

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

Camphill Scotland is the membership body for the 11 Camphill communities in Scotland. Together, our members support more than 500 people with learning disabilities and other support needs, ranging from children to older people. The communities are located in a variety of beautiful settings across Scotland, from Dumfries to Aberdeen. Each offers a supportive community life with personalised opportunities to find purpose and belonging through a wide range of social, cultural and work activities.

We believe that significant cultural change is necessary within our society, and within communities across Scotland, to reduce social isolation and loneliness, and to increase the range and quality of social connections.

Camphill Scotland's members have a strong sense of community, which is promoted through providing care and support in community settings to people with learning disabilities and other support needs, and to older people, and through providing members of the communities with choices about how they wish to engage in community life. Camphill also has a strong ethos that promotes community, respect and a sense of belonging, which helps to tackle social isolation and loneliness. As part of the cultural change necessary to tackle social isolation and loneliness, we, therefore, believe that further consideration and recognition must be given to community settings, which can promote respect and a sense of belonging within communities.

In addition, Camphill Scotland considers that a key element of implementing this cultural change must be ensuring that people with learning disabilities and other support needs, and older people, will be given greater respect within our society. These groups are particularly vulnerable, and are often at risk of being isolated socially. In view of this, priority should be given to actions and initiatives which will help these groups to feel respected, included and valued within communities across Scotland.

Camphill Scotland believes that an important part of this cultural change should be promoting a more balanced approach to, and appreciation of, digital media, and that education can make a significant contribution in this area. Furthermore, while it is important that society recognises the benefits of social media, it must also be acknowledged that digital inclusion is not universal. Indeed, many of the most vulnerable groups within our society, including people with learning disabilities and other support needs and older people, often struggle to access digital media. Camphill Scotland's view is that, while digital media can make some people feel less isolated and lonely, there is evidence that digital media can in some circumstances actually increase feelings of isolation rather than reduce them. This must be recognised if the strategy is genuinely going to build living, sustaining connections between people.

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

Camphill Scotland believes that the Community Planning Partnerships in each local authority area should drive change at the local level to reduce social isolation and loneliness, and to increase the range and quality of social connections. In this respect, we consider that the Community Planning Partnerships should work with community bodies, including third sector organisations, and people within local communities, to identify specific actions and initiatives to tackle social isolation and loneliness within local communities. Furthermore, these

outcomes should be prioritised by the Community Planning Partnerships in the Local Outcomes Improvement Plans and in the Locality Plans, which they are required to prepare and publish, to keep under review, and to report on under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

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

Camphill Scotland believes that the Scottish Government, in order to empower communities and to create the conditions to allow social connections to flourish, should update the Scotland Performs: The National Performance Framework to ensure that it includes a specific focus on tackling social isolation and loneliness. This will help to ensure that the work of Community Planning Partnerships and other key agencies take a targeted approach to tackling social isolation and loneliness across Scotland, and make a significant contribution in these areas.

Camphill Scotland is aware that unemployed people often feel socially excluded. We, therefore, believe that more should be done to support unemployed people at risk of social isolation. Camphill Scotland believes that the Scottish Government could play a key role by working with the third sector to significantly increase and improve unemployed people's access to volunteering opportunities within society. Apart from reducing the risks of social isolation and loneliness, such opportunities could also help to improve unemployed people's chances of accessing work, or education or training.

Against this background, we believe that the Scottish Government should also work with the UK Government to ensure that, where unemployed people wish to take up a volunteering role or to increase their existing work as a volunteer, this does not have an adverse impact upon their benefits.

The Scottish Government could also empower communities and create the conditions to allow social connections to flourish by highlighting examples of best practice, including the approaches taken by the Camphill communities to tackling social isolation. Camphill Scotland was, therefore, delighted that Jeanne Freeman MSP, the Minister for Social Security, recently visited Camphill Newton Dee, and was able to find out first hand how Camphill in Scotland's approaches are helping to promote social inclusion, and to ensuring that people with learning disabilities and other support needs feel valued, respected and have a sense of belonging within communities.

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

Camphill Scotland agrees with the proposed definitions of social isolation and loneliness.

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

Camphill Scotland believes that the Scottish Government has drawn from useful evidence sources. We would also refer you to the work of Robin Jackson in relation to intentional communities.

**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?**

The Camphill movement began in 1940 when the North East of Scotland offered sanctuary to a group of mainly Austrian Jewish refugees fleeing from Nazism. There are currently more than 140 Camphill communities in 40 countries around the world, with 11 Camphill communities in Scotland. These include the Beannachar Camphill Community, Blair Drummond, the Camphill School Aberdeen, Corbenic, Loch Arthur, the Milltown Community, Newton Dee Village, Ochil Tower School, Simeon Care for the Elderly, Tigh a'Chomainn and Tiphereth. These Camphill communities make a significant contribution in the UK, and across the World, to support vulnerable groups, including people with learning disabilities and older people, and to ensure that they feel valued, respected and have a sense of belonging within their communities.

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

Camphill in Scotland's members hold regular events, including concerts, plays and exhibitions which are open to people living in the neighbouring communities. These events act as one of the important 'bridges' between our member communities and the wider, neighbouring communities.

