

# Response ID ANON-8H41-QX33-M

Submitted to **A Connected Scotland: Tackling social isolation and loneliness and building stronger social connections**

Submitted on **2018-04-27 15:14:50**

## Key questions for everyone

### 1 What needs to change in your community to reduce social isolation and loneliness and increase the range and quality of social connections?

#### Input your answer here::

RTPI Scotland welcomes the acknowledgment on pages 17 and 18 of the consultation document of the role of planning in influencing the way that places take shape, and therefore how the built environment can foster opportunities for social interaction. We believe that there are further opportunities however to weave placemaking into the draft strategy.

An umbrella review of the evidence of the links between place and health, including mental health and social connectivity, was published last year by Public Health England. While published in the English context, this piece of research covers principles that are equally applicable to Scotland. Spatial planning for health states: "An ever-increasing body of research indicates that the environment in which we live is inextricably linked to our health across the life course. For example, the design of our neighbourhoods can influence physical activity levels, travel patterns, social connectivity, mental and physical health and wellbeing outcomes."

Similarly, the 2016 RTPI report *Poverty, Place and Inequality* makes the case that "people-based approaches on their own are not enough to reduce poverty and inequality. Alongside conventional approaches to reducing poverty, which focus on welfare reform, we need to harness the potential of places to increase opportunity and realise people's potential."

Both of these reports highlight the profound impact of the built environment on outcomes for individuals. RTPI Scotland therefore urges the Scottish Government to take steps as it finalises its social isolation and loneliness strategy to ensure that placemaking is a core part of its response to this challenge.

An important pillar of the ongoing review of the Scottish planning system is increasing the influence of communities of place and interest in decision making about how places develop and change over time. This includes measures for improved engagement in the preparation of local authorities' local development plans, and introducing local place plans, which will allow communities to articulate their own ambitions for land use and development in their areas.

Both local development plans and local place plans are important strategic documents which could support placemaking that fosters social connections. This includes providing for accessible and attractive green space, enabling active travel, and ensuring the delivery of community buildings. For this to be achieved collaborative working between health and social care, community empowerment, and spatial planning will be essential. RTPI Scotland has proposed amending the Planning (Scotland) Bill currently under scrutiny in the Scottish Parliament to create statutory Chief Planning Officers in all Scottish local authorities. In recent years heads of the planning service have generally moved down the corporate structure in local government, and with them expertise about place at the strategic level. The introduction of Chief Planning Officers would make it a requirement for an individual with expertise about planning and place to be consulted on strategic decision making on investment and service delivery, including that expressed in, for example, Local Outcome Improvement Plans, Local Transport Plans and Strategic Housing Improvement Plans.

### 2 Who is key at local level in driving this change, and what do you want to see them doing more (or less) of?

#### Input answer here::

The proposed Chief Planning Officers would be key individuals in fostering collaborative working across and beyond local government that takes into account local circumstances and complexities. This would in turn support a placemaking approach.

### 3 What does Government need to do nationally to better empower communities and create the conditions to allow social connections to flourish?

#### Input answer here::

Our answer to question 1 references local place plans. As Scottish Government develops the framework for these plans, to be focused on land use and development, it will need to ensure careful integration with existing tools such as community action plans and locality plans. As the community empowerment landscape evolves more approaches to influencing decision making are becoming available. To ensure that communities are able to navigate this landscape and select the tool that is most appropriate to their ambitions – whether that is to influence development or provision of, for examples, community facilities – clear guidance from Scottish Government on the options and support available will be crucial.

It will also be important that community-led local place plans will form part of a wider approach to more positive and proactive community involvement in decisions about land use and development. This includes those decisions made in larger scale plans led by local and national government, and particularly local development plans and the National Planning Framework. Involvement in decisions about place from the neighbourhood to the strategic national scale has the potential to both support the creation of places in which social connections can flourish, and opportunities for community debate and participation.

#### Do you want to answer any of the detailed questions?

## Detailed questions

### 4 Do you agree or disagree with our definitions of (i) social isolation and (ii) loneliness? Please provide comments, particularly if you disagree.

**Input answer here::**

**5 Do you agree with the evidence sources we are drawing from? Are there other evidence sources you think we should be using?**

**Input answer here::**

Please see the RTPI report Poverty, Place and Inequality and the Public Health England report Spatial Planning for Health, both referenced in our response to question 1.

**6 Are there examples of best practice outside Scotland (either elsewhere in the UK or overseas) focused on tackling social isolation and loneliness that you think we should be looking at?**

**Input answer here::**

**7 Are you aware of any good practice in a local community to build social connections that you want to tell us about?**

**Input answer here::**

The consultation references Paths for All and the National Walking Strategy. The Paths for All Volunteer Award Winners provide a useful resource of best practice in encouraging both physical activity and social interaction. Once again it should be noted that improvements to the built environment could make walking groups easier to set up and more attractive to participate in.

