

A CONNECTED SCOTLAND
Tackling social isolation and loneliness and building
stronger social connections



Respondent Information Form (RIF)

Please Note this form **must** be returned with your response to ensure that we handle your response appropriately.

1. Name/Organisation Name

The Salvation Army

Title Mr Ms Mrs Miss Dr

Please tick as appropriate (if completing electronically, double click on box and select default value as 'checked')

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3. Permissions - I am responding as...

Individual / **Group/Organisation**

Please tick as appropriate

(a) Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site)?

Please tick as appropriate

Yes **No**

(c) The name and address of your organisation **will be** made available to the public (in the Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site).

(b) Where confidentiality is not requested, we will make your responses available to the public on the following basis

Please tick ONE of the following boxes

Yes, make my response, name and address all available

or

Yes, make my response available, but not my name and address

or

Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address

Are you content for your **response** to be made available?

Please tick as appropriate

Yes **No**

(d) 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?

Please tick as appropriate **Yes** **No**

CONSULTATION RESPONSE



The Salvation Army Scotland is grateful for the opportunity to respond to this consultation.

Through its network of 75 corps (local church and community centres), 17 centres for people experiencing homelessness, two residential homes and a day centre for older people and a centre for adults with learning disabilities, The Salvation Army operates a wide range of social programmes which directly and indirectly seek to combat the causes of loneliness and isolation.

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

Loneliness is a significant and growing issue for many older people across Scotland and the UK. Its impacts are devastating and costly with comparable health impacts to smoking and obesity; and close links to deprivation.

Loneliness is amenable to a number of effective interventions, which are often low cost, particularly when voluntary effort is harnessed. Taking action to address loneliness can reduce the need for health and care services in future. Effective action to combat loneliness is best delivered in partnership and action to combat loneliness should take place in the context of a wider strategy to promote older people's wellbeing.

Encouraging fewer virtual interactions and more physical interactions, alongside the recognition that not everyone has access to electronic equipment or the ability or desire to fully engage in a digital world and social interaction, would bring about a helpful change.

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

In its 2016 report *Connecting Communities*, the Church Urban Fund noted that loneliness or social isolation is one of the most commonly cited social issues, with 64% of Anglican church leaders reporting it as a major or significant problem in their area, up from 58% in 2011¹. The report goes on to say:

Churches and faith groups have an important, and in many ways, unique role to play. Research has shown that churches often act as the glue of their local communities; they invite people into communities of friendship and build resilience by enabling networks of mutual support to grow. As the number of people experiencing loneliness is likely to increase in the years to come, primarily as a result of our ageing population, this kind of local and relational response will become even more important.

¹ *Connecting Communities: The Impact of Loneliness and the Opportunities for Churches to Respond*, available at <https://www.cuf.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=06a66cd5-15c0-4fe5-a837-f5f417a2d2b7> [Accessed 27/03/2018 12:07]

The Salvation Army believes that that our Corps (Churches) and social centres are uniquely well placed to carry out the types of activities that have been proven to be most effective in reducing loneliness: parent and toddler groups, music activities, youth and children's clubs, special interest groups, support for people experiencing homelessness, addictions, financial hardship or relationship breakdown, and worship services of various kinds for those who have a faith background or want to go on a spiritual journey.

We believe that local community facilities are essential for general well-being and specifically to combat isolation. Health, leisure, fitness and social spaces are needed in each community. Alongside providing necessary services to local people, they could provide space at low cost for community-based groups to meet.

Where official facilities do not exist or have closed due to cuts and mergers, churches and faith groups could provide a hub where agencies may come to provide services. This already occurs in some communities, but with support from government it could become more common. This may also create opportunity for people to discover what churches already provide within their community.

Local businesses have a role to play, first through simple friendliness in getting to know their customers. If they maintain information about local services, they would be well placed to signpost people to other forms of help. With regular customers, they may become aware of needs that could be met.

Some work is also needed around provision of services such as banking and post offices in communities. These are essential, yet many older people or families with low income living in remote areas or parts of large towns and cities with few amenities cannot access them. An agreement could be made amongst the banks to provide a service in each community at least one day a week, hosted by one bank behalf of all the others.

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

Social isolation occurs in connection with many other health and social issues, some of which are being addressed by church and community groups. For example, a recent report from Go Well² indicates that beyond providing the basic necessities, foodbanks provide emotional support and signposting that can go some way towards alleviating social isolation.

Government at national and local level needs to learn to harness the work already carried out at the neighbourhood level by community facilitators and grass-roots activists such as The Salvation Army and other faith-based organisations. These

² *Food and beyond: exploring the foodbank experience*, available from http://www.gowellonline.com/publications/450_food_and_beyond_-_exploring_the_foodbank_experience
[Accessed: 23/04/2018 12:04]

groups are well placed to understand and build on existing community capacity and assets and to recognise and respond to individual needs and circumstances.

However, a change would be needed to the current commissioning model. Government at national and local level tends to identify particular problems in specific groups of people and targets funds at large scale interventions. Church and community groups work on the ground with individuals or small groups of mixed ages and backgrounds with a variety of needs. Often the two approaches do not meet, or may even clash. For example, a church lunch club may be offered funding from the local council on the basis that it catered for over 65's. However, this would mean turning away the students on study from university enjoy mixing with a variety of people, the lady in her fifties with learning disabilities, and the family with young children who benefit from free meals for the kids during holiday time, not to mention the handful of people who come for a bit of company.

All local authorities have Community Development Plans. Alongside housing, business and large scale health and social care, these should include details of how the council will work with local groups to meet the basic social needs of people who may not need the formal level of care at which the authority may excel. Small scale grants should be available where necessary (though they may not be required) but without the limits normally placed on funding. This would allow Service provisions to be adapted to meet the needs of those who are lonely as well as providing specific interventions as required.

East Lothian Council employs community development workers to liaise with local groups and facilitate joint working. Such a partnership would have the effect of connecting lonely people into a local network, strengthening the existing community groups and relieving the health and social care services of some of their burden.

We would also call on the government to ensure user friendly and affordable access to digital inclusion captures everyone who wishes to engage. With many services moving online, anyone who is lacking digital skills will become increasingly isolated. Where services are provided, such as in libraries, it is important that help is on hand for those who need it. On the other hand, we would stress the importance of maintaining the option of face-to-face encounters in service provision as a means of combating isolation.

We believe that there should be a review of current city development plans to encourage growth and sustainability of local businesses in communities rather than the large multi shop complexes on industrial estates located away from local communities. Many people who are isolated have no independent means of transport; for those with poor physical or mental health, using public transport can be very difficult. Essential services should be maintained as close as possible to the centre of a community to avoid create further isolation.

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

In general we agree with the definitions offered on the basis that social isolation and loneliness are significant factors in both the cause and impact of people experiencing homelessness and can be a major cause for repeat homelessness across our services

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

In general we agree with the evidence sources the Scottish Government is drawing from. However, we would propose that more evidence is sought from research completed within the homelessness sector as this will highlight and evidence the impact that social isolation and loneliness has and continues to have for individuals experiencing homelessness and addictions. The Salvation Army has both historic and ongoing research in homelessness and addictions, the outcomes of which we would be happy to share.

Question 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?

Women, faith and social cohesion

Ghazala Mir, John Lawler and Mary Godfrey, July 2010

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/women-faith-social-cohesion>

This report looked at the role of women and faith in building cohesive communities by bringing people from different backgrounds together. Four levels of 'bridging' are described:

1. Hospitality, where people met as a guest/host at places such as a place of worship;
2. Information gathering/awareness, where positive messages were used to educate people about diverse communities;
3. Real meeting, where people got to know one another and found common ground; and
4. Meeting as equals, where people could also talk about problems and concerns, with this form of bridging being the most effective for creating cohesive communities.

Reconnections is a new service covering the whole of Worcestershire and aims to tackle loneliness amongst older people by supporting them to connect with their communities through their own interests. The service is open to anyone living in Worcestershire, who is over 50 years old and is suffering from or at risk of feeling lonely.

Reconnections is a partnership of local organisations and groups, led by Age UK Herefordshire & Worcestershire, and is based on international best practice around reducing loneliness in older people.

Reconnections provides tailored, one to one support for older people to help them find and engage with activities which interest them in their local areas. Together with a network of volunteers, the service aims to help older people enjoy activities and build connections: from coffee mornings and bridge clubs through to Zumba classes

and golf lessons, the service will find the right activities and networks and support individuals to take part in them.

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

In our experience **Group-based activities are better than one-to-one interventions.** Evidence has shown that group activities are more effective in reducing loneliness than one-to-one interventions³. Belonging to multiple social groups can help to prevent loneliness developing in the first place and can also benefit those who are already experiencing chronic loneliness and its associated impacts such as anxiety and depression. Indeed, belonging to a range of groups may enhance our resilience, enabling us to cope more effectively with difficult life changes such as the death of a loved one, job loss or a move.

