



Our plan for helping people who are lonely and find it difficult to meet other people



This document was written by **Welsh Government**. It is an easy read version of 'A strategy for tackling loneliness and social isolation and building stronger connections'.

February 2020

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.



Words in **bold blue writing** may be hard to understand. They have been explained in a box below the word.

If the hard word is used again it is in **normal blue writing**. You can check what all the words in blue mean on **page 32**.



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Where the document says **we**, this means the **Welsh Government**. For more information contact:



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

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Introduction



This is our first plan to help stop people from being lonely and **socially isolated**.

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.



Last year we asked people what they thought about our ideas for dealing with these issues.



This plan says what we are now going to do.



Anyone can be lonely or **socially isolated**.



We know that when people are lonely and **socially isolated** it can affect their health and **well-being**.

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



So, it is really important to help stop people from being lonely or **socially isolated**.



We are giving nearly 1 and a half million pounds to help us better understand these issues.



Thank you to everyone that took part and had a say in this work.



This plan is just the start of making a difference to these important issues.



Julie Morgan
Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services

What we want to do

We are learning more and more about how loneliness and **social isolation** can affect:

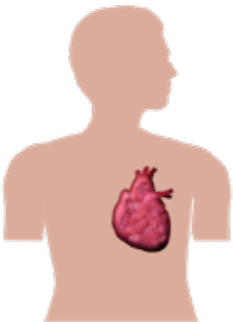


- our bodies



- our minds.

For example, people who are lonely or **socially isolated** may be more at risk of:



- Heart problems.



- Sleep problems.



- Poor mental health. This is when you are not feeling well in your mind and thoughts.



It is really important for us to have relationships with:

- family and friends



- neighbours and people we work with.



This can help with our [well-being](#).



We want people to know that there are times when we can all feel lonely or [socially isolated](#).

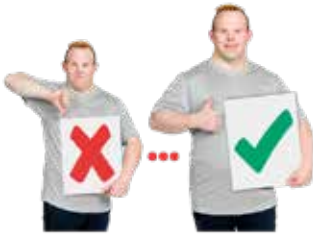


For example, when we start a new job or if a relationship ends.



But it is ok to ask for help.

In this plan we look at ways to:



- Lower the risk of becoming lonely or **socially isolated**.



- Stop people from being lonely or **socially isolated** for a long time.



- Help people early on, before it becomes a big problem.



- Help people to understand these issues better. And to cope with loneliness and **social isolation**.



We need to make sure that the right help and support is available for people.



We know that the Welsh Government cannot solve these problems alone. We all need to work together to make a difference.

Our 4 main goals

We want:



1. More chances for people to connect

When we **connect** with other people it means we have people close to us who help us feel loved, supported and cared for.



2. More services in communities



3. Strong communities where people support each other



4. People to understand these issues better



1. More chances for people to connect



It is really important that we are able to **connect** with other people.



Being part of a community can help improve people's **connections**.



We want there to be more chances for people to **connect** with each other.

Sports and physical activity



This is a really good way of helping people to **connect** with others.



It is also really good for our physical health and our mental health.



We need to make sure it is easier for people to become more active. For example, by making sure there are enough **accessible** places for people to walk or cycle.



Accessible means something can be used by lots of people, even if they have different needs.



We are working with other organisations to help people be more active.



And we are putting a lot of money into this work.

Volunteering

Volunteering helps:

- people feel more connected to others





- people learn new skills.



Other people can also benefit from the work the volunteer does.



Culture and the arts

Culture and the arts mean things like the theatre, concerts, music and crafts.



There are lots of activities in Wales for people to go and see or get involved in.



They give us the chance to have fun and learn. And can help us make good social [connections](#).



We will work with the **Arts Council of Wales** to help people learn about how the arts can help with [well-being](#).



The **Arts Council of Wales** is going to look at how the arts can be used for **social prescribing**.



Social prescribing means telling people about services in the community that can help with their **well-being**.

Digital inclusion



Digital inclusion means making sure all groups of people have the chance to use things like computers and the internet.



Using computers and the internet cannot replace being around people.



However, they can be a useful way of talking to other people. And finding out what activities are going on. It is also a good way for people to find help and support.

Community services



There are lots of services in communities that can help lower loneliness and **social isolation**.



It is really important to make sure people know what they are.



There is a website that tells people about services that may help them. It is called **DEWIS Cymru**.



There is also an **app** that helps people find support and advice. It is called **Health and Well-being Wales**.



App stands for **application**. It is a piece of software on a phone or tablet. It helps people use things like social media.

Well-being services



Some people who are lonely or **socially isolated** may need support to **connect** with others.



Organisations that offer **social prescribing** can help with this. They can tell people about services and activities that can help with a lot of different things.

Supporting people most at risk



Some groups of people are at a higher risk of being lonely or **socially isolated** like:

- Older people.



- Unpaid carers.



- People who have left the Armed Forces – the army, navy or air force, and their families.



- Disabled people.



- Children and young people.



We are making sure we carry out work to support these groups of people. This work is also covered in some of our other plans.



2. Having more services in the community



It is really important that there are good services in the community to help people **connect**.

Transport



People need good public transport to be able to visit other people.



We want to make public transport services in Wales better.



And we want more people to use public transport.



Public transport also needs to be **accessible**.



We are going to put £200 million into improving things like toilets and waiting rooms in rail stations in Wales.



And we have spent £25 million on making buses more **accessible** in Wales.



We are going to find out more about what public transport people need.

The internet and mobile phones



We are putting more money into making sure people can use the internet and mobile phones.



This is through improving **broadband** in Wales. **Broadband** is a way to get very fast internet.



We are also making sure mobile phone signal is better.



And we are doing a lot of work to help make sure young people are safe when using the internet.

Housing



When people feel safe where they live it can help them feel less lonely or **socially isolated**.



People need to live in the right home for their needs to help them be independent.



We are putting a lot of money into making sure people live in the right housing.



This money will also be used to make sure there are community services near to where people live.



And we will make sure people get housing support who need it.



Community spaces

Places to meet in the community allow people to enjoy time together and share hobbies.



Schools are an important part of communities.



Schools can be used for other activities that everyone can benefit from. For example, sports and training.



We are giving money to schools to improve services in the community.



We also want there to be more green spaces, like parks.



We know green spaces are good for people's mental health.

3. Helping build strong communities



To build strong communities people need to:

- have the chance to work together
- feel safe about getting involved in their community
- be treated fairly and equally.



Communities working together



We are paying for small teams across areas of Wales to work with communities. And find out what problems people are having.



We are doing work to make sure people are treated fairly and equally.



1 way we are supporting communities is through **Community Hubs**.



Community Hubs are places people can go to get support. And get together.



We set up a group to look at what **Community Hubs** need to offer people. We asked people what they think.



Some areas in Wales already have **Community Hubs**.

Health and social care services working together



Good services that meet people's needs are really important for our health.



We want services to listen to what people want and put them first.



We have training called the **Education Programmes for Patients**. This helps people with health problems learn how to look after their health and **well-being**.



We want staff working in health and social care to have more training to help them understand loneliness and **social isolation**.



We are also putting a lot of money into supporting people who have the most needs.

Helping people who do not have much money



When people do not have much money they often cannot afford to pay for activities. Or things like bus tickets and transport to get places.



This can make them more likely to be lonely or **socially isolated**.



We have a plan to help support families who do not have very much money. For example, by helping parents learn new skills that can help them get jobs.



4. Helping people better understand these issues



Many people find it difficult to say they are lonely or **socially isolated**.



We want to help people understand what loneliness and **social isolation** is. And to help them talk about it more.



We want people to understand more about how important being **connected** to people around us is for our **well-being**.



And that when people support each other it can make a huge difference.

Supporting children and young people



Many children and young people say they feel lonely or **socially isolated**.



Work is being done to help schools look after the mental health and **well-being** of children.



This work will also look into loneliness and **social isolation**.



Sometimes children are not allowed to go to school. For example, because they have a disability which affects how they behave. This can make them feel lonely or **socially isolated**.



Work is being done to help children go to school. And to stop children being left out.



We also have a plan for young people. To help them understand their needs. And feel **connected** to their community in a way that is right for them.

Supporting good mental health and well-being



Loneliness and [social isolation](#) can lead to poor mental health. No matter what age you are.



We have a plan to help the mental health of everyone in Wales.



Some of this plan is about using [social prescribing](#) to help improve mental health and [well-being](#).



We are also going to give more support to people with **dementia**. This is a condition that affects the brain. Many people with dementia feel lonely.



Work

We are going to write a guide for businesses to help their staff.



This is because many people in work say they can feel lonely or **socially isolated**.



This may be because more people work from home now.

People of all ages working together



We have found that when people of different ages do activities together it can help lower loneliness and **social isolation**.



It can also help people feel more part of their community. And help people to learn about different age groups.



We will talk to organisations in Wales about doing more of this type of work.

What happens next?



This is the first step in trying to lower loneliness and **social isolation**.



There is lots of good work going on in Wales already to help with these issues.



We want to learn from them. We will work with other organisations and groups to help us do this.



We want all parts of the Welsh Government to think about these issues. And do something about them.



We will put a group together to check the work we are doing.



We will write a report every 2 years to show what work has been happening.



We will find out if people's **well-being** is improving. We will do this through a survey called **National Survey for Wales**.



And we will find out how young people are doing through a survey called the **Student Health and Well-being Survey**.



We want to learn more about loneliness and **social isolation**. We will have money to help us do this over the next 3 years.



We will also carry out checks about the work we have said we will do in this plan.

Hard words

Accessible

Accessible means they can be used by lots of people, even if they have different needs.

App

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Connect

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Culture & the arts

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Social isolation

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Social prescribing

Social prescribing means telling people about services in the community that can help with their well-being.

Well-being

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