

Dear Fellow EA Members,

The Scottish Government want to hear from you! There is currently a live consultation on a national strategy to tackle social isolation and loneliness in Scotland. ([A Connected Scotland: Tackling social isolation and loneliness and building stronger social connections](#))

This represents a significant **opportunity to share some of the good work churches are doing in communities across Scotland**. We have been engaging at a senior level in the Scottish Government on this issue and have been invited to encourage as many members as possible to respond. So we are taking the rare step of contacting all our EA Scotland members to invite you to respond.

The consultation outlines the government's strategy to tackling social isolation from childhood, through to old age, however it fails to mention the role of the Church in communities.

There are three key questions that form the basis of this consultation:

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 a 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?

We want to be sharing as many good news stories as we can of the role churches are playing in offering support to those who socially isolated or lonely. We believe that Church should be a place at the heart of every community and are fundamental at a local level in creating communities.

Some important points to consider from the consultation:

- The Scottish Government has committed to developing a national strategy to tackle social isolation and loneliness, it is right to praise the Scottish

Government for this and support them in their claims that social isolation and loneliness can affect anyone – at all ages and stages of life.

- The Scottish Government recognises that the biggest impact can only be delivered if communities are enabled to lead this work; everyone has a responsibility to ensure that communities are more connected and cohesive, and that principles like kindness get greater traction in society.
- Additionally, recent research by the Carnegie UK Trust has identified that kindness can go a long way to reducing social isolation and loneliness, and has also identified what contributes to creating kinder communities. This work has helped kick-start a conversation about the importance of kindness, which we think is important to welcome.
- The Scottish Government recognises that the responsibility for this does not lie within a single policy area within government or a single organisation and that the impacts of loneliness include mental health issues, the likelihood of developing clinical dementia in older people, and physical health impacts that are comparable to obesity or smoking.
- The consultation focuses on promoting the Third Sector and the desire to promote volunteering as it has a positive impact on communities. While this is extremely important at no point in the consultation are churches mentioned. We would encourage you to talk about the important role the church plays pastorally in tackling social isolation and loneliness. It's also important to share examples of this and provide any case studies you might have include befriending networks, support groups for children and young people, clubs for those with additional support needs, etc.

Responses to this consultation are being invited 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>.

If you are unable to respond online, please send your response along with the completed Respondent Information Form (see "Handling your Response" section of the consultation) to:

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

EH6 6QQ

If we can support you in anyway responding to this consultation, or if you don't have time to submit a response but would like to share some examples from your local context, please contact us at k.turner@eauk.org.

Kind Regards,
The EA Scotland Team