



Craig Whittaker MP

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Response to Loneliness – March 2017

Thank you for contacting me about loneliness.

I have welcomed the launch of the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness.

I believe that we all have a responsibility at an individual, family, and community level to identify people with care needs such as loneliness, and provide support to improve their health and wellbeing. There is no single solution that can tackle loneliness and I think that it is useful to have a range of solutions.

Local commissioners are responsible for ensuring that health services match the needs of the population. Since 2012, local authorities have been expected to identify areas where older people suffer most acutely from loneliness to allow them to tackle the growing problem of social isolation and its harmful effects.

The Department of Health has also supported the development of a 'digital toolkit' for local commissioners, developed by the Campaign to End Loneliness, to support them in understanding and commissioning services to tackle loneliness and social isolation in their communities.

You may be interested to know that the Government also funded the Social Care Institute for Excellence to develop and run the Prevention Library, which includes examples of how to prevent, reduce or delay people's care and support needs from deteriorating. Local authorities can learn from emerging practice, and exchange ideas and experience of the impact that information, advice and befriending services can have on tackling loneliness.

I am aware that that the Government recognises the current pressures facing social care in local areas. That is why the Government is giving local authorities greater funding and flexibility so that they will have access to up to an additional £3.5 billion by 2020, providing a real terms increase in funding by the end of this Parliament.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP