Annex 1 - Consultation Response Form

Please return this form to reach the Welsh Government no later than **15 January 2019**.

The email address for responses or queries is:

lonelinessandisolation@gov.wales

Postal responses should be sent to:

Loneliness and Social Isolation Team
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

Your name:	Hilary Watson
Organisation (if applicable):	Women's Equality Network (WEN) Wales
Email Address:	hilary@wenwales.org.uk
Your address:	WEN Wales, c/o Chwarae Teg, First Floor, Anchor Court, Keen Road, Cardiff, CF24 5JW.

Responses to consultations may be made public on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to be anonymised, please tick here:

About WEN Wales:

WEN Wales is a representative women's network[1] and human rights organisation working to influence policy-making and empower women to achieve equal status in corporate and civil life. Our charitable objectives are to promote equality and human rights with specific reference to women and gender equality in Wales.

WEN Wales surveyed our individual members on a number of questions from this consultation. The voices of our membership have helped shape and inform this response. We also received a statement from our organisational members, Welsh Women's Aid, included below.

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[1] *Over 1000 individual members and organisational members, including women's rights and allied organisations from across the third sector, academia, international and national NGOs.*

Question 1: Do you agree with our definitions of loneliness and social isolation? If not, what would you propose instead?

YES…….. NO…….

Comments:

N/A

Question 2: How can we help people to understand the trigger points for loneliness and social isolation and to build emotional and psychological resilience to enable them to take steps to avoid or reduce these feelings?

Comments:

As highlighted in the Welsh Government's consultation document, the National Survey for Wales 2016-17 identified several triggers for loneliness and social isolation, two of which, 'becoming a new mum' and 'not feeling safe after dark' being particularly gendered issues. Society teaches women and girls to fear their safety outside after dark due to the high levels of actual and perceived threats of street harassment and sexual assaults disproportionately experienced by women and girls on a regular basis. Equally, being a new parent can make primary carers (disproportionately women) feel particularly lonely and isolated. Of course, women are disproportionately more likely to be single parents in one-parent households and can be at risk of loneliness and isolation due to the strains – both in terms of time and financially – of raising children alone. Women are more likely to take on unpaid caring roles for elderly relatives, often in addition to full or part time working. Women and girls are disproportionately impacted by all forms of violence against women – loneliness and social isolation is closely connected to this due to both types of abuse and violence experienced and due to prevailing social stigmas and shame around these issues, which can, for example, manifest as victim-blaming.

WEN Wales members gave rich and diverse answers to this question, however, some felt that the question itself was not correct, and was itself 'part of the problem':

"This is not an individual issue that requires an individual response. This is part of the problem. We look at treating people as if they have a problem, rather than tackling the problem. It is not a feeling/emotion. It is an experience that stems from a society that is disconnected with groups of people feeling marginalised and abandoned. We need to refocus on human and beyond human rights to support more social coherence and more just practices across our public sector." WEN Wales member

Other WEN Wales members who responded to our survey echoed this point, stating that sorting out the circumstances that create feelings of loneliness and isolation is key, from reducing unemployment and isolation due to illness, to eliminating incidents of violence against women, offering flexible working (more flexible working opportunities and opportunities at all career levels including senior positions) and appropriate childcare and other care provisions to cater for all with caring responsibilities.

WEN Wales' members have suggested many ways of increasing people's understanding of loneliness and social isolation, including teaching students in schools in existing Physical, Social and Health Education classes or Sexuality and Relationship Education sessions

about loneliness and isolation. This is widely understood by the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) sector to be an essential mechanism for achieving greater gender equality and helping to eradicate VAWDASV in our society. Training and awareness raising on social isolation and loneliness was suggested, which could take place through GP surgeries, workplaces and through media campaigns to highlight triggers and signpost people to services and appropriate solutions that are tailored for individuals, rather than a 'one-size-fits all' approach. Survivors of violence against women, new mothers and older people were particularly mentioned as groups to target with information. Some GP surgeries already use the IRIS model, for identification of domestic violence. Good practice from this could be used to inform an approach that looks specifically at loneliness and isolation as this model aims to enable early intervention. With both VAWDASV and loneliness and social isolation there is a need to focus on prevention and early intervention to enable better outcomes for individuals and reduces long term pressure on the public purse.

