



**National Assembly for Wales Inquiry into Loneliness and Isolation -
 Response from Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Regional Partnership Board**

1. The Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Regional Partnership Board includes representation from the two local authorities, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, WAST, third sector providers and carer representatives.
2. The Board recognises that as our population is increasingly ageing, more and older people are dealing with loneliness and isolation across our region. However, we also recognise that it isn't just older people who are dealing with this issue. Our response to this inquiry will provide some evidence from some of the services that operate across Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan.

The evidence for the scale and causes of the problems of isolation and loneliness, including factors such as housing, transport, community facilities, health and wellbeing services:

3. Tackling social isolation and loneliness – across our population, but especially older people - has been identified as one of the key themes in the Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Population Needs Assessment which will be published by 31st March 2017.
4. A Local Government Association report, Combating Loneliness¹, published in January 2013 lists a number of potential risk factors for loneliness, including:
 - living alone
 - poor health
 - being aged 80+
 - loss of friends
 - having no access to a car/ never using public transport. in Wales, two-thirds of single pensioners have no car, and so reliable local transport is extremely important as people get older²
 - living in rented accommodation
 - living on low income or on benefits as main income
 - having no access to a telephone
5. There is significant anecdotal feedback from the City of Cardiff Council's case management teams that the older people that they are supporting are reporting that loneliness is a significant issue for them. It also appears that the higher the level of need/ disability, the more loneliness is a factor for them.
6. It is not just older people who are affected by loneliness. It is also an issue for younger people with disabilities, especially where they lack opportunities to engage with their

¹ Local Government Association (2013) Combating Loneliness: A guide for local authorities. Available at: <http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/7632544/L15-431+Combating+loneliness+-+a+guide+for+local+authorities/b4b88757-2623-4696-ae04-565892a58909> [accessed 23/02/17]

² Older People's Commissioner for Wales(2013) "A Thousand Little Barriers"
http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/Libraries/Uploads/A_Thousand_Little_Barriers_1.sflb.ashx [accessed 14/02/17]

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 can often feel isolated from their peers and sometimes reluctant to tell others about their situation, for example teachers, which can lead to isolation and not receiving the support they need³.

7. Parents can be affected by loneliness, with a survey by Action for Children in 2015 finding that nearly a quarter felt lonely and cut off from friends and other sources of support.
8. Poor access to appropriate transport is reported as a major contributing factor to increasing people's isolation and sense of loneliness. Even within urban areas it can be difficult due to poor mobility or disabilities, or too far for people to get to a bus or train station. In rural areas the problem is even more apparent. Some individuals have reported through the case management teams that they have experienced a lack of understanding/consideration on the part of bus drivers of their needs which adds to their reticence about using public transport. Although there are voluntary transport schemes, these are limited and often oversubscribed, and have to be booked in advance. This can be a real problem for older people, especially if they have memory issues. A recent survey by Age Connects Cardiff and the Vale found that older people cited lack of transport as one of the barriers to being able to access services.
9. The survey carried out by Age Connects Cardiff and the Vale with 248 older people also highlighted other common issues which are contributing to loneliness and isolation:-
 - The overwhelming factor for making life better for older people is having regular contact with others, particularly of their own age
 - Lack of opportunities to get out and about
 - Transport was a key issue
 - Personal support and care for carers
 - Support to go out
 - Readily available information and advice services
 - Someone to turn to when help is needed
10. A particular contributory factor in Cardiff is its multicultural nature, as there is growing awareness of a kind of cultural loneliness, for example where people only speak their native language, and their religion makes it difficult for them to go to mixed groups.

