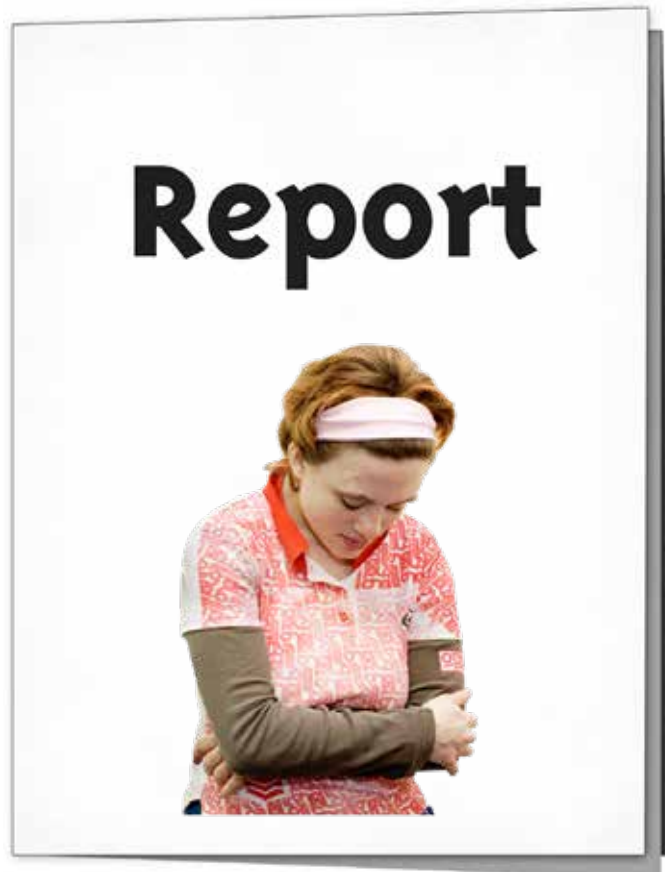




# Helping people who are lonely and find it difficult to meet other people

## What people said



This is an easy read version of Welsh Government's summary of responses for their consultation called **Connected Communities: Tackling Loneliness and Social isolation.**

May 2019



# 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 hard to understand. They are in **bold blue writing**. 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 it means on page 40.



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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# What this document is about

This document is about the answers people gave us to our questions in:



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



The questions were 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.



Loneliness and **social isolation** can cause people a lot of health problems. And the health problems cost a lot of money.



We want to do more to help people who are lonely or **socially isolated**. We will use the answers to help us do this.

# What people said

## Question 1

**Do you agree with how we described loneliness and social isolation?**



234 people answered this question. 159 people said they liked how we described loneliness and **social isolation**. People said:



- How we described loneliness and **social isolation** was too difficult. And we should say what loneliness and **social isolation** mean in the easy read and young people's documents too.



- Making sure people have more contact with others does not mean they will be less lonely or **socially isolated**. It is not just how many people we know. It is how good the relationships are that is important.



- We should think about the way that loneliness and **social isolation** are described in England and Scotland. And about how the **Office of National Statistics** describes loneliness to see if the number of people who feel lonely changes over time.

## Question 2

**How can we help people understand what causes loneliness and social isolation? And how can we help people do things to stop them being lonely or socially isolated?**

There were 181 answers to this question. People said:



- Work should be done to help people know about loneliness and **social isolation**. This should focus on how people can find out about activities and services.



- We need to make sure people know what causes loneliness and **social isolation**. And know what they can do about it. And can use services and understand information they are given.



- We should offer people training about loneliness and **social isolation**. Like the **Making Every Contact Count (MECC)** online training.



- Schools are important. They can help teach children skills for dealing with their feelings.



- Schools should help children to feel safe and comfortable enough to talk about their feelings.



- More should be done in schools to deal with bullying to stop children becoming lonely or **socially isolated** as adults.



- But most people said work needs to happen in all areas of life. Not just in school.



- Work should be done to help families have good relationships. And to help everyone work together in their community.



