DRAFT Strategic Statement of Intent: Social Isolation and Loneliness – September 2019

1. Vision

Gloucestershire recognises that everyone feels lonely from time to time. But when people are always lonely they are likely to suffer significant ill health and other negative consequences.

On recognition of this important issue, Gloucestershire's Health and Health Being Board (HWB) requested a 'deep dive' on social isolation and loneliness. This deep dive gave an opportunity to look in detail at the factors affecting people's experiences and service's perceptions on social isolation and loneliness, and our approach to addressing this important area.

2. Background

In May 2019, the HWB reviewed and commented on the draft Deep Dive on Social Isolation and Loneliness. Their comments and suggestions have been incorporated into a final draft, which is available. The final draft of the deep dive will be presented to Safer Gloucestershire Board and Enabling Active Communities Group in October 2019 for ratification.

A Strategic Statement of Intent was requested by the HWB which sets out the key objectives, actions to be taken, by when, with their expected outcomes.

3. Context

The relationships we have with our friends, family, neighbours and colleagues are, for many of us, the most important things in our lives. There is a strong link between having meaningful social connections and living a healthy and fulfilled life. We also know that

having more connected communities means a more thriving, productive society, in which we can all contribute and live fulfilling lives.

Loneliness and isolation is not the same thing. Social isolation is defined as 'an objective state determined by the quantity of social relationships and contacts between individuals, across groups and communities.'

Loneliness can be defined as 'a subjective state based on a person's emotional perception of the number and/or quality of social connections they need compared to what is currently being experienced'. Therefore, it is possible for an individual to be socially isolated without feeling lonely, or conversely feel lonely without being socially isolated.

Across the county, we know that loneliness can affect anyone – from teenagers and young adults to new parents, carers, and the recently bereaved, from students starting university to older people and those with disabilities, from those moving to a new area of the country to refugees.

4. **Our Strategic Approach**

Social isolation and loneliness is one of the seven priorities within our Health & Wellbeing Strategy published in August 2019.

The Enabling Activity Communities Group and Safer Gloucestershire Board on behalf of the Health and Wellbeing Board have started to open up a conversation on loneliness and social isolation, to raise awareness of its impacts and describe practically what we can do as a county to improve our overall wellbeing. Where possible the priorities use a PLACE based approach, and build on the work already being undertaken by each of the District Councils to Strengthen Local Communities.

5. **What we know about our population**

The Gloucestershire Community Wellbeing Survey in 2017 identified that 38% of all respondents feel lonely at times, and loneliness is highest in those with a mental health issue, a long term illness and/or a learning disability. Those with a car as their main form of transport consider themselves less lonely'. Please note, this was based on a small sample of 606 respondents.

We also know the following areas have a higher proportion of younger and older people with no or little access to the internet. Through the deep dive, lack of internet access has been identified as a gap for people to be engaged with what is happening with their friends, family or in their community. These areas are:

- Forest of Dean, North and South Cotswold, and Tewkesbury District

6. **Priorities**

Below is a summary of the themes and priorities identified within the deep dive into social isolation and loneliness.

Theme	Priorities
Personal Preference	Provide person centred and tailored loneliness interventions which are designed for the specific needs of an individual or targeted population in terms of socio-demographic, vulnerability or types of loneliness
Personal Preference	Create more opportunities to offer more inter-generational interactions across the county, where appropriate
Personal Preference	As a county we need to take opportunities to promote the development of meaningful relationships using people strengths, skills and experiences, rather than 'loneliness' interventions which can be both unappealing and stigmatising
Family, Friends and Partners	Support vulnerable and older people to make use of technology to regularly interact with friends and family who don't live nearby through the use of Facetime or Skype
Family, Friends, Partners and Communities	Seek opportunities for family, friends and partners to help combat social isolation and loneliness. In the link are a few examples of what could be achieved to help to inspire others to take positive action in their lives and in their communities: https://www.barnwoodtrust.org/what-we-do/stories/.
Rurality and getting to know your neighbours	Start building connections with our neighbours. Start by talking with our neighbours, to learn their names, find out their skills, interests and needs. Create a directory to share skills and resources.