The Place Standard Tool, devised and developed by a collaboration between NHS Health Scotland, The Scottish Government and Architecture and Design Scotland, provides a tool to help communities articulate their views on different aspects of their places. It includes criteria such as 'social contact' and 'identity and belonging', and could therefore be an extremely important resource for assessing if and how their place is impacting on different people's experiences of social isolation and loneliness.

**8 How can we all work together challenge stigma around social isolation and loneliness, and raise awareness of it as an issue? Are there examples of people doing this well that you're aware of?**

**Input answer here::**

The RTPI report Poverty, Place and Inequality describes in detail the links between poverty and place. In seeking to support those who experience both poverty and social isolation it will be importance for the Scottish Government and local authorities to take a place based approach to investment and service delivery.

This includes applying understanding of place to Community Planning Partnerships and Local Outcome Improvement Plans. RTPI Scotland welcomes the provision made by the Planning (Scotland) Bill to require local development plans to take account of Local Outcome Improvement Plans. However, we believe it is also essential that this relationship is reciprocal; that strategic decision making by Community Planning Partnerships takes into account development and land use proposals included in local development plans.

**9 Using the Carnegie UK Trust's report as a starting point, what more should we be doing to promote kindness as a route to reducing social isolation and loneliness?**

**Input answer here::**

**10 How can we ensure that those who experience both poverty and social isolation receive the right support?**

**Input answer here::**

**11 What do we need to be doing more of (or less of) to ensure that we tackle social isolation and loneliness for the specific life stages and groups mentioned above?**

**Input answer here::**

**12 How can health services play their part in better reducing social isolation and loneliness?**

**Input answer here::**

**13 How can we ensure that the social care sector contributes to tackling social isolation and loneliness?**

**Input answer here::**

**14 What more can we do to encourage people to get involved in local groups that promote physical activity?**

**Input answer here::**

The Scottish Household Survey 2016 found that walking is the most common physical activity in Scotland. In addition, fewer people living in the most deprived parts of Scotland had exercised in the four weeks preceding the survey than in any other Index of Multiple Deprivation band. Likewise, the survey found that adults living in the most deprived areas of Scotland are more likely to live further away from their nearest green space, and more likely to be less satisfied with that space, and are less likely to use it, as compared to adults living in less deprived areas. These findings begin to point towards a relationship between quality of place and participation in physical activity. Improving the quality of Scotland's built environment, and in particular to provide accessible and attractive green infrastructure, and to enable active travel, will be an important part of the solution to participation.

**15 How can we better equip people with the skills to establish and nurture strong and positive social connections?**

Input answer here::

**16 How can we better ensure that our services that support children and young people are better able to identify where someone may be socially isolated, and capable of offering the right support?**

Input answer here::

**17 How can the third sector and social enterprise play a stronger role in helping to tackle social isolation and loneliness in communities?**

Input answer here::

**18 What more can the Scottish Government do to promote volunteering and help remove barriers to volunteering, particular for those who may be isolated?**

Input answer here::

**19 How can employers and business play their part in reducing social isolation and loneliness?**

Input answer here::

**20 What are the barriers presented by the lived environment in terms of socially connecting? How can these be addressed?**

Input answer here::

Spatial Planning for Health, research published by Public Health England, provides a number of principles for a built environment that supports good health, including good mental health. This includes neighbourhood design, housing, healthy food environments, the natural environment, and healthy food environments.

RTPI Scotland's answers to other questions in this consultation state our belief that placemaking should be central to a strategy to tackle social isolation and loneliness.

**21 How can cultural services and agencies play their part in reducing social isolation and loneliness?**

Input answer here::

**22 How can transport services play their part in reducing social isolation and loneliness?**

Input answer here::

Transport infrastructure is an integral part of the built environment. Accessible transport, including infrastructure for active travel, does not just enable people to access community facilities and face to face social contact, but can also support physical activity and recreation. In this response RTPI Scotland has already advocated its approach to collaborative place based investment and service delivery. Planning for transport infrastructure and services at the national, regional and local levels will be an essential part of this collaboration. We envisage that the introduction of Chief Planning Officers would go some distance to ensuring that National, Regional and Local Transport Plans are aligned with plans for land use and development, and likewise for health and social care strategies.

**23 How best can we ensure that people have both access to digital technology and the ability to use it?**

Input answer here::

## **Any other comments**

**24 Taking into account answers to questions elsewhere, is there anything else we should be doing that doesn't fall into any of these categories?**

Input answer here::

**25 Do you agree with the framework we have created to measure our progress in tackling social isolation and loneliness?**

Input answer here::

**26 Is there anything missing from this framework that you think is important for us to consider?**

Input answer here::

## **About you**

**What is your name?**

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**Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?**

Organisation

**What is your organisation?**

**Organisation:**

RTPI Scotland

**Are you responding on behalf of a community discussion that has taken place?**

No

**If you used our facilitation guide, please upload the Event Registration form here.**

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**The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:**

Publish response with name

**We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?**

Yes