

To: COMMUNITY CARE, HEALTH & WELLBEING THEMATIC BOARD

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Report by:

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and member of Forum for Empowering Communities Thematic Board.

TITLE:

**CHALLENGING THE IMPACT OF LOSS, LONELINESS
AND ISOLATION IN RENFREWSHIRE**

1. Summary

A survey by the Office for National Statistics showed that in Britain we are less likely to have strong friendships or know our neighbours than inhabitants of any other country in the EU. The UK is described as the loneliest country in Europe.

Feeling Lonely increases the risk of: Dementia, Heart conditions, Depression, Sleep Disruption, raised Blood Pressure and lowers our Immune system. Research suggests that the financial pressure on our health and social care system from loneliness is substantial.

It is the intention of the group to consult with local individuals across Renfrewshire, and garner potential interventions and solutions to the issues which create a sense of loneliness and unwanted isolation.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Board are asked to note the establishment of a consultation process to identify key issues which contributes to issues of Loss, Isolation and Loneliness in Renfrewshire.
- 2.2 If it proves beneficial to consider developing interventions which will help mitigate the consequences of Loss, Loneliness and Isolation, the Board is asked to endorse the working group to seek external and complementary funding to augment existing resources to further combat Loss, Isolation and Loneliness.

3. Background

3.1 Substantial evidence now indicates that individuals lacking social connections are at risk of premature mortality.

The influence of social relationships on risk of death is comparable with well-established risk factors for mortality such as smoking, alcohol consumption and exceeds the influence of other risk factors such as physical activity and obesity. Poor social connectedness is regarded as being as detrimental to good health as smoking 15 cigarettes each day.

There is a strong case for prioritizing tackling loneliness and social isolation and for promoting social connectedness (Dr. Trevor Lakey, NHS GGC).

3.2 Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty Commission promoted representation of statutory and 3rd sector organisations and has encouraged joint working between entities engaged in challenging the causes and determinants of poverty. Following the opportunity to come together to share experience and knowledge, a sub group was established. This group is exploring key areas where there is greatest scope for joint action. Currently, participants include: RAMH, CAB Renfrewshire, ROAR, LEAP (Local Energy Action Plan) as well as colleagues from the HSCP (Health Promotion) and Renfrewshire Council, Economic Development section.

3.3 It is the intention of the group to consult with local individuals across Renfrewshire, and garner potential interventions and solutions to the issues which create a sense of loneliness and unwanted isolation. It is proposed that a minimum of 2 public events are hosted in Paisley and Johnstone / Linwood to seek the views of local people, in association with individualised surveys of people who are disengaged and harder to reach. It is further proposed that a follow up event for professionals operating across sectors will be facilitated, to represent the findings of the initial public events. It is acknowledged that particularly isolated individuals, who may hold the most intuitive knowledge of the cause and impact of Loneliness are particularly challenged in attending. The entities involved in coordinating the events will take every step to sensitively encourage participation.

3.4 If it proves beneficial to consider developing interventions which will help mitigate the consequences of Loss, Loneliness and Isolation, the group would propose seeking external and complementary funding to augment existing resources to further combat Loss, Isolation and Loneliness.

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