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Y Dirprwy Weinidog Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Natasha Asghar MS
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29 September 2023

Dear Natasha,

I am writing following your Oral Question in plenary on 13 September to the Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip regarding discussions with the Older People's Commissioner for Wales (OPCW) about reducing loneliness and isolation amongst older people.

In February 2020, the Welsh Government published its first cross-government strategy to address loneliness and social isolation [Connected Communities](#). This set out our vision for a connected Wales; one where everyone has the opportunity to develop meaningful social relationships and where people are supported at those points in life when they are most vulnerable.

Whilst loneliness and isolation can affect anyone at any age, we also know that older people are particularly vulnerable. Our 2022-23 National Survey for Wales indicated that 51% of older people over 75 were sometimes lonely.

A key commitment in the strategy is the three-year **£1.5m Connected Communities Loneliness and Social Isolation Fund**. Launched in September 2021, the Fund supports front-line, local, grass-roots organisations, which bring people of all ages together, helping them to build social connections in and across communities.

This has supported a range of community-based organisations supporting older people to continue to offer and expand vital services to tackle feelings of loneliness and isolation; these include activities such as befriending schemes, luncheon clubs and exercise classes.

Our Strategy for an Ageing Society was launched in October 2021 and adopts a rights-based approach that promotes equality and social justice across a range of policy areas and places the older people's voice at the core of Welsh Government policy making.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Funding of £1.1 million was agreed to deliver the Programme for Government commitment to “Fund a dedicated post in every local authority to champion work to make Wales an age friendly nation”. This work has the rights of older people at its core and is actively supported by the Older People’s Commissioner. Age Friendly Community Officers have been appointed to develop a local approach towards becoming age friendly and part of the World Health Organisation’s network of age friendly communities and cities. Tackling loneliness and isolation is a key part of these local action plans.

On 9 May the delivery plan progress update for our strategy was published and I gave an address to Senedd Members. I also joined an Ageing Well Social Walk in Swansea Marina on 18 May where I was able to see first-hand the positive impact that the strategy was having on reducing social isolation and building communities.

Since January 2023, the OPCW and I meet on a bi-monthly basis. The OPCW also meets with the Chief Social Care Officer (CSCO) on the alternate month. Prior to January 2023 the OPCW met with both me and the CSCO monthly. Whilst, over the last 12 months, loneliness and isolation has not featured as a specific agenda item in any of these meetings, issues around loneliness and isolation are often pertinent to the wider agenda items that have been discussed. At the most recent meeting between myself and the OPCW on 14 September we discussed plans to collaborate on launching the forthcoming ‘National Action Plan to Prevent the Abuse Of Older People’. This plan recognises the importance of dovetailing with the ‘Connected Communities’ strategy and tackling loneliness and isolation.

Yours sincerely



Julie Morgan AS/MS

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