- Volunteering can help people feel more confident. And often people find it easier to get help from someone who is a volunteer.



- Health services could do more to help. Because health staff are likely to see lots of people at risk of loneliness and **social isolation**. So they need to know how to tell when someone is lonely or **socially isolated**. And know what services are available to help people. There needs to be training for health and social care staff on this.

## Question 3

What can the Welsh Government do to help communities make sure people are not lonely or socially isolated?

195 people answered this question. People said:



- We should employ people to work in communities to help make them stronger. And we should support **Community Hubs** that help people get support to find and use services.



- We should improve information so that everyone knows where they can go to find out about services in their area.



- We need to have better public transport. And we should give money to improve **Community Transport** projects.



- We should give more money to organisations that do work in the community.





- People must be able to use their phones and the internet. Especially people who live in the countryside where it can sometimes be more difficult.



- We need to know what people need in every area of Wales.



- Loneliness and **social isolation** should be thought about across all areas of government. Including housing and transport. We should have a **Communities Commissioner** who would lead on this work for the whole country.

## Question 4

How can we make sure children and young people have good relationships?

168 people answered this question. People said:



- Schools and colleges are really important and must do more. They must help children understand their feelings. And have good **mental health** and **well-being**.



**Mental health** is 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.



Children should feel confident to ask for help. And they should be given support when they change schools.



- We should support parents to help their children feel strong and confident about their feelings. And organisations that work with children could do more to help with this too.



- We need to make sure children can have hobbies and interests. Especially children leaving care.



- We need to make sure there are parks that children and young people want to go to. They should be near community centres so that everyone in the community can be together in the same place.

## Question 5

**How can we make sure schools support children and young people who are lonely or socially isolated?**

163 people answered this question. People said:



- Schools are able to easily check if children and families are at risk of being lonely or **socially isolated**. And getting support early will help children for the rest of their lives.



- People who work in schools need training about loneliness and **social isolation**. For example teachers, teaching assistants and school nurses. But because school staff already have so much work to do we should pay for people to help with loneliness and **social isolation** issues.



- People should be able to volunteer in schools as mentors and to support children. This should be backed up in school **policies**.



**Policies** are written documents that say the rules about how we do things.



- Schools cannot do it alone. They should work with charities that run activities that help children with social skills.



- We need to make sure we know which children are young carers. We could use the **Carers Trust Wales young carers passport scheme**. We must also think about children who are taught at home, are disabled or have to travel a long way to school. And make sure they have the chance to meet other children. And their parents can meet other parents.

## Question 6

**What can housing organisations do to help stop loneliness and social isolation? And what can Welsh Government do to support housing organisations with this?**

195 people answered this question. People said:



- When houses are being planned we must think about what the community will be like. For example there must be good buses or trains. Good community services and places to meet. And the streets and things like lighting and buildings must be set out well and look nice.



- People should be asked their views about what new communities should look like. And we must make sure the law says these things must be thought about when planning new homes.



- There should be different types of homes that meet the different needs of people. And they must be made to a high standard.



- It should be made easier for older people to move to a smaller house in their community if they need to. And we should help with the costs of moving. This would help free up larger houses for younger families.



- There should be more homes that meet the needs of disabled people. We should do more to make this happen. For example by saying how many should be built. And making it easier to get grants to make changes to homes.



- We need to think about supported housing. And how we help people stay in their homes as they get older and still be a part of their community. There are lots of ways we could do this. For example shared housing and creating spaces for older people to meet that everyone can go to



- Housing organisations already do a lot of work to support people they work with. But they could do more. For example have more staff to work in the community. Run more projects and groups. Make sure people live in places that they already know and have links to. Train staff about loneliness and **social isolation** so they can support people at risk. And ask groups about what kind of houses they want to live in. Especially care leavers and people with learning disabilities. We also need to make sure private landlords help with these issues.



- We need to do more work to stop people becoming homeless.

## Question 7

### What can the Welsh Government do to make public transport better?

148 people answered this question. People said:



- It is really important that there is enough public transport for people. Especially for people who live in the countryside. It should be cheap enough for people to use.



