



Commissioner for Older People
for Northern Ireland

16 April 2021

Deirdre Hargey, MLA,
Minister for Communities,
Level 9,
Causeway Exchange,
1 – 7 Bedford Street,
Belfast,
BT2 7EG.

By email: private.office@health-ni.gov.uk

Dear Minister Hargey,

Re: Loneliness and social isolation

I am writing in reference to the Department for Communities (DfC) current and future spending plans regarding supporting older people and mitigating the impact of loneliness and social isolation. In particular I am considering the impact of isolation due to Covid on older people who have enjoyed the connection with peers through voluntary groups and clubs.

A recent poll commissioned by the Campaign to End Loneliness found that 40% of people in Northern Ireland said the current Covid-19 restrictions have caused them to feel lonely; while a worrying 88% had said loneliness had become a bigger problem since the beginning of the pandemic.¹

Research has demonstrated that chronic loneliness, along with social isolation, is associated with poorer mental and physical health outcomes. For many older persons, isolation can have a more severe impact given existing illnesses and societal factors including caring responsibilities and the reduced ability to increase social interaction through technology and the internet.

I would be grateful if your office can provide details of previous and ongoing spending for the coming and future years on the support for older peoples' groups and clubs. I have been contacted by a number of groups who fear that funding will no longer be available or that they will need a small additional contribution to getting up and running again. I look forward to hearing your plans to support and sustain this important resource for older people.

I look forward to your response. If you would like to discuss any of these points in further detail, please do not hesitate to contact my Policy Team via NR Head of Legal and Policy Advice on Irrelevant & Sensitive or by email at: paula.jack@copni.org

1. <https://www.lucidtalk.co.uk/single-post/ni-view-campaign-to-end-loneliness>

Equality House, 7-9 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast, Northern Ireland, BT2 7DP

Irrelevant & Sensitive

Email: info@copni.org

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Personal Data

Eddie Lynch
Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland

Cc Evelyn Hoy
NR
Sharron Russell
NR

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