RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

Please Note this form **must** be completed and returned with your response.

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

☐ Individual

☒ Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

Scottish Commission For Learning Disability

Phone number

0141 248 3733

Address

Scottish Commission for Learning Disability
Suite 5.2, Stock Exchange Court
77 Nelson Mandela Place
Glasgow

Postcode

G2 1QY

Email

Oonagh.b@scld.co.uk

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

☒ Publish response with name

☐ Publish response only (without name)

☐ Do not publish response

Information for organisations:

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.

If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

☒ Yes

☐ No

A Connected Scotland: Tackling social isolation and loneliness and building stronger social connections

Scottish Commission for Learning Disability Response

The Scottish Commission for Learning Disability (SCLD) welcomes the opportunity to respond to this important consultation. SCLD is an independent charitable organisation and strategic partner to the Scottish Government in the delivery of Scotland's learning disability strategy, The keys to life (2013)[1]. The strategy defines a learning disability as a significant, lifelong, condition that started before adulthood, which affects development and means individuals need help to understand information, learn skills, and cope independently. SCLD is committed to finding new and better ways to improve the lives of people with learning disabilities and is focused on sharing innovation and good practice so that those providing services and interventions can learn from each other. SCLD also aims to be a knowledge hub and to build an evidence base, sharing how policy is being implemented and building on an understanding of what really works.

SCLD welcomes the opportunity to respond to this important consultation. In responding to this consultation, SCLD has had wider conversations with The keys to life Expert Group and The Ayrshire National Involvement Network (NIN). This response has been written with a focus on the strategic outcomes of The keys to life (2013)[2], particularly Active Citizenship as well as Choice and Control.

In considering the consultation SCLD's response has:

- Discussed the historic marginalisation of people with learning disabilities in Scotland which has led to their social exclusion from wider society;
- Highlighted the role of social citizenship in achieving social connections for people with learning disabilities;
- Provided case study insights;
- Examined the proposed Draft Performance Framework;
- Commented on changes required to enable individuals with learning disabilities to act as active social citizens, which will in turn support building stronger social connections;
- Structured the document under key themes of **Rights**, **Respect**, **Kindness** and **Support** addressing the relevant questions of the consultation document.

Historic Marginalisation

SCLD would welcome particular focus being given to people with learning disabilities in a national strategy which seeks to tackle social isolation and loneliness. This is because of people with learning disabilities previous excluded experiences. As Hall

---

[1] The keys to Life (2013)
[2] The keys to Life (2013)

(2005)[3] highlighted, prior to the development of community care in Scotland people with learning disabilities were often housed in long-stay hospitals and despite the hospital closures removing the physical exclusion for some people with learning disabilities, social exclusion has continued. As Parr and Butler (1999)[4] stated, individuals with learning disabilities in communities following deinstitutionalisation were viewed as "the ultimate other". This stigma and exclusion has had an impact which continues for many people with learning disabilities today, in the form of:

- Pejorative language on account of a learning disability (Gravel, 2012)[5] or as a result of being recipients of disability payments (Benstead, 2012)[6];
- Hate Crime charges relating to people with disabilities reported at 188 in Scotland in the years 2016 to 2017 (Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service)[7];
- Exclusion from employment (McTeir, et al, 2016)[8];
- Exclusion from family life (Tarleton, et al, 2006[9]; Stewart, et al, 2017)[10];
- Barriers to Housing (Ormston, et al, 2017)[11];
- Barriers to participation in wider community life.

The Scottish Government national strategy to tackle social exclusion provides an opportunity to include people with learning disabilities. In our conversations with people with learning disabilities, they told us they consider themselves both as a part of a community of interest and of place. This consultation provides the opportunity to recognise people with learning disabilities as active social citizens.

Social Citizenship

SCLD views Social Citizenship (Marshall, 1950)[12] as central to ensuring people with learning disabilities are socially connected in their communities. Marshall defined Social Citizenship as a "… whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share fully in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in society".(1950, p.30).