- Bus services need to be better. And there should be better information for everyone. Including for people with sight or hearing loss. Staff should be able to communicate with people who have different needs. And should be able to give more help to people getting on and off transport.



- Welsh Government should do more to support **Community Transport**. We should include taxis and other types of transport in plans to make it easier for everyone to get around. And also think about how we can support walking and cycling. And improve the way free bus passes are used. And how all this links together.



- The free bus pass for people who are 60 or over should carry on. And it could also be offered to young people leaving care.

## Question 8

What can we do to help more people use computers and the internet? And how can we make sure people can use the internet safely?

154 people answered this question. People said:



- We need to make sure every area of Wales can get good internet. And give more support to people of all ages to safely use the internet and computers.



- There should be more libraries with computers and the internet.



- People who do not have much money should be offered a free **tablet**.



A **tablet** is like a small computer.



- Older people should be given more help to use computers and the internet. Young people could help with this through schools. Everyone should be able to stay safe online and there should be better information and websites for disabled people.





- We need to make sure the way we use computers helps us have good relationships. And does not replace face to face contact.



- Not everyone wants to learn to use a computer so we should not lose face to face contact.

## Question 9

**Can you tell us about any ways that social services have tried to help people who are lonely or socially isolated?**

And

## Question 10

**What can social care services do to help stop loneliness and social isolation?**

129 people answered question 9 and 185 people answered question 10. People said:



- Social care organisations can do a lot to help reduce loneliness and **social isolation**. But cuts to funding have made this more difficult.



- Social care staff need to understand loneliness and **social isolation** better. And know more about what services can help.



- More needs to be done to check people are happy with how they are treated by services. And more needs to be done to help people use **Direct Payments**.



**Direct Payments** is when people get money to pay for services they need like health and social care.



- Organisations could work together more to help reduce loneliness and **social isolation**.



- Staff working in health and social care should be given enough time to support people. And there should be less changes to staff.



- Give more support to services that are for the good of the community. People should have more of a say about services. They should be controlled less by councils and other organisations.



- Give more support to carers. And to young people leaving care to help them stay in their local area.



- Information about services could be better. For example through the website **DEWIS Cymru**.



- There could be special staff to support people who are lonely or **socially isolated**.



- Day centres can help stop people from being lonely or **socially isolated**.

## Question 11

What can we do to get people who might be lonely or socially isolated to take part in local groups and do more exercise?

184 people answered this question. People said:



- There needs to be better and cheaper transport. **Community Transport** should be used where needed.



- Places need to be easy to get to. And the opening hours of venues need to be better.



- There needs to be more choices of activities. And they should be advertised better.



- People should be told more about the importance of exercise. And how loneliness and **social isolation** can affect health.



- Some people may need more support to use services.

- The **National Exercise Referral Scheme** should be used more. This is where a doctor refers a patient to use a gym to help with their health.



- Staff who work in exercise settings need to be trained to support disabled people more.



- There should be more plans for volunteers and support so people do not have to exercise alone.

## Question 12

**How can health services do more to help reduce loneliness and social isolation?**

195 people answered this question. People said:



- Doctors have said they see many patients who are lonely. They need more time to spend with patients.



- Doctor's surgeries could advertise activities. And charities and voluntary groups could run services to help reduce loneliness and **social isolation**. Doctors could refer people to these services.



- All health staff need to have training about **mental health** and loneliness and **social isolation**.



- Loneliness and **social isolation** could be checked during health assessments.



- Chemists and drivers delivering medication could do more to help people who are lonely or **socially isolated**.

## Question 13

**What can Welsh Government do to get more people to volunteer?**

196 people answered this question. People said:



- There should be lots of advertising across Wales about volunteering.



- **Time Credits** should be used more.

**Time Credits** are when people volunteer but are given something as a reward for their time.



- It should be easier for people to volunteer. For example, if they are getting benefits.



- Volunteering should be used to help people get a paid job.



- Employers should help the people that work for them to volunteer if they want to.



