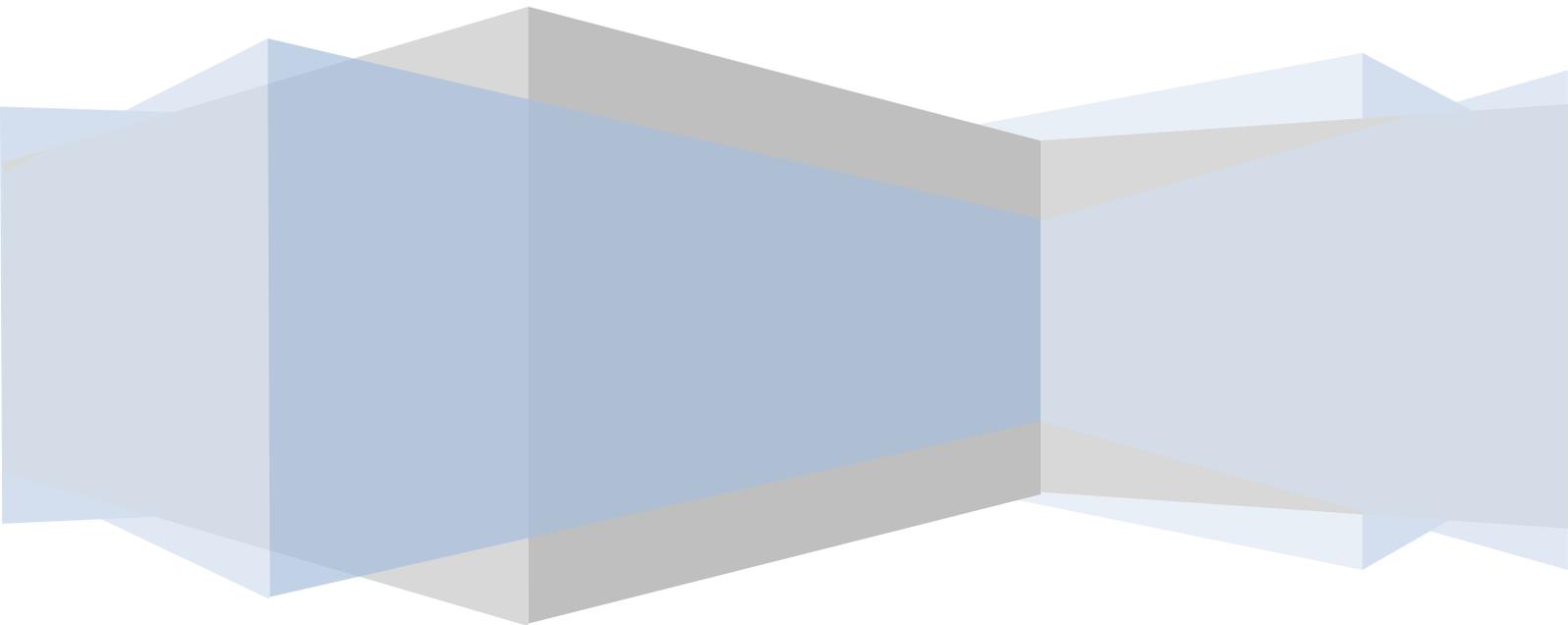




Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
gov.scot

# A CONNECTED SCOTLAND

Tackling social isolation and loneliness  
and building stronger social connections  
**Facilitation Guide**



# Purpose

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The Scottish Government and partners are working to develop a national strategy to tackle social isolation and loneliness.

We want to hear the views of a wide range of organisations, groups and individuals with an interest in addressing this experience to inform the strategy. We are particularly keen to ensure that the views of people living in Scotland who have direct experience of these issues are reflected in the strategy.

We are encouraging people and organisations across Scotland to hold discussions to talk about what should be in the strategy. This facilitation guide aims to help people to plan and hold events and to provide feedback on event discussions, which will be used to inform the next strategy.

If you are planning an engagement event, we would really appreciate it if you could let us know in advance so that we can build a picture of what is going on across Scotland. Please email us at [AConnectedScotland@gov.scot](mailto:AConnectedScotland@gov.scot) to tell us when and where your event will take place, and who you hope will attend.

## In this guide

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This short guide provides information for organisations and groups who want to contribute by hosting an event. It includes:

- background information on the Social isolation and loneliness strategy
- tips on holding an event and questions to discuss
- FAQs

# Sending your event feedback

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It is best to write up the feedback from your event while it is fresh, please return feedback within 10 days of your event taking place.

We are inviting responses to this consultation by 27 April 2018

Please respond to this consultation using the Scottish Government's consultation platform, Citizen Space. You view and respond to this consultation online at <https://consult.gov.scot/equality-unit/connected-scotland>

You can save and return to your responses while the consultation is still open. Please ensure that consultation responses are submitted before the closing date of 27 April 2018

If you are unable to respond online, please send your response along with the completed Respondent Information Form to:

Social Isolation and Loneliness Consultation  
Equality Unit  
3H North  
Victoria Quay  
Edinburgh  
EH6 6QQ

Please pass the **Event Registration Form** found at the end of this guide around the delegates and ask them to complete it.

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# Background

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In 2015, the Equal Opportunities Committee of the Scottish Parliament held an inquiry into age and social isolation. This was the first Inquiry of its kind in the world, and it identified social isolation and loneliness as a major public health issue.

The Scottish Government has made a commitment to developing a national strategy to tackle this issue. We want to build a modern, inclusive Scotland where everyone has the opportunity to flourish and live a high quality life. Part of what impacts on our quality of life is our network of social relationships and connections. And we also need a range of things to live full lives – access to education and fair work, high quality and affordable housing, a decent standard of living and the opportunity to get on and succeed.

In recognition of this, our strategy will focus on two main priorities:

- empowering communities to lead
- ensuring Government plays its part

The Government has an important role in providing leadership to the country and creating the conditions for change to happen. But many others also have a role – right down to people as individuals, and communities themselves. If Scotland is to be an inclusive country where people enjoy meaningful social connections and feel part of their communities and wider society, then everyone in Scotland needs to play their part. That's why we want to work collaboratively with a range of partners – local government, the third sector, and communities themselves – to ensure that the Strategy helps to create a climate where social isolation and loneliness can be reduced.

# Tips for Holding an Event

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There are a number of different ways to gather feedback to contribute to the engagement process. Your approach could form part of a regular meeting or existing activity, such as a community group meeting. Some groups or organisations may wish to organise specific events, perhaps focusing on local community-based responses to social isolation and loneliness.

## **Who Should be Invited?**

As part of the engagement, we would like to hear from organisations and individuals working to reduce loneliness as well as people with direct experience of these issues.

When planning an event it is useful to think about all the different organisations and groups who are already working to reduce social isolation and loneliness in your area, or who could become involved in providing support. We are encouraging events to include as many of those groups of people as possible. If you run services or activities we are particularly keen that you think about planning an event which they will feel confident contributing to and would encourage you to involve them in planning for the event.

However, you do not need to have all of these groups represented at your event. You can still hold an event to contribute the views of your group to the engagement. As events will take place across the country and across a range of groups and organisations, there should be opportunities for everyone to contribute. This is why we ask about who attended your event and would like you to let us know in advance if you are planning an event. That way we can identify if there are any gaps in participation before the end of the engagement.

# Planning An Engagement Event

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It is up to you what type of event will suit your group or the people you want to engage with. Things to consider include:

- is your venue accessible and comfortable for everyone who might want to attend?
- is there enough space for everyone?
- you should make sure there is water available for everyone and might also want to provide refreshments.
- is your event at a good time for everyone who might want to come?
- what are people expecting from the event?
- try not to raise participants' expectations about what the engagement can do – it is not a problem solving session but an opportunity for people to contribute their views.
- you might also want the engagement to be part of a wider event or an existing activity. Think about how you will get people to participate if they have come to the event for another reason.
- are there other events being planned in your area?
- you could work with other groups or organisations to hold an event or promote each other's events to give people more opportunities to engage.
- how much will participants know about social isolation and loneliness and to ways of responding to it? (This may inform how much time you want to introduce the topic or to enable detailed discussions.)
- You might want to read the [Equal Opportunities Committee Report](#) or websites such as [The Joe Cox Foundation](#) or [the Campaign To End Loneliness](#) before the event to find out what is happening.

# Event Facilitation

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Facilitation is important to support and focus the discussions, whichever way you choose to run your event.

The facilitator's role is to support and focus the discussion on the questions and balance opportunities for participants to speak. It is also to encourage people to speak, using prompt questions, and to manage participant interactions. It is extremely important that the facilitator should remain neutral and not seek to influence the content of the discussion. The facilitator should ensure that all participants have an opportunity to speak and that nobody is able to dominate the discussion to the exclusion of others.

In addition to a facilitator it is useful to have a scribe to record discussions, as it is very hard to scribe and facilitate. You could ask participants to volunteer to scribe or use volunteers from within your organisation if resources allow.

You may wish to ask people to write on post-its which can then be grouped into themes or priorities. You may also want to use flip-charts to record responses to each question. However, do not worry if you do not have these items, ordinary paper can be used instead.