The impact of loneliness and isolation on older people in terms of physical and mental health and wellbeing, including whether they disproportionately affect certain groups such as those with dementia;

11. Social isolation and loneliness for older people can be associated with both mental and physical health and wellbeing⁴. There can be an impact upon cognitive decline for some

³ Carers Trust (2013) Young Adult Carers at School: Experiences and Perceptions of Caring and Education. Available at: https://professionals.carers.org/sites/default/files/young_adult_carers_at_school-8_11_13-1_proof_4_final.pdf [accessed 09 Feb 2017]

⁴ Courtin E & Knapp M. (2015). Social isolation, loneliness and health in old age: a scoping review, *Health and Social Care in the Community*. Available at: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/hsc.12311/epdf> [Accessed: 15th Feb 2017]

Loneliness and isolation on mortality is comparable to the impact of well-known risk factors such as obesity, and has a similar influence as cigarette smoking.

The impact of loneliness and isolation on the use of public services, particularly health and social care;

12. Being isolated can impact upon older people's ability to access services, which can then impact upon their health and wellbeing. In Cardiff, the Independent Living Officer team has noted that many older people they support may come up against motivational barriers or concerns around leaving the house which can impact upon their ability or confidence to access services or activities which could help address their loneliness. The team make referrals to the Day Opportunities Team who will work with an older person to help them overcome these barriers.

Ways of addressing problems of loneliness and isolation in older people, including interventions to specifically address the problems and other projects with wider aims. Evidence for what works and the outcomes for older people in terms of health and wellbeing;

13. In Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan, a number of initiatives to address the problems of loneliness and isolation have been delivered by Age Connects Cardiff and the Vale. The 'Friendly AdvantAGE' programme – a partnership project comprising Glamorgan Voluntary Services, Cardiff Third Sector Council (C3SC), Age Connects Cardiff and the Vale, Scope Cymru and Dinas Powys Voluntary Concern – exists to reduce the social isolation and increase the confidence of older people in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. It does this in various ways by using a combination of staff and volunteers to befriend and reach out to isolated people and encourage them to become more involved with their families, friends and communities. The programme is essentially a project coordinating five 'local' befriending projects. In an evaluation of Friendly Advantage, of the people who said they were lonely at baseline, 84% said as a result of being involved in the project their social interaction and well-being had increased.
14. The Healthy and Active Partnership Programme delivered by Age Connects reported that over a 4 month reporting period of 86 clients, 78% of clients show an improvement in their experience of loneliness. This has been measured by using the Campaign to End Loneliness Measurement Tool. The Senior Health Shop provides older people with a place to go to meet others, gather information and take part in activities, and 82% of people say that attending has reduced their isolation or loneliness.
15. Extra Care schemes have proved an effective solution for many people to address loneliness and isolation; access to onsite care and support enables people to access activities and become involved. For older people who move to extra care housing, there is emerging evidence that social lives and relationships strengthen, consequently lowering the risk of

⁵ Campaign to end Loneliness <http://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/threat-to-health/> [accessed 13/02/17]

Response from loneliness and social isolation Extra Care scheme in Cardiff, there are close links with the Glamorgan Regional Partnership Board and the tenants regard this intergenerational contact as invaluable.

