

Social Isolation And Loneliness

A Plan - Recovering Our Connections 2023 to 2026

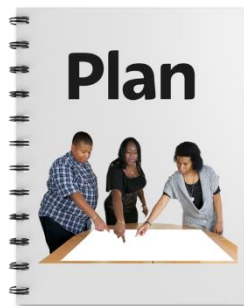
Easy Read

March 2023

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A Plan - Recovering Our Connections 2023 to 2026



Easy Read





In 2018 the Scottish Government wrote a plan called A Connected Scotland.



The plan aims to help people in Scotland to feel less lonely and to get in touch with other people more.

Framework



We want to see a Scotland where people and communities are more **connected**.

In this document **connected** means things like:



- meeting other people
- talking to other people
- messaging other people
- getting to know other people
- making new friends



We think everyone should get a chance to make friendships.

It doesn't matter:

- how old they are
- where they live
- how they live their life



We want Scotland to be a place where everyone is met with kindness.

Our 4 main aims



- We are healthy and active
- We live in safe, friendly, strong communities
- We grow up feeling loved and looked after
- We have human rights in place

4 things that will happen



- more people will understand how bad loneliness is, and how to change it
- less people will feel lonely
- less people will have difficulties that come from being lonely
- more things will be happening to keep people connected

Public Health and Equality



We know that loneliness is a health problem in Scotland.

The longer someone feels lonely, the worse it is for their mental health and body health.



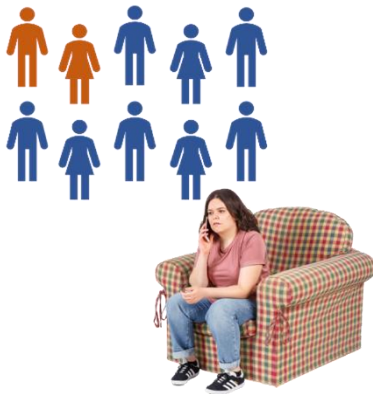
Anyone of any age can feel loneliness.

But people who have other difficulties too are more likely to feel lonely.



How connected we are now

In 2018 there was a questionnaire called The Scottish Household Survey.



2 in every 10 people said they had felt lonely in the week before answering.

There was more loneliness among:



- people between 16 and 34 years old
- people older than 75
- people who lived in built up areas like cities
- people who lived in very poor areas
- people from some **ethnic groups**

People from an **ethnic group** might have the same language, culture or religion.

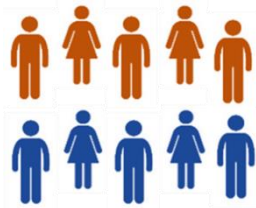


The loneliest people were disabled people.

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic made everything harder.

Because everyone had to stay away from each other.



5 out of every 10 people said they felt lonely in the week before answering.



Nearly 2 out of every 10 people said that they felt lonely most of the time.



The cost of living crisis



The **cost of living crisis** is where the cost of things like food, heating and fuel have gone up so much that many people cannot afford them.



4 out of every 10 people said they will have to limit how much they meet up with other people because of the cost of living crisis.

Which people are most lonely at the moment?



- disabled people
- people with long term illnesses
- young people
- people who don't have much money
- people who can't get online
- people who live on their own
- people who don't have green spaces nearby – like parks

What we have done so far



A group has been set up.

It is called the Social Isolation and Loneliness Advisory Group.

There are 17 organisations in the group.



During the COVID-19 pandemic 15 organisations shared emergency funds.

The funds helped them to:

- keep phone helplines open
- give kindness calls and friendship calls
- give people learning activities, wellbeing help and online events
- work with young families who were finding life hard
- give money for projects
- work on mental wellbeing with young people
- help disabled people and carers



How the Plan was made



Lots of different government groups helped to make this Plan.



The Social Isolation and Loneliness Advisory Group collected people's experiences of loneliness.

These are the most important aims:

- learning from what happened during COVID-19
- finding out what works to stop loneliness happening
- helping people to feel more confident after the pandemic
- looking after people - like **unpaid carers** - who can't get services
- thinking carefully about people with **protected characteristics**
- making sure that public spaces are good for people meeting up
- use new ideas
- easily get smaller funding amounts



- get enough funding so that work can carry on and be checked to see how the plan is working
- get the whole of the Scottish Government to take part

Our 4 priorities



Priorities are the most important aims at the moment.



Priority 1 – Making communities feel like they have their own power for change



Communities can be people who live in the same area.

Communities can also be people who share the same interest – like a hobby or a religion.



We want everyone to understand loneliness better.



We want communities to make good decisions about helping people to meet up.



We want to make sure that Government money spent in communities helps people meet up and feel less lonely.



We want different types of organisations to work together and own these projects.

Priority 2 – Helping people to keep a positive attitude



A **positive attitude** means that someone feels mostly hopeful about life.

It means looking for good things to happen.



We want more:

- happy friendships
- healthy relationships
- kindness
- mental wellbeing
- talking between older people and younger people



We want less **stigma**.

In this document **stigma** means that someone might feel embarrassed to say they feel lonely or need help.



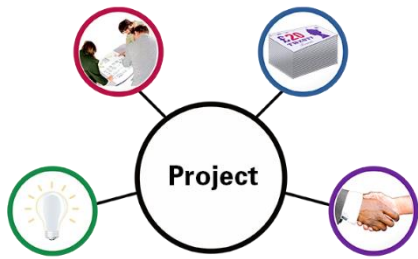
Priority 3 – Making places and times when people can get together



We want to make sure that people can find out what there is happening.



We want to help make more activities and groups happen.



Priority 4 – Giving Scotland systems that help people to connect



We want our care system to work together on loneliness.



We want our transport system to be accessible so that people can meet up more easily.



We want there to be better online connections and help for people to use them.



We want our communities and places to be better for people to meet in.



We want our housing system to make meeting up easier.

Other things

Funding

We will make sure that money is spent carefully.

And we will help smaller organisations to get funds.



Equality

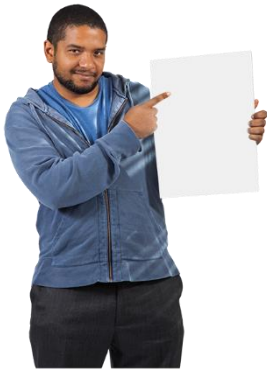
We will make an Equality Impact Assessment.

This means we will check to see that our Plan treats everyone fairly and does not leave any groups of people out.



Communication

We will try to make sure that everyone across Scotland knows about our Plan.



Reporting

There will be reports on how we are doing.

The reports will be written in 2024 and 2026.



How we will know if it is going well

We will:

- see how our Actions are going
- give funding to lots of different types of community projects
- write and read reports
- look at the next Scottish Household Survey results to see if people feel less lonely
- see more people trying to stop loneliness
- see more and more places doing things to help people connect





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