Sustainable communities	For those more developed communities, they could look to create a gift circle where a community both gives and receives skills and resources in an organised way.
Rurality and getting to know your neighbours Sustainable communities	Collaborate with employers using their volunteering schemes to support and empower people to engage with their local community.
Rurality and getting to know your neighbours **Sustainable communities**	Gloucestershire could look to introduce National Neighbours Day on a set day of the year whereby communities come together in an organised and celebratory way
Rurality and getting to know your neighbours **Sustainable communities**	For each statutory, community and voluntary organisation in Gloucestershire to make a pledge in recognition of loneliness across our county and helping people to maintain or make new friendships.
Transport	Start building connections with our neighbours. Create a directory of regular journeys i.e. commuters taking people who don't drive into towns, cities, places of interest, community groups, etc.
Environment	Focus on the prevention for frail over 65 years olds and their fire risk
Environment	Use resources around us i.e. spaces and benches. Some charitable organisations have grants available for small community projects. For example https://www.barnwoodtrust.org/grants/grants-for-organisations/. Each statutory partner could commission 'talking benches' across the county in strategic locations which optimise people to sit down and talk. The talking benches would include a plaque to raise awareness of combating social isolation and loneliness
Environment	To ensure all new housing developments include areas which enable communities to come together i.e. community garden, walks, benches as well as promoting active travel i.e. walking and cycling

7. **Key Objective**

Commitment	Call for action	Milestone	Outcome
To create a county where loneliness and social isolation are recognised openly as something likely to affect us all and where the importance of Gloucestershire's social infrastructure to grow connectivity and community cohesion is understood and acted upon	**Phase 1** For statutory, community, voluntary and private sector organisations to make a pledge in recognition of social isolation and loneliness across our county. A list of example but practical pledges will be provided to organisation and could include: • Get to know your neighbour • Have a conversation in the workplace about social isolation and loneliness • Spend time to talk to someone at work, in your community you have never spoken to before • Get involved in an event • District Councils to support 'play streets' and the closure of roads	September 2020 December 2020	Increased awareness of social isolation and loneliness Create opportunities to collaborate across organisations and communities Reduce likelihood of social isolation and loneliness across all age groups Strengthen local communities

	on certain days at a week end For the Health and Wellbeing Board to endorse a Gloucestershire Neighbours Day. This could take the form of planned events or simply getting to know your neighbour.		
To create a county where loneliness and social isolation are recognised openly as something likely to affect us all and where the importance of Gloucestershire's social infrastructure to grow connectivity	**Phase 2** Create opportunities for children and young people to support vulnerable and older people to make use of technology to regularly interact with friends and family who don't live nearby through the use of Facetime or Skype Using examples of what works well in parts of the county i.e. Stroud Interplay to encourage the creation and development of more intergenerational projects i.e. drop ins and coffee mornings.	December 2020 March 2021	Enable people who live remotely and unable to travel to maintain friendships and links with family Support Gloucestershire to become a digital enabled county Reduce social isolation and loneliness in children, young, vulnerable and older people across the county

and community cohesion is understood and acted upon			
To create a county where loneliness and social isolation are recognised openly as something likely to affect us all and where the importance of Gloucestershire's social infrastructure to grow connectivity and community cohesion is understood and acted upon	**Phase 3** To make best use of the resources around us i.e. community spaces and benches. Work with charitable organisations and Town and Parish Councils who have grants available for small community projects. Work with arts and culture to look creatively at the use of community spaces and the successful introduction of any new initiatives To ensure all new housing developments include areas which enable communities to come together i.e. community garden, walks, benches as well as promoting active travel i.e. walking and cycling	March 2025 March 2025 March 2030	Create opportunities for people to meet and talk and for communities to come together Promote use of arts and culture in helping to reduce social isolation and loneliness Reduce social isolation and loneliness

8. **Key enablers**

In summary, this Strategic Statement of Intent confirms that we do not need a 'loneliness response' but a community one that offers opportunities for the creation and development of meaningful relationships. Therefore the critical success factors will be dependent upon:

- The engagement of people, neighbours and communities in recognising social isolation and loneliness and wanting to make a difference
- The level of support statutory, community, voluntary and private sector organisations are able to provide to create opportunities for people to interact with each other
- Resources available in both staff resource and monetary terms to implement the key objective within this report