The Equality and Human Rights Commissions' 2017 inquiry into pregnancy and maternity discrimination research findings highlights some real concerns in Wales with regards to how women feel that they are being treated and the attitudinal barriers they face from employers.[2] Of the mothers who were consulted by the EHRC in Wales:

- **71% reported negative or possibly discriminatory experiences**
- **10% felt forced to leave their jobs**

This is clearly unacceptable and a link between this outrageously high figure and loneliness and social isolation is stark.

Question 3: How can the Welsh Government foster the right environment and create the right conditions to build resilient communities?

Comments:

While WEN Wales did not pose this specific question to our membership, this was addressed in answers to other questions.

Key areas to foster the right environment and create the right conditions to built resilient communities should include areas of priority which promote gender equality while also meeting these aims. For example, flexible working arrangements; appropriate childcare supporting carers; increased employer responsibilities in areas such as health and wellbeing of staff; and gender responsible budgeting.

Question 4: How can children and young people be better equipped with the skills to establish and maintain meaningful social connections?

Comments:

Survey respondents identified four key areas: schools and educational instructions; groups and clubs; community and parents.

Schools were identified as important community hubs – particularly in rural areas, where for example, national organisations have found it difficult to set up sports clubs. A different

[2] https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/file/10521/download?token=WqAvNfz5.

approach to both curricular and extra-curricular activities were identified. For example, some identified that more emphasis must be given in schools to emotional intelligence and not just academic intelligence. Schools also need to be more integrated into their communities. Several members suggested that there should be more opportunities for older people and children and young people to interact and that one way to enable this is to encourage older people to volunteer in schools. There were also suggestions of more drama-based activities and discussion groups in schools to encourage social connections, in both extra-curricular activities and within subject lessons. Health and Relationships education was also identified and mindfulness and meditation incorporated into the school day. Some felt that improved anti-bullying training for teachers and staff was needed. There was also a call for welsh medium schools in all communities as those who attend their nearest welsh medium school which is in another town or area may feel isolated from either their school community or their home community as these will not be integrated. Children and young people's involvement in, and contribution to, the running of school clubs and groups provided an opportunity for young people to feel ownership of the activity and a sense of responsibility that school-life often cannot offer in more curriculum-based environments.

Members felt that external groups and clubs such as sports clubs, youth clubs or music and arts, or other clubs, e.g. board games clubs offered children and young people opportunities to have meaningful social connections, and yet funding losses or lack of funds meant that these places were often missing or under threat of cuts within communities. These can often be key safe spaces for children and young people and a connection to local communities. Members highlighted the importance of more meaningful, face-to-face interactions for young people and children with the community.

In relation to parents, respondents suggested that offering support to parents about raising children and offering guidance in relation to safe use of social media would be beneficial. Baby and toddler groups are important for the support of parents who may feel isolated after the birth of a child or during parental leave.

There was also a call for specialist interventions that can enable children to develop skills to establish and maintain meaningful social connections, for example, interventions that address anti-social behaviour in children and young people; heathy relationship education; anti-bullying measures; mental health awareness. These areas all impact personal experiences and addressing them could help tackle certain forms of loneliness and isolation that could have a life-long effect.

One respondent stated that tackling poverty and social injustice was the most important aspect for having the greatest impact on children and young people in establishing meaningful social connections. Respondents also urged Welsh Government to pose this question to children and young people, who would be best qualified to answer this question.

Question 5: How do we ensure that schools can better support children and young people who may be lonely and socially isolated?

Comments:

Schools play an incredibly important role in the general health and wellbeing of children and young people. Many schools continue to offer rich support to tackle loneliness and social isolation currently, both in the classroom and through extra activities. However, schools face many funding cuts and teachers face increasing pressures. WEN Wales members have highlighted that funding is needed both for compulsory school activities and specifically for extra curricular activities. One member stated that **"schools need money. They are the corner stone of so much and yet as funding is cut so is their ability."** Some suggested that at a time where funding is short, schools may be able to link with other local schools to maintain a rich extra-curricular programme, though this may not always be possible.