Following conversations with The keys to life Expert Group and NIN, SCLD understands that to address social isolation for people with learning disabilities they must be active social citizens. This means that people with learning disabilities must have their **rights** recognised, experience **kindness,** be **respected** in their communities and have access to appropriate and flexible **support.**

---

[3] Hall, E (2005)
[4] Parr, H, Butler, R (1999)
[5] Gravell, C (2012)
[6] Benstead, S (2012)
[7] Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service
[8] McTeir, A, et al (2016)
[9] Tarleton, B, et, al (2006)
[10] Stewart, A, et al (2017)
[11] Ormston, R, et al (2017)
[12] Marshall, H, T (1950)

Rights, kindness and **respect** as well as appropriate and flexible **support** are expanded on below with reference to key questions from the consultation document.

Rights

SCLD would welcome the government strategy to tackle loneliness and social isolation taking account of the principles of The United Nations Convention on The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)[13], which includes full and effective participation and inclusion in society.

In adopting this approach, the Government strategy can address key areas of social exclusion for people with learning disabilities (and other excluded groups) which include: Social Security, Education, Employment, Community Engagement and Empowerment, Housing, and Transport.

Social Security

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

The experience of poverty has been widely demonstrated as a contributory factor to social exclusion. Yeo and Moore (2003)[14] highlighted that people with disabilities are more likely to experience poverty because of institutional, environmental and attitudinal discrimination. This means that people with learning disabilities face significant barriers to "… the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security" (Marshall, 1950)[15] . For people with learning disabilities social security is vital to ensuring active participation. This is in line with previous conversations with The keys to life Expert Group who have spoken about social security as both a safety net and as something which allows people with learning disabilities to take part in society.

SCLD would therefore welcome a social security system in Scotland guided by Human Rights which:

- Supports people with learning disabilities to be as independent as possible and support their right to live well;
- Provides inclusive communication and accessible information and processes;
- Invests in a publicly funded advocacy and advice services to provide enhanced levels of support to those who need it;
- Broadens the evidence base for decision making with minimum emphasis on assessments interviews;
- Ensures quality of service through administration at a national level;

---

[13] Convention on The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)
[14] Yeo, R & Moore, K (2003)
[15] Marshall, H, T (1950)

- Integrates well with other services e.g. social care and support for employment, education and training.

In addition, SCLD would welcome the National Guidance considering The Fairer Scotland Duty which will require public bodies to consider how to reduce economic disadvantage during strategic decision making processes. SCLD's response to Question 10 is in line with our earlier response to the consultation, Social Security in Scotland (October; 2016)[16].

Education

(Question 15: How can we better equip people with the skills to establish and nurture strong and positive social connections?

Question 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?)

SCLD agrees that helping children and young people to develop strong and positive relationships at an early stage is vital to long-term social inclusion. SCLD view education as having an important role in this. However, for people with learning disabilities developing these skills at a young age can be a challenge. This can be due to exclusion from mainstream education and the opportunity to mix with a range of their peers coupled. This is coupled with an experience of bullying due to perceived difference.

To best ensure that children and young people with learning disabilities have the opportunity to establish and nurture positive relationships, SCLD would support those providing education to children and young people in both mainstream and specialist settings addressing the following:

- The provision of support that has a focus on capabilities at its centre. This support should be provided in a way which does not stigmatise and isolate individuals;
- Making the necessary adjustments to integrate a child or young person in a school community;
- Creating a whole school culture of acceptance and inclusion.

With particular regard to Question 16, SCLD would support schools embedding lessons on learning disability into the curriculum, in line with Recommendation 2 of IncludED in the Main (2016)[17]. This could be supported by the use of 'Talking About Learning Disability'[18]. This is an online lesson planning resource about people with learning disabilities experiences of bullying.

---

[16] Social Security in Scotland (SCLD: October 2016)
[17] IncludED in the Main (2016)
[18] Talking About Learning Disability

SCLD would also welcome young people with learning disabilities leading peer education and sharing their experiences with bullying and exclusion. This is in line with Enable Scotland, 'Be the Change' campaign. The impact of young people sharing experiences is highlighted in a case study about Lucy McKee[19]. This type of peer training will work best on an individual basis, based on the confidence, resilience, and wishes of the young person.