- Some people thought volunteering was not helpful to people.

## Question 14

**What can charities and community groups do to help reduce loneliness and social isolation? And how can the Welsh Government help them?**

197 people answered this question. People said:



- A lot of people said charities are the main way people who are lonely or **socially isolated** are supported.



- A lot of people said more funding was needed for charities. And the funding must last a long time.



- Services need to work together more. And know about other services so there are not 2 the same.



- People need to know about the **DEWIS Cymru** website and what it is for and use it more.



## Question 15

What can employers do to help reduce loneliness and social isolation?

153 people answered this question. People said:



- They should do more to follow the **Equality Act 2010** so staff feel more supported and then they will work harder.



- Employers should do more to support the **mental health** of their staff. And do more to support good **well-being**. For example, by letting staff work different hours and work from home. Managers and staff should have training on this.



- Employers should do more work in the community and with other organisations. Staff should be supported to become volunteers or get involved with **Time Credits**.



- There should be more support for people who are retiring.

## Question 16

What can Welsh Government do to help people who are lonely or socially isolated because of poverty?



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

143 people answered this question. People said:



- Changes to benefits have affected people in a bad way. People need more support through charities. There should be more funding to help reduce loneliness and **social isolation**.



- People should be given more support to know about their rights and help with their money. For example through the organisation **Citizens Advice Bureau**.



- **Time Credits** should be used more across Wales.



- Public transport should be better and cheaper.



- More activities should be available and cheaper.



- More money should be given to poor areas of Wales.

## Question 17

**What else can we do to make communities stronger? And support communities to help stop people becoming lonely or socially isolated?**

157 people answered this question. People said:



- More support should be given to communities to help make them stronger.



- Projects should keep getting funding and support. And more funding should be given to community groups to try out new ideas.



- People were worried about **Communities First** closing.



- Organisations that give services should show how they make a difference to communities.



- Community groups, local organisations and people know most about what their community needs. They must be asked to have an equal say in what has to be done.



- Buildings like schools and pubs should be used more for the good of the community. More work should be done to stop buildings being closed.



- We need to think about the skills people have that can help others. Sometimes we only think of people's problems.



- A lot of people said they liked the work done by the **British Red Cross** and **Local Area Coordination** to help people get services or support in their communities.



- There should be more funding to help people learn new skills and train.

## Question 18

**Do you agree with our plans? If not what do you think we should do?**

138 people answered this question. People said:



- Overall most people agreed with our plans.



- We need to make sure there is enough money and support from across Welsh Government to carry out our plans. There should be a special group to check the plan is happening.



- Groups in charge of work in the community should have clear job roles to help make our plans happen.



- We should focus on supporting communities to help themselves. And focus on making our communities kind and caring. Our plans should meet the needs of everyone.



- We should write about people's experiences of loneliness and how they have been supported in our final plan. People's experiences are really important.

## Question 19

**Do you know of any other work being done in Wales that has helped people who are lonely or socially isolated?**

133 people answered this question. People said:



- People talked about local clubs and groups and other activities happening in Wales.



- Some people said they did not know what services were available.



- More communities should work with each other and share skills and knowledge.



- More money should be given so services can last.

## Question 20

Do you know of other ways we can learn more about how many people are lonely or socially isolated?

174 people answered this question. People said:



- Not everyone knows they are lonely or **socially isolated**.



- We need to think about the background people have. For example, are they from another country or are they an older person?



- Doctors could collect more information about people so we can find out how many people are lonely or **socially isolated**.



- Some information has already been given about loneliness and **social isolation**. For example by the **Office of National Statistics**.

## Question 21

Do you think our plans will be good for people who speak Welsh?

And

## Question 22

How could we make sure our plans are good for people who speak Welsh?

171 people answered question 20 and 123 people answered question 21. People said:



- A lot of people said yes our plans will be good for people who speak Welsh.



- Services that support people with loneliness and **social isolation** must be in English and Welsh. More support could be given to Welsh language organisations.



- More health and social care staff need to speak Welsh. It is important to talk to people in the language they prefer.



- There should be more Welsh language classes in communities. Welsh lessons should be free or cost less.



- People who speak Welsh should have the same chances to get involved with services and plans as people who speak English.



## Question 23

If you have anything else you would like to tell us about loneliness and social isolation in Wales, please tell us.

46 people answered this question. People said:



- How can we spot and support people who are very lonely and **socially isolated**?



- **Public Services Boards** could do more to help deal with loneliness and **social isolation**.

**Public Services Boards** are organisations like councils and the **NHS** working together in a local area.



- We should make it easier for people to get around. And have more and better public spaces.



- We should check services work well.

# What people said at events in Wales

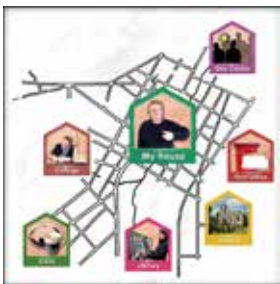
**We also held events across Wales to ask people for their views. People said:**



- Councils need to make sure there are enough safe places for people to meet and use. And we must have public toilets.



- We need to help keep services like banks, schools and post offices open.



- New housing must have good services for people. For example, a shop, a park and bus routes.



- Use **technology** to help deal with loneliness and **social isolation**.

**Technology** could be things like computers or mobile phones.



- Organisations need to work together. Funding should be shared more between community services. And information should be shared better.



- Public transport needs to be better. There needs to be more support to help people use public transport. And we should use more **Community Transport**. We could use school buses on evenings and weekends.



- Housing estates need to be safe and clean. And have places to meet. There must be enough housing for people with different needs. And better housing options for older people.



- There needs to be better supported housing. And better housing for young people leaving care.



- We need to help charities train more volunteers. And do more to support volunteering. Employers should support staff to volunteer.



- There should be more courses in sport and volunteering. And **Time Credits** should be used more for food, clothes and social activities.



- Schools should teach children about loneliness and **social isolation**. And work with people in the community to help teach children new skills.



- There should be groups where families can learn new skills. And children need to be taught how to understand their feelings and talk about them early on.



- Teachers need to learn skills for dealing with difficult problems. And there should be less pressure on children to be the best in schools.



- We should make sure people understand we can all make a difference to loneliness and **social isolation**.



- Councils need to support communities to do more.



- Young people should have more hobbies. And have safe places to meet.



- We need to worry less about paperwork and rules.



- There should be a big plan to talk about loneliness and **social isolation** across Wales. And help people think about how it affects their health.



- Organisations need to work together to make sure funding works in the best ways. Funding need to last into the future.

# What we will do next



Thank you to all the people who had a say.



We are going to decide what to do over the next few months. We are going to write a plan of what to do.



Most people like the ideas we have already had. We want to try and help people early on.



We want to help people understand loneliness and **social isolation** better and give people skills to help deal with it.



We want to make sure support is available for those people who really need it.



Our plans will affect lots of our other **policies** and plans.



We want to work with other organisations that will help people talk about loneliness and **social isolation** more.



We want people to understand the importance of relationships with other people. And give people more chances to spend time with other people.



Our plan will talk about how we will work with other organisations to help deal with loneliness and **social isolation**.



The plan will talk about how we will make sure there are places for people to meet in the community. And for good public transport.



We will also think about how **technology** can help.



We will think about the importance of communities.



We will think about these things when new houses are built.



We will also try and learn more about loneliness and **social isolation**.

# Hard Words

## Direct Payments

Direct Payments is when people get money to pay for services they need like health and social care.

## Mental health

Mental health is how someone is feeling in their mind.

## Policies

Policies are written documents that say the rules about how we do things.

## Poverty

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

## Public Service Boards

Public Service Boards are organisations like councils and the NHS working together in a local area.

## 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.

## Tablet

A tablet is like a small computer.

## Technology

Technology could be things like computers or mobile phones.

## Time Credits

Time Credits are when people volunteer but are given something as a reward for their time.

## Well-being

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