Several respondents recommended specific projects or potential partnerships:
"Provide more extra-curricular activities, pupils to take part in intergenerational projects like Ffrind i Mi with community transport available for those who have no access to private and public transport, create community groups to tackle an issue close to young people's hearts, Beautiful Barry group is a good example where young people are tackling the war on plastic"

"Use local themes around Rights issues as women4resources did in local Primary School linking it with their own history and celebrating suffrage."

"Work with voluntary organisations such as Soroptimists - local groups could be the conduit. Local voluntary groups could go into schools and provide/support discussion session linked to a specific curriculum topic."

Others highlighted the importance of schools and educational institutions identifying and effectively dealing with bullying and other behaviours that lead to isolation and stated that there should be opportunities for young people with different interests and from all walks of life to benefit from activities and clubs at school and the role of strong leadership in this from the head teacher. More investment and variation in breakfast, lunch and afterschool clubs was suggested. One member stated that "In schools I'd like to see **"buddying" becoming the norm. I've been helping front-of house at a theatre this week where we've had school parties visiting the annual pantomime. It's been great to see the older children being given responsibility of look after the younger ones, for example by holding their hands when entering and leaving the theatre."** Others also suggested buddying and mentoring within schools.

Some suggestions were more fundamental: smaller classes with more staff; supporting children as humans not just as learners; creating less strict and hostile environments within schools to encourage more discussions and opportunities to speak their minds.

While incidents of all forms of violence against women and girls are so common within our society, they remain common within our schools. Therefore, a whole educational approach

to ending violence against women, as outlined in Welsh Women's Aid's good practice guide[3] is vital in supporting children and young people who are already experiencing or having already experienced violence and abuse for example, within their families or amongst their peers. Alongside age-appropriate sexuality and relationship education for children and young people, empowering children and young people to better understand their experiences and what constitutes a healthy relationship is key. It is vital that investments into this are made not only when the new curriculum for Wales is implemented but immediately so that no children or young people leave school without having had this education.

Question 6: What more can the housing sector do to reduce loneliness and social isolation? How can the Welsh Government support this?

Comments:

N/A

Question 7: What more can the Welsh Government do to support the improvement of transport services across Wales?

Comments:

While WEN Wales did not pose this specific question to our membership, this was addressed in answers to other questions.

One WEN Wales member highlighted this issue and its connection to loneliness and social isolation: **"We are missing integrated, efficient and accessible transport in Wales, particularly in small towns/rural areas. If this is not addressed people can easily be stuck in their own home for considerable periods if they are disabled, elderly or car less. This needs urgent immediate action".**

Cuts to transport have had a big impact on people's ability to access activities that may reduce their risk of loneliness and isolation. One member gave the following example: **"Cardiff Council has steadily cut down adult courses. Now I would have to travel across town to follow up courses I could do in my neighbourhood before, adding lengthy travel and bus costs. I no longer attend those activities."** Another stated **"Look at a rural community because WG current work isn't reaching here e.g. the yoga club is 20 miles away in a town and no transport to get there."** Rural transport remains a big issue. One member stated **"Public transport is a problem, particularly in rural areas. Grass Routes service is excellent but not everyone knows about it. Can Welsh Government do more to publicise this?"**

There were calls from the WEN Wales membership to **"radically improve public transport"** in local areas across Wales. Some felt that local transport investment was essential, even if it was not on the surface 'cost effective' it could still be socially effective.

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[3] http://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Good-Practice-Guide-A-Whole-Education-Approach-to-Violence-against-Women-Domestic-Abuse-Sexual-Violence-in-Wales.pdf

Question 8: How can we try to ensure that people have access to digital technology and the ability to use it safely?

Comments:

While WEN Wales did not pose this specific question to our membership, this was addressed in answers to other questions.

