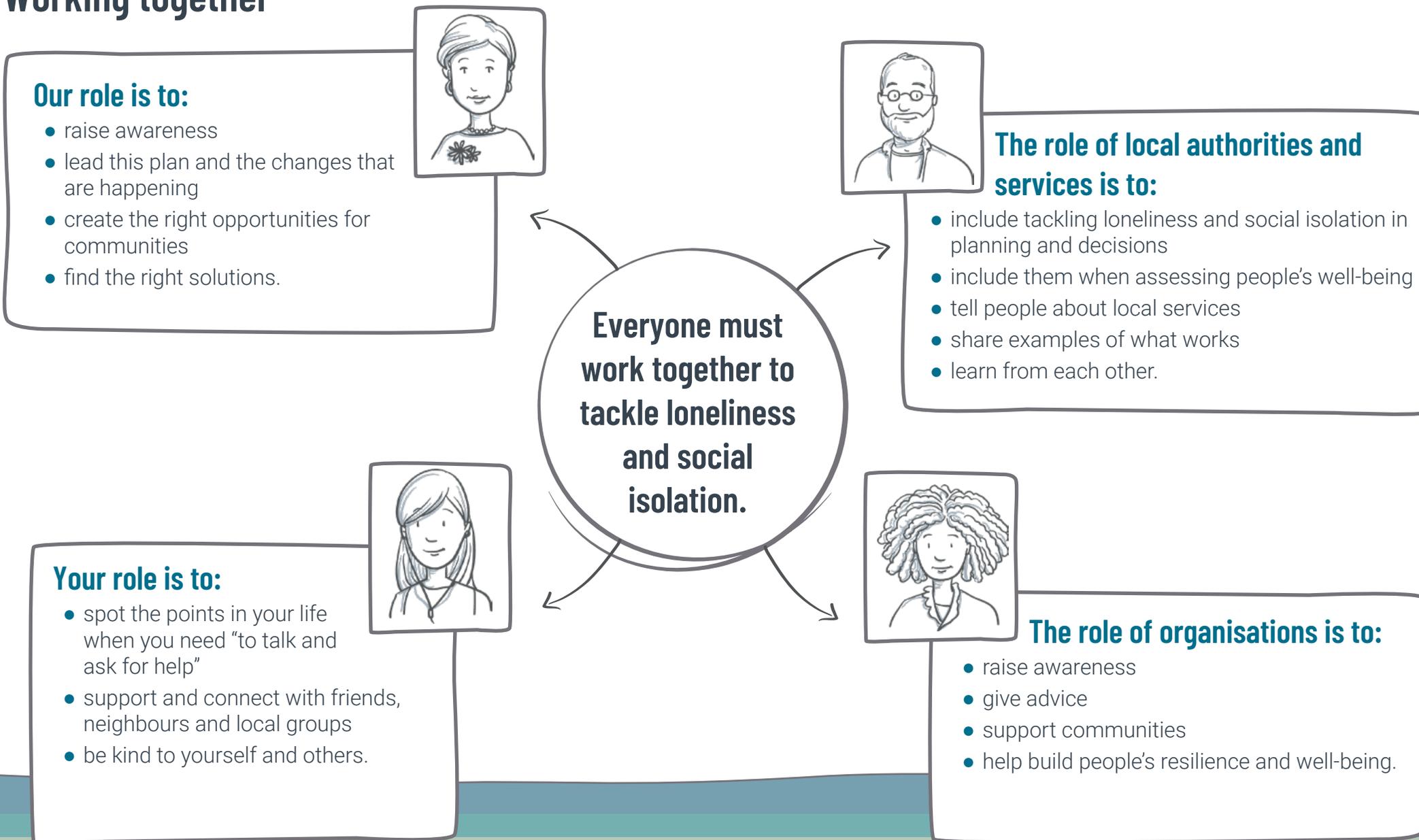
**'Good relationships keep us happier and healthier'**

**Robert Waldinger**

(Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School)



# Working together

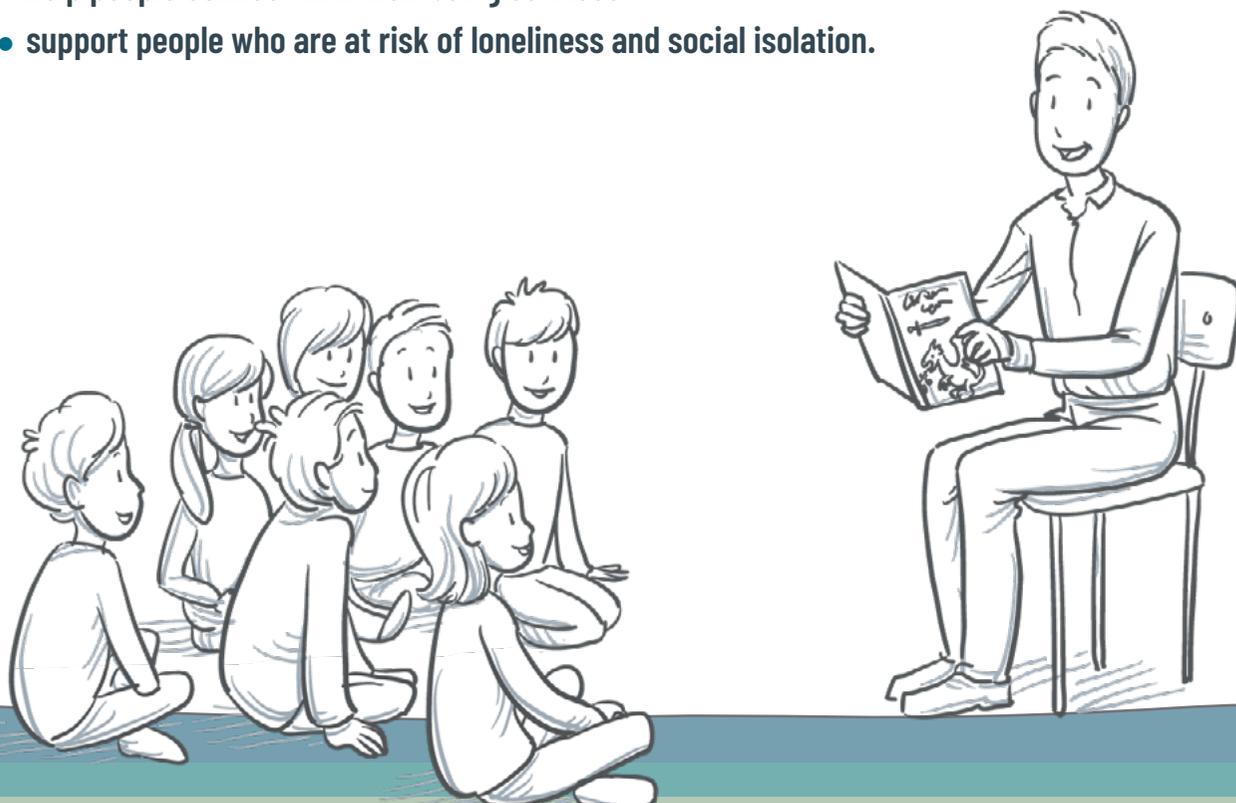


# What we will focus on

## **PRIORITY 1:** We want more opportunities for people to connect.

We will:

- promote opportunities for sports and physical activities
- promote opportunities to volunteer
- help people connect through culture, heritage and other arts programmes
- support people to use tech and the internet for their well-being
- help people connect with well-being services
- support people who are at risk of loneliness and social isolation.



### **We'll do this by:**

- working with the Welsh Physical Activity Partnership (WPAP)
- working with Sport Wales and Sport Wales' School programme
- making sure loneliness and social isolation are considered when funding volunteering
- having programmes like Fusion so people take part in culture and heritage activities
- working with the Arts Council of Wales
- supporting projects that improve people's IT skills
- promoting DEWIS Cymru to community services.

## **PRIORITY 2: We want good quality transport, community spaces and internet that help people connect.**

We will:

- **improve transport systems**
- **make the most of digital technology**
- **make better use of community spaces.**

### **We'll do this by:**

- exploring how to run better transport services
- giving free rail travel for under 16's travelling with a paying parent or guardian
- working with communities to find out what stops people using rail services
- having 20mph zones in built up areas
- having new pavement parking rules
- improving internet and mobile networks
- having new resources about social media, loneliness and social isolation
- improving how we plan new housing and community spaces
- involving communities in planning their spaces
- having new resources for schools to help children and young people connect to their communities.



## **PRIORITY 3: We want safe, strong, healthy and supportive communities.**

We will:

- **develop communities where people can take part, have a say and connect with each other**
- **get health and social care services to work with communities to improve well-being**
- **tackle poverty.**

### **We'll do this by:**

- growing the Community Cohesion Programme so small teams can work with more people
- supporting Community Hubs to grow
- working with Public Health Wales
- making sure health and social care services support people in the right ways
- giving people with long-term health conditions information and skills to stay connected
- training staff in services to spot loneliness and social isolation and connect people to help
- working with Care Inspectorate Wales to include loneliness and social isolation in how they check care homes
- using funding programmes better to help children living in poverty.



## PRIORITY 4: We want to raise awareness of loneliness and social isolation and positive ways of dealing with it.

We will:

- start a conversation in Wales about mental well-being
- support children and young people to have meaningful connections
- support good mental health, well-being and resilience.



### We'll do this by:

- explaining how important it is to connect with others
- making sure schools include loneliness and social isolation when checking well-being
- developing guidance through the Wales Network of Healthy Schools Scheme
- funding the **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)** Support Hubs
- funding the development of trauma and ACE services
- setting up systems to spot and support young people at risk of loneliness or social isolation
- developing a guide for businesses on supporting employees.

**i** **ACEs** can have negative, lasting effects on health and well-being. It may be physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, living in a home with domestic abuse or addiction.

## Building for the Future

This is a long-term challenge. This strategy is only a first step.

We want to learn as much as we can. Over the next three years we will put another £1.4 million into a **Loneliness and Social Isolation Fund**.

It will support projects that:

- explore new ways to tackle these problems
- collect evidence to increase our knowledge
- help us discover what works best.

We will set up an advisory group to check this strategy is working and write a report every two years.

## Thanks for reading this

You can read more about this strategy here:

[gov.wales/loneliness-and-social-isolation-connected-communities](https://gov.wales/loneliness-and-social-isolation-connected-communities)