At the end of the event, the facilitator should make sure that all of the information needed for feedback has been recorded. This includes demographic information about your group as well as their answers to the questions. To assist with capturing demographics we have included a tally registration form at the end of this guide. We recommend you print a copy of the form and ask people to add tally marks against the relevant categories for them as they arrive. If you prefer, you could print individual sheets for participants to complete.

The purpose of gathering demographic information is to help us make sure a wide range of people have been involved in the engagement. If anyone does not want to complete the registration form or provide demographic information that is their choice, they can still contribute to the engagement - but please include them in the total participant figure.

# The Questions

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There are 3 questions we are asking you to discuss and provide feedback on as part of this engagement. It is important that the same questions are used so that we can use information from all of the events to contribute to developing the new strategy.

The questions are:

- 1. What** needs to change in your community to reduce social isolation and loneliness and increase the range and quality of social connections?
- 2. Who** is key at local level in driving this change, and what do you want to see them doing more (or less) of?
- 3. What does Government need to do** nationally to better empower communities and create the conditions to allow social connections to flourish?

In asking these questions, facilitators can prompt participants with the key themes of the strategy. Participants may cover all themes or may choose to focus on one or two. It is also not necessary to stick solely to these themes, if participants identify other important themes we'd like to hear about them.

Participants may also wish to consider the needs of different groups of people, e.g. women, men, children, older people, disabled people, people of different faiths (and none), ethnic minority people, people of different sexual orientations, gender identities. Remember that social isolation and loneliness is and can be experienced by people of all ages and stages of life, so avoid restricting yourself to stereotypical groups.

While participants are asked to be aspirational, they should bear in mind that this strategy is a Scottish strategy. All issues raised in your feedback will be noted. Unfortunately, it will not be possible for the strategy to address issues which are outside the scope of the Scottish Government.

# Suggested Format for an Event

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<p><b>Introducing the Engagement</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• welcome everyone and introduce yourself</li> <li>• set the context (see suggested script on page 9)</li> <li>• complete the event registration form</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ice breaker</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to introduce people if your participants don't all know each other or to get people talking</li> <li>• it is important to facilitate discussion by getting people talking. It can be easier to do this if you ask them to discuss impersonal and non-specialist topics. This allows everyone to get involved regardless of knowledge or social boundaries. For example "give a summary of the last book you read or film you watched to the person next to you"</li> </ul>
<p><b>Question 1 Discussion</b></p>	<p><b>“What needs to change in your community to reduce social isolation and loneliness and increase social connection?”</b></p> <p>This question allows participants to identify issues relating to social isolation and loneliness in their communities and what priorities they want to discuss in Question 2.</p> <p><b>Facilitation tips:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We suggest you dedicate about 30% of your discussion to this question</li> <li>• You could ask people to discuss in pairs as this saves time, or you could brainstorm as a group before identifying what issues are most important for further discussion in question 2</li> <li>• You might want to group issues under themes (these could be the themes identified by the Connected Scotland strategy or themes identified by your group)</li> <li>• Toward the end of the allotted time, if there is not already a consensus on what to discuss in question 2, ask participants to vote on what they think are the most important issues to discuss</li> </ul>

<p><b>Question 2 Discussion</b></p>	<p><b>“Who is key at local level in driving this change, and what do you want to see them doing more (or less) of?”</b></p> <p>This question gets participants to focus on the future and recognise that it can take time for change to happen. It also asks participants to give reasons for the changes they want to see prioritised – this will help us to understand the problem and plan how we can address issues.</p> <p><b>Facilitation tips:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• we suggest you dedicate about 50% of your time to this question</li> <li>• break up your time so that each issue your group wants to discuss is given a fair share of the time</li> <li>• remember it’s important that participants who don’t usually get heard are given time to articulate their points. To help this, you could review all the issues and check if there is anything else to add, or allow some time at the end of the event for people to add anything that wasn’t raised during the discussion. If you are going to allow time for people to contribute individual thoughts at the end, make them aware of this at the start of the event,</li> </ul>
<p><b>Question 3 discussion</b></p>	<p><b>“ What does Government need to do nationally to better empower communities and create the conditions to allow social connections to flourish?”</b></p> <p>This question demonstrates that it is all of our responsibility to effect change in the areas where we have power, control or influence. It also focuses participants on what they can do by highlighting that there is a role for everybody to support the strategy.</p> <p><b>Facilitation tips:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• we suggest you dedicate around 20% of your time to this question</li> <li>• you could pair people up and ask them to have a discussion about what they can offer. Around 2 minutes each should be long enough for people to put their thoughts to their neighbour</li> <li>• bring everyone together for a general discussion about the question</li> </ul>