Throughout the survey responses, concerns were raised around children and young people's access to technology and their online safety. There was a call for safety guidance for parents to better equip them to better understand how they can help protect their children online. This issue should also be addressed in schools, as online safety goes beyond social media and impacts on more and more aspects of our lives as services increasingly operate digitally, for example around banking and fraud. Isolated individuals are less likely to continue to be educated about the ever-changing threats from digital technology so a community approach to protect people from scams and digital threats is vital.

Question 9: What experience do you have of the impact of social services on addressing loneliness and isolation

Comments:

N/A

Question 10: What more can the social care sector do to tackle loneliness and isolation?

Comments:

N/A

Question 11: What more can we do to encourage people who are at risk of becoming lonely and isolated to get involved in local groups that promote physical activity?

Comments:

WEN Wales' membership has identified several barriers and remedies for this. One major barrier can be simply not knowing about certain activities in your area. Many have suggested promoting activities in various locations in the local community, from schools with dedicated resources for this, to community hubs and libraries, pubs and leisure centres. GP surgeries should also promote and it was felt that medical staff and voluntary groups should use social prescribing as one mechanism, with the caveat that while some activities are helpful, certain classes have felt unvaried over time, which can lead to a drop off in attendance. Cost can be a significant barrier, so making activities free or very cheap for those who would not be able to otherwise afford them is important. It was felt by some that funding should be allocated from the Health budget as this, in time, would pay for itself due to fewer people accessing NHS services as a result of a healthier lifestyle.

Some have suggested that the Welsh Government should help fund advertisements for local groups to raise awareness for activities that are already taking place while others suggested actively encouraging those over 65 to set up their own interest groups for others to join. It was also suggested that the Welsh Government may want to ask specific groups, such as the Ramblers, for ideas on this matter.

It was raised that it is important to encourage people to get involved in a range of both social and physical activities, for example walking, fitness classes, gardening opportunities and wildlife watching.

Cuts to both council-run activities and transport have had a big impact. One member gave the following example: **"Cardiff Council has steadily cut down adult courses. Now I would have to travel across town to follow up courses I could do in my neighbourhood before, adding lengthy travel and bus costs. I no longer attend those activities."** Another stated **"Look at a rural community because WG current work isn't reaching here e.g. the yoga club is 20 miles away in a town and no transport to get there."** Rural transport remains a big issue. One member stated **"Public transport is a problem, particularly in rural areas. Grass Routes service is excellent but not everyone knows about it. Can Welsh Government do more to publicise this?"**

It was also highlighted by one respondent that the framing of the question implies that physical activity is the remedy for those at risk of becoming lonely and socially isolated. They pointed out that not everyone wants to, or is able to be, more physically active and that other solutions are also needed.

Question 12: In what other ways can health services play their part in reducing loneliness and social isolation?

Comments:

While WEN Wales did not pose this specific question to our membership, this was addressed in answers to other questions.

WEN Wales' members discussed health services in several ways. They spoke about it in relation to the Health budget financing work that will help tackle loneliness and isolation, for GPs to widely write social prescriptions where appropriate to do so and for GP surgeries to be hubs where information about community activities is available. It was also highlighted that while there are some mental health provisions, there is no where near enough investment to help demand, with 1 in 3 people suffering from mental health conditions, this needs to be addressed.

Prevention and early intervention is needed across the board of adverse experiences and poor health experiences, and will always result in better outcomes for patients, and in turn will lead to fewer of the triggers identified that can bring about loneliness and social isolation. Investing in prevention and early intervention now, will result in better outcomes longer term for all. This has been explored by both the VAWDASV sector and by Public Health Wales through the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) agenda.

Question 13: What more can the Welsh Government do to encourage people to volunteer?

Comments:

N/A

Question 14: How can the Third sector play a stronger role in helping to tackle loneliness and social isolation? What can the Welsh Government and other public bodies do to support this?

Comments:

"Third sector will always step up if the funding is available to them."
WEN Wales member

WEN Wales members suggested several ways in which the Third Sector could play a stronger role in helping to tackle loneliness and social isolation. For example, one person stated that **"Third sector could help develop and co-ordinate collaboration between the two sets of groups who can mutually benefit by interactions. For example elderly people who are lonely can go to school and help children who are perhaps at risk of loneliness and share their skills and experience with them. For example: reading, cooking and sporting skills."** Others suggested that the sector should run a wider range of activities to help elevate this issue and to work in collaboration with other third sector organisations as well as working with the local community.

It was felt by some that it would be beneficial if the third sector was more visible in the local high street in towns and villages. For example, in Pontypridd the Post Office shares the same space as Age Concern. One respondent felt that they wanted the Third Sector and the Welsh Government to **"increase-cross generational interaction at schools, nursing homes, cafes, community centres, libraries etc."** and for there to be **"radically improve public transport in rural areas".**

Several WEN Wales members referred to GAVO in South Wales: **"Organisations like GAVO offer facilities for people to get involved with various activities but, often, people don't know about these facilities."** One respondent went further: **"raise the importance of network groups such as GAVO in SE Wales, Give local AMs a mandate to interact with their local groups. The AMs need to feed back to the Welsh Government on such issues, irrespective of their political roots!"**

Some people stated that they felt that grass root organisations can reach these people more effectively than large providers as they only focus on a narrow client group and specialise in supporting them. This is one reason that Third Sector groups are so valuable and that many responses talked about the continued need for secure funding for the sector that is more secure than year on year funding. One member described the situation as **"The third sector is on life support and desperately needs reviving in order to keep doing the incredible and innovative work it can do."**

One person also felt that there was far too much bureaucracy, which has impacted on their

willingness to volunteer in the future: **"I did some voluntary work for Age Concern Cymru running tea dances. Nightmare bureaucracy. Never again."** The Third Sector relies so heavily on volunteers generously giving their time to help organisations deliver life-changing services. More stable investment and less burdensome bureaucracy would make a huge impact on the sector's ability to tackle loneliness and social isolation.

Question 15: How can employers and businesses play their part in reducing loneliness and social isolation?

Comments:

While WEN Wales did not pose this specific question to our membership, this was addressed in answers to other questions.

There is much that employers and business can do to reduce loneliness and isolation. For example, by offering flexible working (more flexible working opportunities and opportunities at all career levels including senior positions); offering appropriate childcare and supporting carers; increased employer responsibilities in areas such as health and wellbeing of staff; and specific policies for employees undergoing menopause.

The Equality and Human Rights Commissions' 2017 inquiry into pregnancy and maternity discrimination research findings highlights some real concerns in Wales with regards to how women feel that they are being treated and the attitudinal barriers they face from employers.[4] Of the mothers who were consulted by the EHRC in Wales:[5]

- 71% reported negative or possibly discriminatory experiences
- 10% felt forced to leave their jobs
- 15% reported financial loss
- 46% reported a negative impact on opportunity, status or job security

Coupled with the findings when the EHRC consulted with employers in Wales, there are clearly worrying and contradictory attitudes that require attention. Of employers surveyed and interviewed:[6]

- 87% feel it is in the best interest of the organisation to support pregnant women and those on maternity leave
- 65% feel women should declare upfront at recruitment if they are pregnant
- 36% said all statutory rights are reasonable
- 26% said all statutory rights are easy to facilitate
- 23% said pregnancy puts an unreasonable cost burden on the workforce

These snapshots indicate that despite the legislation in place to protect the rights of pregnant women and women on maternity leave there are feelings amongst the majority of Welsh employers interviewed that pregnancy and maternity leave: is unreasonably costly; it

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[4] https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/file/10521/download?token=WqAvNfz5.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.

is difficult to facilitate all statutory rights; and that statutory rights go beyond what is reasonable. It is worrying then that 65% of employers would have women declare pregnancy during recruitment, and presumably through conscious or unconscious bias, these women would reap the consequences of the unpopular levels of protection that pregnant women and those on maternity are covered by, in the eyes of the law.

Employers must do more to tackle sexual harassment in the work place and particularly to address isolation of women in industries or work environments that are male dominated.