SCLD view this as a helpful way to support children and young people to identify and support a peer who may be experiencing bullying and social isolation.

This response in line with SCLD's earlier response to Consultation on Excellence and Equity for All: Guidance on the Presumption of Mainstreaming (SCLD;2018)[20]. This is because SCLD sees clear links between policy development in education and policy development in social inclusion.

Employment

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

Question 19: How can employers and business play their part in reducing social isolation and loneliness?)

Research [21] commissioned by SCLD found that the employment rate of people with learning disabilities in Scotland was very low. Based on available data the rate of people with learning disabilities in employment in Scotland is estimated between 7% and 25%. This is compared to the disability employment rate of 42% and an overall employment rate of 72% (80.2% at the time of this response). The report also highlighted that while some individuals with learning disabilities may have some form of employment, 21% of those employed in Scotland worked in what the report calls 'Part-Time, Sheltered Employment'. This is defined as, "Employment that is less than 16 hours per week (i.e. insufficient to live on without welfare support) or is in a sheltered workplace that does not lead towards employment in the open labour market. This type of employment effectively acts as a substitute for a day care opportunity" (McTeir, et al, 2016 p.8)[22]. This is in contrast to what is termed real sustainable employment, in which individuals participate in the open labour market at over 16 hours a week, earn as a minimum the living wage and allows for opportunities to progress and develop.

The experience of those in part, time and sheltered employment has been highlighted by Hall (2004)[23] who discusses the experience of Gordon who worked part-time in a supermarket filling shelves for 12 years. Gordon talked about how

---

[19] IncludED in the Main (2016)
[20] Excellence and Equity for All: Guidance on the Presumption to Mainstreaming (SCLD;2018)
[21] McTeir, A, et al (2016)
[22] McTeir, A, et al (2016)
[23] Hall, E (2004)

working more hours would help him to feel he belonged. Gordon also spoke of instances of workplace bullying he had experienced. Hall (2004) states this is related to his outsider status as a result of, restricted dealings with customers and no career development. These experiences for people with learning disabilities are not uncommon. At a recent meeting of The keys to life Expert Group one member recounted their experience of working in a supermarket filling shelves and being kept in a back room. They said, "I don't want to be hiding."

SCLD therefore sees an important role for both employers and businesses, in providing real and sustainable employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities. This will in turn help to reduce social isolation. Employment as a route to social connections and supporting the development of social skills is supported in research looking at both mental health and learning disability (Marrone &Golowka, 1999[24] Jones, et al, 2004[25]).

SCLD would therefore support a strategy addressing loneliness and isolation which encourages employers and businesses to remove the significant barriers to employment faced by people with learning disabilities. This can be achieved by:

- Providing information to employers on how to provide a more accessible workplace and to encourage the employment of people with learning disabilities (For example, The DWP Access to Work Fund);
- Awareness raising and training for employers which challenges attitudes that people with learning disabilities can only complete certain tasks and fears about recruiting a person with learning a disability;
- Motivating employers to recognise the benefits of recruiting people with a learning disability;
- Encourage employers to make adaptations in their recruitment processes and to invest in the career development of employees with a learning disability;
- Equality and Diversity Training for all staff;
- Providing space and opportunities for all staff to form bonds (For example, team building and social events).

Community Engagement and Empowerment

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

SCLD agrees with the consultation document that the Third Sector and Social Enterprises embedded in communities offer an important role in reducing social isolation and loneliness. Volunteering, in particular, has been shown to have a positive impact on an individual's mental and physical wellbeing (Pillavin, 2007)[26] as

---

[24] Marrone, J & Golowka, E (1999)
[25] Jones, R, et al (2004)
[26] Pillavin, J (2007)

well as helping to develop skills and experience which may lead to future employment opportunities

With specific reference to the Third Sector and Social Enterprises based in local communities, SCLD see a role for the adoption of an asset based approach to support the building of social connections. While there is no single model of an asset based approach, the guiding principles are:

- Focusing on community assets rather than deficits;
- Working with people rather than doing to people;
- Helping individuals identify assets within themselves and their community;
- Supporting people to make changes by developing skills, resilience relationships, knowledge, and self-esteem;
- Supporting the building of mutually supportive networks;
- Shifting control from state to individuals and communities.