Another important bridge has been the social enterprise undertaken by many of our members, including Loch Arthur, Newton Dee Village and Tiphereth. The social enterprises undertaken by our members help to build social connections within local communities, and make a significant contribution to the local economies.

**8. How can we all work together 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?**

Camphill Scotland considers that the education system could play a major role in teaching children and young people about social isolation and loneliness, and about their adverse impact upon people, their health and wellbeing and upon their life opportunities. We believe that such work would help to promote increased awareness of social isolation and loneliness, and a greater understanding of their effects. This, in turn, would help to reduce stigma around social isolation and loneliness.

**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?**

Camphill Scotland believes that this is another area in which the education system, by promoting values of kindness and respect, could make a significant contribution to reducing social isolation and loneliness.

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

**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?**

We take the view that more needs to be done, including additional funding, to improve and increase the number of libraries, cultural and leisure facilities, sports facilities and other community assets in deprived areas. This, along with providing good levels of accessible,

affordable local transport, will help to ensure that people experiencing poverty and social isolation receive the right support.

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

Health services can play a major part in reducing social isolation and loneliness by signposting the availability of services and opportunities which might help people at risk of social isolation and loneliness.

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

Camphill Scotland considers that adding a question, focusing on what care providers are doing to tackle social isolation and loneliness, in the Care Inspectorate's questionnaire for care inspection visits would help to promote a culture within the social care sector which helps to tackle social isolation and loneliness.

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

Camphill takes the view that increasing the availability of accessible, affordable leisure and sports facilities within local communities would help, along with improving the availability of accessible, affordable transport linked to these facilities. We also believe that particular thought should be given to improving the availability of such facilities for people with disabilities, including learning disabilities and other support needs, and for older people.

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

This is another area where the education system can play an important part, by teaching children and young people the skills to establish and nurture strong and positive social connections.

Particular attention must be given to how to equip children and young people with disabilities, including learning disabilities, to establish and nurture strong and positive social connections. An important part of this must be ensuring that children with disabilities, including learning disabilities, have appropriate levels of support to meet their needs during the transition to adulthood. This is a key stage in a person's life, and Camphill Scotland is aware that many disabled people become very isolated at this stage in their lives that can impact upon their health and wellbeing. This underlines the need for such support to be put in place.

**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?**

Camphill Scotland believes that services will be able to better identify where children and young people may be socially isolated if appropriate training is provided to their staff.

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

Providing sustainable, long-term funding would help to strengthen the third sector's, and social enterprises', capacity to contribute to tackling social isolation and loneliness within communities.

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

Camphill Scotland believes that providing sustainable, long-term funding for voluntary organisations would help to promote volunteering, and help remove barriers to volunteering, particularly for those who may be isolated. We further believe that greater consideration should be given to identifying volunteering opportunities for people with disabilities, including learning disabilities, and for older people.

**19. How can employers and business play their part in reducing social isolation and loneliness?**

Employers and business can play a part by adopting, and promoting, family friendly employment policies, and by ensuring that their employees are able to enjoy a good work/life balance.

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

One of the main barriers presented by the lived environment in terms of socially connecting is the lack of affordable, accessible transport, or the existence of limited transport services especially in the evenings, in many local areas across Scotland.

Another significant barrier is the funding pressures faced by many local services including public libraries, cultural venues, leisure and sports facilities and by other community assets. This is directly limiting the opportunities available for socially connecting within local communities.

Access to transport, and to the services provided by community assets such as sports and leisure facilities, is particularly important for people with disabilities, including learning disabilities, and for older people. Camphill Scotland believes it is essential that the Scottish Government should increase funding in these areas. In addition, community planning partnerships should give priority to improving access to transport, and to the services delivered through community assets, within the local authority area, which will help to tackle social isolation and loneliness.

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

Cultural services and agencies can play a major role in reducing social isolation and loneliness through promoting and delivering cultural activities and initiatives. Specific steps should be taken to ensure that people with disabilities, including learning disabilities, can access these cultural activities and initiatives. In this respect, we believe that cultural services and agencies should draw upon the learning from the inclusive events run by Camphill communities, in which people with disabilities play a full part both as participants and as spectators. These events, which are open to the local communities, help to promote social inclusion, and a sense of belonging for participants and spectators alike.

**22. How can transport services play their part in reducing social isolation and loneliness?**

Camphill Scotland believes that transport has a vital part to play in reducing social isolation and loneliness. As previously mentioned, this is particularly important for people with disabilities, including learning disabilities, and for older people. These groups will often struggle to connect socially unless there is accessible, affordable transport available to enable them to attend events or activities.

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

Camphill Scotland believes that access to training on how to use digital technology should be increased, and that particular attention should be given to ensuring that people with disabilities, including learning disabilities, and older people can access such training.

**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?**

As previously indicated, Camphill Scotland believes it is essential that the Scotland Performs: National Performance Framework should be updated to include a focus on tackling social isolation and loneliness, with appropriate National Outcomes and National Indicators. We take the view that this will help to ensure that local authorities, NHS Health Boards and other key agencies are all taking action to tackle social isolation and loneliness.