Question 16: What more can the Welsh Government do to support those who experience poverty alongside loneliness and social isolation?

Comments:

Key areas highlighted were the relationship between the Welsh Government and the UK Government, benefits and austerity measures, educating young people and community members in life skills, investment into the public and third sector and spreading investment across Wales and particularly into rural areas.

Some WEN Wales members felt that the Welsh Government could do more to fight austerity and that it would be beneficial to have greater devolution which included control over the welfare budget. It was also raised that the Barnett formula is no longer fit for purpose. While welfare is a non-devolved issue, increased publicity and support to those eligible to claim benefits could be helpful in enabling people to claim their whole entitlement. It was suggested that council staff should receive training to provide accurate financial and welfare advice.

The return of home economics education in school and home budgeting classes could help reduce unnecessarily high food costs and enable people to manage their money in a more formal way. Some raised the need to address period poverty, particularly in schools, by providing free sanitary products.

Many raised the sense that funding is currently not benefiting all. For example, there was a call for resources to benefit all and not just those involved in local community groups. Others suggested that funding should be spread fairly to rural areas and not concentrated in South East Wales: **"Stop focusing all the investment and funding in the SE of Wales, spread the funding out to rural areas and objective one areas. Put more events and set up networks in Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion and other rural areas of Wales."** One respondent suggested: **"Overhaul taxation, remove the stinging cost of VAT especially in relation to building renovation on brown field sites to allow more social housing, introduce a living wage for all reducing stigma of unemployment, value work currently carried out by volunteers and those in low pay."**

It was felt that funding cuts for initiatives that are already helping needed to stop and that resources and meaningful, long-term investment into the public and third sector was imperative. One respondent suggested: **"Support local authorities and initiatives as far as possible as there are many on the ground already who are aware of local poverty.**

If not already working with Trussell Trust and other food banks start doing so. Also very important to support schools who are also very aware of issues for their students."

Meaningful investment into free or affordable transport, particularly in rural areas was again raised as a key area.

Question 17: What more can we do to build community resilience and support communities to combat loneliness and social isolation?

Comments:

WEN Wales' members overwhelmingly felt that active and interesting community centres were greatly beneficial and that more community centres should offer a broad range of affordable activities and have mechanisms to enable those with mobility issues and caring responsibilities to be active users of these centres. These venues would be used for groups, activities, meetings, celebrations and should offer clean cafes where people want to spend time. Several members suggested that finding mechanisms to support schools letting out their buildings for some of these activities may also be mutually beneficial.

One member stated: **"Outreach already in place could be extended, many areas also run community car sharing or have volunteers to drive people to appointments etc. Encourage schools to visit care homes as there are benefits to both the elderly and the youngsters. Community centres need support and to offer a variety of activities. Of course, budget cuts make this difficult but again many retired people have time and skills as do people unable to participate in the work place for whatever reason including young people and some with disabilities. There is a potential there to include people to reduce their own isolation as well as to draw on their skills for the benefit of the wider community."**

One respondent felt that community investment should benefit all and not just those who are past retirement age. Awareness, advocacy and action were highlighted as key areas with the caveat that without research into what is effective in each area, money could be wasted if invested into unsuccessful projects. Two examples of communities working effectively together were given, firstly, the Mount Pleasant community hub in Swansea (SA1) and secondly, Treorchi High Street: **"Communities work together, shop local, support local cafés, Treorci High Street is a brilliant example of a thriving, cohesive community that supports local business and Welsh language - examples out there - Welsh Government need to be more aware of good examples and learn and share learning"**.

Several people suggested that employing community cohesion ambassadors from within the community could have a big impact. Some have suggested that the third sector could be funded to coordinate this.

Transport was again raised as a key area, with calls to **"radically improve public transport"**. Some felt that local transport investment was essential, even if it was not on the service 'cost effective' it could still be socially effective.

Question 18: Do you agree with our proposed approach? If not, what would you otherwise suggest?

Comments:

N/A

Question 19: Are you aware of examples of successful interventions within Wales, or beyond, that you think we should be looking at?