Community cafes, drop-in centres and day centres operated by The Salvation Army, other churches and community associations across Scotland provide nutritious meals and snacks for people of all ages and backgrounds. Whilst some facilities are aimed at groups with specific needs, such as people experiencing homelessness, or with mental health or addiction issues, a key part of their ethos is to treat the whole person. Some of our projects will include activities to enhance life skills, but all include an element of social interaction which may be looking in the lives of many who attend.

Most of our corps (church and community centres) also have various groups that are open to the public such as Parent and Toddlers, children's and youth clubs, groups specifically for men or women, and special interest groups for gardening, crafts, photography and many others. Again, an important part of these groups for many participants is the opportunity for social interaction.

We have specific examples aimed particularly at people experiencing homelessness.

Niddry Street drop in: operating Mon-Fri from 9-1pm. Initially the service was set up to support street homeless and rough sleepers by providing breakfast and lunch, shower facilities, washing facilities and support to access other service including health, addictions, housing and benefit offices. However the service now supports a range of client groups that include individuals living in communities who use the service to maintain and build social networks

Drop in at Peterhead and Fraserburgh Corps: These corps (church) based programme were established to provide a time for the local communities to come together over a meal. Other agencies attend including health, social work, substance misuse teams along with the team from The Shield project to support individuals with a wide range of daily challenges. This is a good example of every expression of The

³ Cattan, M et al (2005), Preventing Social Isolation and Loneliness Among Older People: a systematic review of health promotion interventions, *Ageing & Society* 25, pp 41–67
[Available at <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/61f6/c1dda4962620a8c4354019bef6022319da43.pdf> , Accessed: 27/03/2018 13:30]

Salvation Army working together to serve the local community which is demonstrating examples of individuals building social networks.

Perth weekly drop in service: Established over the past couple of years with the Perth Corps (Church) and Skinnergate Lifehouse⁴ working together to provide a space and time for the community to come together for food and practical support

Dundee Furniture and Volunteering project: Initially this was set up as a volunteering project to provide an opportunity for clients living in Strathmore Lodge & Burnside Mill lifehouses to develop and augment new skills that can be transferred in to employment while providing a purpose and positive relationships. This has now developed into a reuse furniture project that has seen former clients become employees and peer mentors for current clients

In addition to the above, a range of educational programmes operate in Skinnergate Lifehouse and the Perth and Niddry Street Drop-ins that support individuals to acquire new skills and knowledge that can lead to potential employment which in turn builds confidence and self-esteem. Aside from educational and employment benefits, these programmes can enable individuals to build new social networks both during the courses and once they find employment.

Our Scotland Drug and Alcohol Strategy employs four specialist Drug and Alcohol Support Workers, based in local Salvation Army corps (church and community centres). An important part of the programme is reinforcing social networks, in part by working with the client's family and in part by linking in to social and community activities operated from the corps building.

Befriending schemes are perhaps the longest established loneliness intervention that The Salvation Army has had. We run 10 befriending schemes across the United Kingdom. Befriending schemes represent a low cost and effective remedy for some of the most vulnerable older individuals experiencing loneliness, in particular those who are housebound. Whilst befriending schemes are long established in many areas, practice is becoming ever more sophisticated with increased attention paid to peer-to-peer models of befriending and an emphasis on matching individuals based on mutual interests. Use of technologies such as Skype builds new dimensions to the model, creating and reinforcing networks for those unable to get out and join group activities. Wherever possible, the ultimate goal of such befriending services should be to help people access the type of group activities that have been proven to reduce loneliness most effectively.

Dementia can lead to isolation even within a group setting. The Salvation Army has developed "Singing by Heart", an interactive session featuring popular songs and hymns from past decades, with the aim of engaging the long term memory of those with dementia, thus enabling them to participate in a social and worship activity. Mental and physical exercises are also built in to the programme, which is designed to bring together people with dementia and those without.

⁴ We call our residential homeless centres Lifehouses to indicate they are places of hope for a new life rather than dormitories for people with nowhere else to go.

Question 8: How can we all work together to 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?

We should develop school education programmes so young people at schools are aware of the issues surrounding loneliness and isolation. Within The Salvation Army Homelessness Services, we have worked with South Lanarkshire Council and Highland Council in raising awareness of homelessness and addictions as part of the school curriculum.

Volunteering opportunities in centres for older people could bring together different generations for the benefit of all.

Question 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?