<b>Is there anything else the participants think is important?</b>	Provide a chance for people to highlight anything that wasn't captured under the three questions. This can be recorded in the final comments box of the template.
<b>Finish</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• thank everyone for coming</li><li>• explain what happens next (see suggested script on page 10)</li></ul>

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# Suggested Scripts

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## Context

Key things to cover:

- what the engagement is about
- why it is important, including that everyone's views are heard and respected
- what is going to happen today
- what is going to happen after today

## Suggested script:

“This engagement is a chance for you to have your voice heard regarding social isolation and loneliness. Personal experiences are particularly valuable to helping to steer the direction of the strategy. Because the Scottish Government aim to be transparent and accessible to all, it is important that everyone here has the opportunity to speak and be heard. With this in mind, please be mindful of talking over people.

We will be discussing three questions during the event:

1. What needs to change in your community to reduce social isolation and loneliness and increase social connection?
2. Who is key at local level in driving this change, and what do you want to see them doing more (or less) of?
3. What does Government need to do nationally to better empower communities and create the conditions to allow social connections to flourish?

After today's event, all of the notes recorded will be written up and sent to the Scottish Government to inform the strategy. It is important that everyone's views are heard and respected so that the feedback provided is as complete as possible. Events like this will be taking place across Scotland with lots of different groups and organisations.”

***[You may want to explain how your event will run – for example by splitting into smaller discussion groups – and then begin discussions with question 1]***

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# Conclusion

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Key things to cover:

- thank everyone
- what will happen with the feedback
- next steps

Suggested script:

“Thank you for taking part in today’s engagement event. Your time and contribution to discussions is really appreciated.

The notes we have taken today will be written up and submitted to the Scottish Government, along with feedback from other engagement events taking place all over Scotland this summer.

The Scottish Government, will bring all of the feedback they receive together and identify the issues which are most important to everyone. That information will be used to help write the strategy which will respond to people’s experience of social isolation and loneliness .

Making changes will take time. As we talked about during question 3, there is also a role for everyone in supporting the strategy and contributing to the change we want to see.”

# FAQ

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## **What do we mean by social isolation and loneliness?**

Social isolation refers to the quality and quantity of the social relationships a person has. These can be intimate relationships with another person, or ties to a larger group or community. Loneliness is the feeling experienced by a person when the reality of their social relationships don't meet their expectations. These two things are not always linked. Someone can feel lonely whilst having a lot of social connections and a person with few relationships may not feel lonely.

## **What causes Social isolation?**

Social isolation has many causes and someone can become socially isolated at any point in their lives. Older people and younger people can be equally effected, as can immigrants, LGBTI people, disabled people and people going through significant transitions in their personal lives.

## **What effect can social isolation have on people?**

Other than feeling lonely, social isolation has been shown to have serious health implications. The Scottish Health Survey identified that adults with poorer social support were more likely to experience mental health issues, and those who suffer from anxiety, depression or stress are at increased risk of experiencing severe loneliness.

## **What can I do to help?**

Charities and Third Sector organisations are often looking for people to volunteer. It may be worth asking the person running this event about local opportunities.

Alternatively, you can search opportunities in your community by visiting [www.volunteerscotland.net](http://www.volunteerscotland.net)

## **Who can I turn to for help if I feel socially isolated?**

**Breathing Space** is a confidential service for people in Scotland experiencing anxiety, depression or low mood :0800 83 85 87

**Samaritans** is a U.K wide charity that offers help and support to people who are suicidal or feel despair:116 123 (free from any phone and open 24/7, 365 days a year)

**Childline** offer a chance for children and young people to talk to someone about what concerns them: 0800 1111

**Age Scotland** is a charity that is dedicated to helping older people enjoy "better later lives". Their helpline provides advice, information and friendship to older people: 0800 12 44 222

# Event Registration Form

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This form is important to help us make sure we have heard a diverse range of people. Please add a tally mark beside the relevant categories below. There is no need to record your name.

Event organiser:		Date:	
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I am representing a group or organisation . If so, I represent:	
Local Authority	
Charity (employee or volunteer)	
A local voluntary group	
Business or private sector	
Other (please specify)	

My organisation:	
Provides services in the local community	
Plans / coordinates services	

I am aged:	
0-15 years	
16-34 years	
35-64 years	
65+ years	

I identify as:	
Female	
Male	
Other (specify if you wish)	

I class myself as having a protected characteristic	
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Total number of participants	
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## Respondent Information Form

**Please Note** this form **must** be completed and returned with your response.

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

- Individual  
 Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

Phone number

Address

Postcode

Email

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

- Publish response with name  
 Publish response only (without name)  
 Do not publish response

**Information for organisations:**

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.

If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

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  
 No