Comments:

WEN Wales members have given examples of successful interventions throughout this consultation. Those that were previously mentioned and those supplied specifically for this question have been listed here.

1) European Union and worldwide examples of Intergenerational Practice. **"I attended an EU conference on this in 2012 and it was a really inspiring model of how to get people of different ages and background to collaborate together to make changes and move forward." WEN Wales member.**

2) Some Supporting People organisations have done good work tackling isolation

3) Older people visiting schools for story telling or reading one-to-one sessions.

4) Span Community Arts Activities**. "This should be used as a model for other rural towns, where the community centre acts as a hub for events, but it needs to be properly supported with some paid staff." WEN Wales member.**

5) The Rainbow Centre at Penley, Wrexham **"has many such interventions as it offers a lot of social prescribing - but I think it's geared towards the Elderly." WEN Wales member.**

6) Early intervention projects in mental health and family support. **"Action for Children, for example, have many innovative projects then there are grass roots organisations supporting people on next to no resources." WEN Wales member.**

7) Pembrokeshire initiatives.

8) Mindfullness programme in Terrace Rd Primary School . Clara Neal Story and "Right " in Celebrating Suffrage Year in Terrace Rd School.

9) SA1 Community Hub run by locals.

10) Treorchi High Street: **"Communities work together, shop local, support local cafés, Treorci High Street is a brilliant example of a thriving, cohesive community that supports local business and Welsh language" WEN Wales member.**

11) Ffind I Mi

12) FAN (Friends and Neighbours)

13) Beautiful Barry group: **"is a good example where young people are tackling the war on plastic" WEN Wales member.**

14) women4resources linking with local Primary School on communities own history and celebrating suffrage.

15) GAVO in South Wales: **"Organisations like GAVO offer facilities for people to get involved with various activities but, often, people don't know about these facilities." WEN Wales member.**

16) Age Concern in Pontypridd shares the same space as the Post Office.

17) Grass Routes, public transport: **"Grass Routes service is excellent but not everyone knows about it." WEN Wales member.**

18) Iris Model in GP surgeries.

Question 20: Are there other ways in which we can measure loneliness and social isolation?

Comments:

While WEN Wales did not pose this specific question to our membership, this was addressed in answers to other questions.

"This is not an individual issue that requires an individual response. This is part of the problem. We look at treating people as if they have a problem, rather than tackling the problem. It is not a feeling/emotion. It is an experience that stems from a society that is disconnected with groups of people feeling marginalised and abandoned. We need to refocus on human and beyond human rights to support more social coherence and more just practices across our public sector." WEN Wales member

Some WEN Wales' members felt strongly that there is a need to consider a variety of different triggers that could result in isolation and loneliness, for example, marginalised groups, adverse experiences and that Welsh Government must consider methods to address these and measure instead the triggers that can result in loneliness and social isolation. Others worried about the risk of pathologising loneliness.

Question 21: We would like to know your views on the effects that our proposed approach to tackling loneliness and social isolation would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English.

What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

Comments:

N/A

Question 22: Please also explain how you believe the proposed approach could be formulated or changed so as to have positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language, and no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

Comments:

N/A

Question 23: We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

Comments:

WEN Wales is a membership organisation that works towards achieving gender equality and women's rights across Wales. Achieving gender equality will help tackle loneliness and social isolation that is specifically experienced by women and girls because they are women and girls. In WEN Wales' joint manifesto in partnership with Chwarae Teg, Women Connect First and Welsh Women's aid, we have outlined a number of key recommendations that the Welsh Government will take to tackle gender inequality. The full report can be found on WEN Wales' website.[7] Certainly, we believe that key policy changes around equal leadership at all levels of Welsh public and political life, fair care provisions for childcare, elder care and disabled care and healthy relationships education is vital to achieving gender equality and reducing isolation and loneliness that is a result of an unequal society.