16. In the Vale of Glamorgan, an Extra Care scheme has been running for three years jointly commissioned in partnership with Social Services, Housing and Supporting People. There are care and support services on site and people undertake a unified assessment and will have needs to enable access to the scheme. A panel meets on a regular basis to assess new applicants and to agree lettings when there is a vacancy. Most people who come into the scheme state they had been isolated in the community and the scheme has addressed this. This scheme is used as a community hub for people who are isolated to meet and make networks, they have regular coffee mornings and information sessions for people who still live in the community.
17. The City of Cardiff Council's Independent Living Service has been established to support people to find their own solutions to issues in order to defer or negate their need for statutory services. Fundamental to the work of this multi-disciplinary team approach is the provision of information, advice and assistance and the early identification of outcomes. Through the use of better outcome conversations all Independent Living Officers and Contact Officers discuss loneliness and social isolation with clients. If loneliness or social isolation are identified by the Officer, conversations would become about interests that the service user may have. Tools such as DEWIS and knowledge of groups and 3rd Sector organisations would then be used to assist the service user. Independent Living and First Point of Contact do not just limit assisting the service user concerned but will also consider the issue of loneliness and social isolation on other members of the household and carers who often experience loneliness but lack local knowledge to gain respite.
18. As highlighted above, the multicultural nature of Cardiff can create a kind of cultural loneliness, for example where people only speak their native language, and their religion makes it difficult for them to go to mixed groups. The Day Opportunities Team has provided the catalyst for them to get together, with the use of an interpreter and enabled people to become friends, provide peer to peer support for each other and attend groups together. Between April and December 2016, Preventative Services have helped remove 171 people from Social Isolation, through the provision of information, advice and assistance in accessing services, activities and groups that enhance the service user's wellbeing.
19. There are a range of voluntary/ community groups which can help older people address loneliness and isolation, including lunch clubs, choirs, exercise classes and gardening clubs. Recent additions to the Cardiff and Vale area are 'men's sheds', which offer a social space for men to meet and undertake practical activities together. One of the members of a Shed in Cardiff, who is suffering from early on-set Alzheimer's, has shared that attending the Shed has revitalised him and given him meaning and purpose once more. Members of Sheds in other areas of Wales that have been running for longer have credited Men's Sheds with saving their lives, having previously had suicidal thoughts.

⁶ Housing LIN (2013) What role for extra care housing in a socially isolated landscape? Available at: http://www.ilcuk.org.uk/images/uploads/publication-pdfs/What_role_for_extra_care_housing_in_a_socially_isolated_landscape.pdf [accessed 8th March 2017]

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Response from The Vale of Glamorgan

Glamorgan Regional Partnership Board

The Vale of Glamorgan Council delivers a range of Supporting People projects which support older people to live in their own accommodation. The Council has retendered the

Supporting People Older persons floating support schemes recently and as part of these schemes asked providers to specifically target older people isolated in the community. They have been working with the 50+ Coordinator to identify ways in which to meet and engage isolated people and offer them support. The Council are also undertaking a series of talking workshops with older people around the commissioning of future joint services and have been working with Cardiff on a regional proposal. There are Step down schemes run from sheltered accommodation and an Accommodation Discharge Coordinator who works with people in hospital to find them suitable accommodation on discharge.

21. The provision of good communication and information, highlighted as a key theme in 'Ageing Well in Wales' is proving effective in supporting people to engage and define their own outcomes and solutions. Fundamental to this approach is the provision of information, advice and assistance and the early identification of outcomes. There have recently been some developments of projects which are taking the approach of early intervention and the need to support the older person to identify their own needs and outcomes.
22. The Wellbeing4U project, delivered by United Welsh Housing Association operates a team of Wellbeing Coordinators based in GP practices. They receive referrals from GPs of people needing support for a range of issues, from finance to social isolation, and are able to signpost and support people to access services that can help them address isolation if this is something that is highlighted during their conversations. Some clients the team have worked with have received support to enable them to have adaptations made to their home to enable them to remain living independently, had referrals to befriending projects, and been supported to access the Senior Health Shop. The crucial elements in the work of this team is the ability to intervene at an early stage, and engage the older person in conversations to understand the full extent of their needs and put in place a personalised response.
23. A final point to make with regard to addressing loneliness is the role that volunteering can play. People who volunteer often make local connections, and take part in activities with other people, therefore this can help to reduce their isolation and make them less lonely⁷.

Contributions to this response received from:-

Age Connects Cardiff & the Vale

City of Cardiff Council, Adult Services

City of Cardiff Council, Independent Living Service

Vale of Glamorgan Council, Housing Services

United Welsh Housing Association

Cardiff & Vale UHB

Cardiff Third Sector Council

⁷ Campaign to end loneliness 'Volunteering: an answer to tackling isolation and loneliness?'

<http://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/uncategorized/volunteering-an-answer-to-tackling-isolation-and-loneliness/> [accessed 08 Feb 2017]