Tackling Loneliness and Social Isolation

A Welsh Government Consultation

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Introduction

The Welsh Government know that loneliness and isolation are problems in Wales.

They affect people's **mental health** and **physical health**. They can happen to people of all ages including children and young people.

This booklet tells you about some of the things we are doing to deal with loneliness and isolation

We want to know what you think about these problems and what else can be done to help.

Our Vision

We want everyone in Wales to have the best health, well-being and quality of life.

Loneliness and isolation are problems. Tackling them is an important part of our planning.

Prosperity for All is our strategy to grow the economy in Wales. It also aims to improve well-being and reduce isolation and loneliness.

Loneliness and Isolation

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.

Isolation is about not having enough contact with people in life.

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

1 How would you describe loneliness?

How would you describe isolation?

Why is this a problem?

Loneliness and isolation can cause:

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

20% of 16-24 year olds were lonely

10% of people aged 75 or over were lonely

The National Survey 2016-17

4,636 **Counselling sessions** for loneliness by Childline in 2017/18. ⬆**14%** from the year before.

Resilience

Anyone can face loneliness and isolation in their life. So, it's important people know how to be resilient.

Resilience is about coping and bouncing back when tough things happen. Mental and emotional resilience are about:

- habits
- attitudes
- connections.

Our role

We want communities to help each other more so they don't face loneliness and isolation.

But, we can't do this without help.

Everyone needs to work together to solve these problems.

3 What would help communities be more resilient?

2 What would help young people understand what triggers loneliness or isolation?

How can we help people be more mentally and emotionally resilient?

What we're already doing

Schools

Schools are a big part of life for children and young people. As well as teaching, they support well-being. They also help stop loneliness and social isolation.

> Many children and young people report feelings of loneliness and social isolation. This impacts their mental health and their ability to do well at school.

So, we set up a new **Joint Ministerial Task and Finish Group**. They will look at:
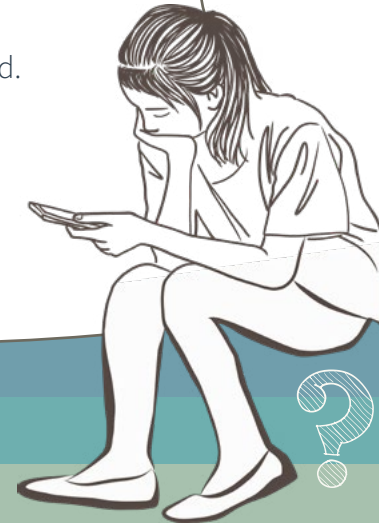
- what schools already do to help stop this problem
- ways to make mental health and well-being skills central to how schools work and school life.

We know some children face problems at home – broken family relationships, neglect, or domestic abuse. This can make children feel more lonely and isolated. We want to help these children more, so they can build resilience.

4 How can we help pupils learn skills to make better connections and stop isolation?

5 How can we make sure schools support pupils better?

Transport

Having the right, safe transport so people can get out and meet friends is important. Being able to walk safely in your community is also important.

We're putting more money into transport including making new pathways and cycling routes.

6 What else can we do when planning our communities to stop loneliness and isolation?

Technology

Technology and the internet are a growing part of life and connecting with friends.

It's important that everyone has the skills to benefit from technology but stay safe.

The internet has lots of positives, but also many negatives. It can make people feel:

- lonely
- bad about how they look
- bad about their lives
- anxious or depressed
- isolated.

It can also lead to bullying, harassment and social pressure. It can be very hard for parents, teachers or others to notice when someone is having problems. But, we want to make sure everyone has the support they need.

7 How can we make sure people can use technology and be safe?

Social care and health

Social care helps people stay independent and in their own home and community for longer.

It helps with everyday tasks like washing, cooking and shopping. But it also stops people feeling lonely and isolated.

8 Have social care services ever helped you?

Yes   No

If yes, have they made you feel less lonely and isolated?

9 What else could social care do to stop people feeling lonely and isolated?

Being active

Being active helps people stay healthy. It also gives people the opportunity to make friends and join groups.

We are working with **Sport Wales** and **Public Health Wales** to give children and young people opportunities to be active and join a group. There's a **Healthy and Active Fund** to help us do this.

Mental Health

Loneliness and isolation are bad for people's mental health.

We have a plan called **Together for Mental Health**. Its aim is to improve well-being and reduce loneliness and isolation.

It set out ways for services and health services to work together. It has new ways for GPs, nurses, pharmacists, paramedics, social workers and others to support people. It also helps services spot when young people may be lonely or isolated.

10 What else can we do to help children and young people be active and get involved in local groups?

11 What other ways can health services reduce loneliness and social isolation?

Poverty

Poverty is a problem. It affects lots of areas in people's lives.

Poverty is not having enough money to pay for everyday things like food, clothes and heating.

When children live in poverty it can affect their health, education and well-being. It can also mean they feel lonely and isolated from others.

We have a **Child Poverty Strategy** that aims to stop child poverty in Wales. It focuses on:

- children living in homes where no one is in work
- increasing the skills of parents
- creating a strong economy
- creating more well-paid jobs
- increasing household income.

Rural area

People who live in villages and rural areas are more likely to feel lonely and isolated.
This can be because there are:

- less local activities
- less transport links
- fewer opportunities to be social.

People in towns can also be lonely and isolated, when public transport is difficult.

13 What can we do to support communities so people don't face loneliness and isolation?

12 What else can we do to support people who face poverty, loneliness and isolation?

Going forward – making a difference

Dealing with loneliness and isolation is difficult. It will take time.

It affects people in different ways at different points in their lives.

We want to make sure people get the support they need when they need it.

Stepping in quickly stops things getting worse. It's also costs less than picking up the pieces – and it's much better for the person too.

This **Tackling Loneliness and Social Isolation Strategy** will help us do this.

We want to make sure each step we take will reduce the risk of loneliness and isolation. We want them to make a real difference in people's lives.

14 Do you think this is the right way forward?
Yes   No   Why?

15 Are there any projects or services that have helped you deal with loneliness and isolation?

Measuring results

We need to know our plans make a difference in people's lives.

The Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 is a law. It means we must make sure the decisions we make, support people now and in the future. It says Welsh Ministers must show how they are reaching the seven well-being goals.

The National Survey asks people how they feel about these statements:
- I experience a general sense of emptiness.
- I miss having people around.
- I often feel rejected.
- There are plenty of people I can rely on when I have problems.
- There are many people I can trust completely.
- There are enough people I feel close to.

We can use this to see if loneliness and isolation is improving or getting worse.

16 Are there other ways we could measure loneliness and isolation?

Thanks for reading this

Please answer the questions and send it to us at:

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

Email: lonelinessandisolation@gov.wales

by **15 January 2019**

Your information

Anything you send us will only be seen by Welsh Government staff and your details won't be published. This is under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).