The responses to this question from WEN Wales' membership were rich and varied. For example, one response focused on the negative impact of Brexit: **"There is a growing negative attitude towards migrant communities from EU. Brexit is causing a lot of tensions and people's rights might be breached because of lack of understanding of the law. There is a risk that more vulnerable people from migrant communities will be pushed to the margins of society and they will feel isolated and lonely."**

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[7] http://www.wenwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/LR_11509-WEN-Manifesto-20pp-A4-English.pdf

Another raised concerns around the way in which loneliness has become a focus within this consultation: **"We are in danger of pathologising people *as* lonely and then targeting interventions at what is a symptom of something that is a societal issue. I would suggest that this survey be rewritten and sent to politicians asking them what they / we can do to be part of creating a better society, starting with not blaming citizens for what is wrong with the country but having meaningful dialogue."**

It was also felt that while mental health provisions existed in places, much more needed to be done: **"Mental health issues isolate many- although much is being done it is not enough. 1 in 3 people now have a problem, some transient some permanent and some drug related. We have to heal society if we are to heal the individuals."**

Some felt that emphasis on life long learning was very important, while another member raised the issue that they did not feel that provisions in their area adequately catered for their particular needs: **"Social isolation can happen when activities/events for highly intelligent and diverse people are not considered, there has been a dumbing down of events put on particularly in rural Wales. There is perception that cultured and intelligent people don't live outside of SE Wales which is completely wrong as many artists and intellectuals live outside of SE Wales. Our needs should be looked at too."** Again, this highlights the feeling that has been presented throughout this response that people who live outside South East Wales feel that they are not receiving a fair proportion of the investment.

Awareness of gender, sexual orientation and age difference have been raised as key areas to consider how this problem may be tackled to help different people. Some have also suggested that Welsh Government put emphasis on supporting women's and mothers/parents' groups. Period poverty was also a concern: **"Period poverty undermines girls and women and could be tackled by free provision of Sustainable pads provided by a local entrepreneur. Compulsory gender awareness training to combat bullying and harassment and change attitudes."** There was also a call for Welsh Government to do more to tackle institutionalised sexism across Wales and that there also needs to be a particular focus on provisions that address the needs of particularly vulnerable individuals, for example those who are at risk of or are directly affected by homelessness and survivors of all forms of violence against women and girls, including male survivors and children. Furthermore, WEN Wales' organisational member Welsh Women's Aid have supplied the following statement with regards to this consultation:

Welsh Women's Aid is keen for consideration to be given to the drivers of isolation in the context of coercive control. We know that deliberate community isolation is a common tactic used by perpetrators to gain and maintain power and control both in intimate partner violence and other forms of VAWDASV, particularly within the context of so called 'honour' based violence and forced marriage.

Isolation as a tactic of power and control. It can often be one of the early warning signs and can sometimes be one of the first tactics used by an abusive partner before physical and other types of abuse begin. Isolation from support networks is a key tactic for a perpetrator who wants to gain complete control and prevent the non-abusing partner from help seeking. Intertwined with this is other forms of control, for example economic abuse preventing the survivor from having or keeping a job, accessing the benefits they are entitled to or more broadly preventing access to other economic resources such as transport. The tactic of controlling access to these resources works to support and further intensify the ongoing isolation.

In terms of so called 'honour' based violence, women are often heavily policed in the home, which is recognised as a significant risk factor. There may be additional risks of isolation for some women experiencing HBV, for example if they are recent immigrants to the country and so do not speak the language, do not have their own community networks or indeed

have no recourse to public funds.

Reviews of domestic homicides have also found that 'informal networks' are key in the help-seeking process for women, but often these networks, without a thorough understanding of the nuances of coercive control, 'responsiblised' the victim for their own safety[8]. This compounded by perpetrators isolating from informal networks, either directly or forcing networks to disown the victim, leads to further isolation.

At Welsh Women's Aid, we are piloting the 'Change that lasts' model, key to this is training community ambassadors as part of 'Ask Me'[9]. Recognising the key role these 'informal networks' can play in supporting survivors earlier in their help-seeking journey but also ensuring key members of communities understand how isolation is used as a central tactic within intimate terrorism.

[8] http://www.standingtogether.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/STADV_DHR_Report_Final.pdf
[9] http://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/our-approach-change-that-lasts/ask-me/