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation⁵, in their research, suggest that if we are to deal with loneliness in our communities, if we are to help those who are struggling, for whatever reason, if we are to develop our own sense of connectedness, we need to work on creating 'Kinder Communities.' Even small acts of kindness make a significant impact on individuals. Despite a growing use and dependence on the internet and the virtual world, the report makes the point that 'we all still live in real houses, on real streets and rely on real people to make our lives work.'

Informal research undertaken within The Salvation Army, by direct intervention and interviews by our network of Older Peoples Specialists, indicates older people talked about what made 'a good life' and their experiences of ageing. The research found variation in the resources available to people to deal with the changes that accompany ageing and to actively manage transition and loss in their lives. Being part of a faith-based community which values you and where there is organic mutual support was prized, and there was a strong feeling of not wishing to 'be a burden' on family.

Localities were identified as of the utmost importance – as frailty increases people become increasingly affected by what is immediately available (both physically and socially); locality also influenced people's sense of personal identity. Social relationships, leisure activities and an interest in the world and in other people were seen as central to a good life. Neighbourliness (keeping an eye out for people, little errands, saying hello) was found to be important and existent, but seen as declining and fragile as it depended on a minority of 'good' neighbours.

Again, we would highlight the need to recognise the importance of churches and faith groups in local communities. "Love your neighbour as yourself"⁶ is a commandment of Jesus for Christians to follow, and members of churches often

⁵ <https://www.jrf.org.uk/>

⁶ *The Holy Bible, New International Version*, Mark 12:31

carry out acts of kindness individually and collectively, alongside the formal programmes of the church.

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

We call on the Scottish Government to review the current housing allocation strategy and process for individuals transitioning from temporary accommodation to enable individuals to have a real choice about where they live (as opposed to having just one offer and being forced to accept this regardless of appropriateness of offer) and time to make this a home, rather than having to move into an empty shell with no furniture or basic cooking facilities. Providing the right support at the time of transition will lead to a better chance of successful tenancy and improved sense of well-being, which in turn eases the process of social integration.

Question 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?

There should be a greater awareness of location of housing being offered to people in temporary accommodation, as this has an impact on the well-being of the tenant. Moving someone away from a familiar area breaks social networks, potentially leading to isolation and decline and repeat homelessness. This is especially when the tenant has health or financial problems that will prevent travel to visit family and friends.

Consideration should be given to improving the quality of social housing being offered. Whilst there are very good schemes, in some areas the housing is of poor quality, which adds to the problems faced by the tenant.

We would call for a review of the time scale people are given to transition from temporary accommodation to permanent housing. Moving is a stressful process for anyone and takes planning and preparation. Someone moving from temporary accommodation to permanent housing is given little warning or time to move, resulting in unnecessary stress and potentially moving into a house with barely any furniture. Aside from the physical and mental health implications, they may be reluctant to invite family or friends to visit, further increasing their isolation.

We believe that local government should engage with and work with churches and faith groups at national and local level to establish structured and meaningful befriending services for those who are socially isolated. (See the answer to Q7)

Brief mention is given in the consultation document to disabled people. The Salvation Army has little formal work specifically for disabled people; we seek to include them as much as possible in our regular activities, giving them responsibility within their abilities as we would for someone without an identified disability. This is important to avoid isolation and loneliness in the present, but will also equip the disabled person to achieve their best in the future.

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

The local pharmacist/chemist, physiotherapist, nurse practitioner, proactive care team can all play their part in signposting, giving advice and information on services and activities available in the local area, both statutory and voluntary.

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

We would urge the Scottish Government to adjust funding models to enable continued support to individuals in the community during the transition from temporary accommodation to independent living in the community. A successful transition is important for the sustainability of the tenancy and the future wellbeing of the tenant. Support provided at this time is likely to reduce the need for major interventions in the future.

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

Part of the role of local and national government could be to provide a central space for gathering information on activity based groups and supply that through social services, surgeries, leisure and community centres.

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

It is our experience that partnership working between statutory & non-statutory organisations and local grass-roots activists both in terms of financial support and infrastructure support offer an intentional opportunity to promote skills, and social cohesion.

As a result of our local presence and place in existing community life across Scotland. Salvation Army churches are able to welcome people of all ages and stages of life into the new friendships and activity groups that help to reduce loneliness. They can also offer people opportunities to give, as well as to receive. By allowing people to take ownership of those groups, to volunteer and to give of themselves to others, faith-based communities can help to build people's wellbeing, self-esteem and sense of purpose. In our increasingly fragmented society it is crucial that faith-based communities continue to respond to the issue of loneliness, offering hope and friendship to those most isolated in our communities.

Face to face conversations are an important part of building relationships and social networks. Whilst there are many benefits for modern technology, we believe it would be helpful to reduce or eliminate the use of mobile technology phones during the school day to encourage young people to interact and form actual positive relationships.

Question 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?

Most churches and community centres have dedicated youth and children's workers, many of whom have connections with local schools where they build strong relationships with the young people. This enables them to be a bridge between the formal environment of the classroom and church or community based groups that create space for meeting other young people.

Where there is a good working relationship with the school, opportunity exists to work together to identify and support young people who are in danger of being isolated. The Salvation Army is developing training for its children's and youth workers in identifying potential mental health problems and seeking help before these lead to isolation.

Youth and children's workers need to be aware of the dangers posed by social media for increasing social isolation, either by emphasising online contact over face-to-face meetings or by exclusion from particular groups. The best way to combat isolation is to create intentional relationships with young people, emphasising quality over quantity.

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

The Salvation Army has a long history of social enterprise with a view to assisting people out of poverty, addiction or isolation. The Dundee furniture project mentioned in reply to Q7 is only one of many charity shops and furniture projects operating across Scotland and the wider United Kingdom. They provide a service to the community in reducing waste, reusing unwanted items which are offered for sale at prices affordable to people on low incomes. Although managers are usually paid, the majority of workers will be volunteers of all ages. For older people, the main attraction is the social interaction and a sense of purpose; younger people may be referred through job centres, probation or from their school. Although there is usually a specific trigger for volunteering, everyone benefits from the social interactions. And funds raised benefit the wider work of the parent organisation in the community and across the nation.

The Salvation Army's social enterprises are often operated alongside another programme: the historic Hadleigh Farm training centre in Essex operates a tea room, rare breeds farm, horticultural garden and woodworking shop; the Booth House Lifehouse in Swindon operates Recycles, offering training in cycle maintenance whilst recycling unwanted bicycles which are also available for hire. The essential ingredients are, a local need and an outlet for the product coupled with skilled trainers and a seed group of willing workers. Social enterprise can be an ideal way to include people with disabilities, or those returning to work after physical or mental trauma. Learning to work in a team will enhance their social skills and build resilience.

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

One barrier to volunteering is the historic requirement on jobseekers to spend the maximum time possible seeking paid work. Volunteering is a helpful stepping stone towards permanent work for people with long term health problems, or who have suffered physical or mental trauma. Volunteering provides the skills necessary to carry out work and also builds self-esteem in the volunteer. As the Scottish Government picks up responsibility for employability programmes, it should consider encouraging volunteering alongside looking for work. Employers may look more favourably on someone who has chosen to give up their time to help others than one who has spent 35 hours a week writing letters and making phone calls to employers.

In many parts of Scotland, transport to work (paid or voluntary) is difficult and expensive. Although organisations may refund expenses (usually retrospectively) smaller groups with little income may struggle to do so. The Scottish Government should consider offering bus passes to people who are registered as volunteers, or alternatively a grant towards travelling. This issue should also be considered alongside travel to work or for benefit purposes in any transport policy.

For people with disabilities, there may be added barriers such as access alterations or special equipment which the volunteer body does not have funds to provide. The Scottish Government should look at means to facilitate provisions for disabled volunteers, possibly in a similar manner to Access to Work, or through existing local health and social services.

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

Local businesses and employers can give as part of their contribution to local community, voluntary employee hours. These hours can be used to support local activities aimed at combatting and reducing loneliness and isolation i.e. community tea parties, local befriending schemes, shopping buddies, gardening, walking groups, book clubs.

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

A striking theme in our experience is the connection between loneliness and place. In some places both in Scotland and the UK how challenging it is creating community when there's no shared space in which people can meet. In Rural Communities it is clear that when services are far away, there's an impact on people's well-being and experience of isolation.

Our experience as a faith group is about building community right where we are - in our communities our neighbourhoods, our villages etc. Combating loneliness involves thinking near and thinking small. It's about creating "*little places of belonging*", grasping the potential of "*here*".

For people who have experienced homelessness, availability, location and quality of social housing available for individuals in temporary accommodation is a major issue. Often people in rural areas or small towns will have to move to another area to find temporary accommodation. This puts them at a disadvantage by breaking their social networks and support services. If they have to move again, this only makes matters worse.

We would recommend removal of the one offer policy to enable people to really choose where they want to live (which is often where family and friends live) rather than being forced to accept the first offer they receive, and then to ensure appropriate support structures are readily available, helping them to rebuild their lives in the place where they are known.

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

Cultural services and agencies can bring together people from similar backgrounds for shared interests. On the other hand, they may also provide opportunities for New Scots to begin to meet with those who've been raised here.

For example, Interfaith Scotland in Glasgow and Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees in Edinburgh run Weekend Clubs, with monthly activities aimed at bringing refugees and local people together for social interaction and to learn about each other's cultures.

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

Affordable local transport that enables someone living alone to access activities taking place in our Churches, community centres and other vital services is essential for wellbeing. Transport is often the key to unlocking the barriers that prevents loneliness and isolation occurring.

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

Access to digital technology is becoming increasingly important, especially with the move to "digital by default" for public services. It is essential to increase the facilities for public access to Increase facilities for public access to IT services and equipment, with flexible opening times, in all communities. This could easily be achieved by supporting third sector and community groups (including churches and faith groups) to provide these facilities and equipment.

For those who lack knowledge, church youth groups could host an exchange of information: young people exchanging their digital technology information and how to use technology for historical, life, inspiring stories and insights of the past.

The Salvation Army has some experience in this area, for example in connection with Jobseekers Ayr⁷, working in partnership with JobCentrePlus and Ayrshire College. Similar partnerships would be a great benefit in many areas of the country.

Question 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?

Nothing further to add

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

We are broadly in agreement with the measurement framework.

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

We would want to see a greater understanding and awareness of the impact social isolation and loneliness plays in homelessness, repeat homelessness and addictions.

Being homeless, especially on the streets, cuts people off from the usual sources of support. Even when they are brought into a residential setting, they may need help to socialise again and to adjust to living indoors. Where proper support is lacking, they may return to the streets, a familiar environment.

Similar concerns occur around addictions, in that contact may be lost with family and friends. An important element of rehabilitation for people recovering from addictions is to rebuild social networks. For this reason, The Salvation Army's Scotland Drug and Alcohol Strategy seeks to work with families of addicts and also to build new networks within our church setting or the local community, in order to provide ongoing support for the recovery process.

We also note that there is no mention of faith or spirituality in the document, nor of the role churches and faith groups play in the communities where they are located.

The Mental Health Foundation highlights the important place of spirituality for mental health, although it does not equate spirituality to any particular religion. It notes that "tolerant and inclusive spiritual communities can provide valuable support and friendship."⁸ And within the NHS, spiritual care is considered best practice:

Best practice in 21st century healthcare attends to the whole person - the physical, mental, social and spiritual aspects of human living. When emotional and spiritual

⁷ Ayr Salvation Army steps in to help jobseekers <https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/ayr-salvation-army-steps-help-jobseekers> [Accessed: 02/04/2018 11:59]

⁸ <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/s/spirituality> [Accessed:02/04/2018 09:13]

*needs are addressed, service users and staff experience a greater sense of wellbeing in dealing with ill health.*⁹

In The Salvation Army, we would recognise faith as being an important element in the lives of our church members. Many (though not all) older people will have had a church connection in earlier times. Maintaining this may be important for them, and signposting should be provided to appropriate local churches or faith groups. Churches could further develop befriending and networking groups in order to reach out to people who are isolated.

Many church-based activities are aimed at or have a secondary impact of reducing social isolation. For example, parent and toddler groups serve the dual purpose of providing early social interactions for the children but also provide an opportunity for parents with young children to spend time in adult company. Sensitive group leaders will also be able to offer a confidential listening space for any parent with concerns or frustrations. Practical support could also be offered for families in financial difficulties.

There is also some work to be done regarding the balance between privacy and confidentiality on the one hand and a proactive approach to helping people overcome isolation. Too often the rule of confidentiality or individual choice is taken to mean that a connection to an external agency cannot be made without the express permission of the client or service user. There is an argument that the sharing of information with carefully chosen partners may enhance a person's wellbeing within the terms of the originating service. Barriers of pride or fear may inhibit a person from asking for "charity", whereas the need is to open a relationship of trust which needs an intermediary. An offer to set up a joint meeting with a church worker could be facilitated by an existing care worker in order to open the door to a positive response. However, this needs to be addressed at the national level in health and social care sectors, so that standards of care and confidentiality are consistent across all providers.

⁹ <http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/education-and-training/by-discipline/spiritual-care/about-spiritual-care.aspx> [Accessed: 02/04/2018 09:17]