<div align="right">(McNeish, et al, 2016)[27]</div>

The effectiveness of asset-based approaches in working with people with learning disabilities has been demonstrated by Vibrant Communities in East Ayrshire, which set out to improve how the council worked with local communities, and to ensure local communities had a chance to lead on positive change. Examples of asset based approaches with communities of interest include Project Ability which facilitates artists' workshops, walking groups, and a self-led artists' studio (McNeish, et al, 2016)[28].

In light of the above, SCLD would support the Third Sector and Social Enterprises:

- Adopting asset-based approaches with communities of place and interest;
- Offering volunteering opportunities and skills development training to individuals with learning disabilities as a way to gain experience and form social connections;
- Involving people with learning disabilities at all levels of Third Sector; organisations and Social Enterprises (For example volunteering, employment, decision making and leadership);

For this to be achieved there is a need for both Third Sector organisations and Social Enterprises to work with people with learning disabilities to remove barriers to community participation. A useful practical framework to achieve this is The Candidacy Framework which has previously been used in Health and Social Care (Chin & Abraham, 2016)[29]. For asset-based approaches to be achieved the Third

---

[27] McNeish, D ,et al (2016)
[28] McNeish, D, et al (2016)
[29] Chin, E, & Abraham, E (2016)

Sector and Social Enterprises will need access to sustainable funding (See: *Example Case Studies*).

Housing

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

SCLD agrees that how much a person socially interacts is influenced by their lived environment. Critical to this is a person's access to good quality housing that meets both their needs and aspirations while allowing for choice.

Ormston et al (2017)[30] highlighted that supporting individuals with learning disabilities to live independent and healthy lives required: expanded housing options, enhanced advice, accessible design and person-centred planning. In addition to this, the report stated the importance of community engagement. Housing Associations were seen as having a role in providing links to the community and in engagement. For example; Loretto Community Engagement Team, ARK 'Active Speak Out Group', Community Connectors and Blackwood Housing 'Tenants' Ambassador' Scheme.

It is worth noting that while the long stay hospital closure programme had made real progress the NHS Information Statistics Division (ISD) showed that there were more than 600 people with complex needs who had lived in a hospital for over a year in 2015[31].

The importance of housing location was also discussed as a key factor in allowing people to be social citizens. In particular, being close to family and friends, having access to local amenities and feeling safe.

Other barriers presented by lived environment encompass limited access to community engagement support, being geographically isolated and the ongoing housing needs of individuals with complex needs in hospital settings.

To overcome these barriers SCLD would welcome:

- Good quality housing located close to family and social supports;
- Increase the role of housing associations as community connectors and share current good practice examples;
- Housing providers and professionals providing advice and choice for people with learning disabilities about where they live and the provision of advocacy to support this;
- The development of an implementation plan to ensure people with learning disabilities are not being accommodated in health care settings unnecessarily.

---

[30] [Ormston, R, et al (2017)](#)
[31] [Ormston, R et al (2017)](#)

Transport

(Question 22: How can transport services play their part in reducing social isolation and loneliness?)

The need for accessible and affordable transport to help people with learning disabilities have full social lives was a key theme that emerged from our conversations with both The keys to life Expert Group and NIN. Individuals in both groups felt that without the use of transport in their communities, in particular buses, their social connections would decrease. This was particularly true for those who lived in rural communities. Transport therefore, was acknowledged, as a key area of challenge for those that we spoke to.

Transport was also a prominent theme in Abbot and MCConkey's (2006)[32] study on the barriers to social inclusion with people with learning disabilities living as residents of supported accommodation and shared houses. This highlighted that affordability and the physical accessibility of transport was key to accessing community resources. This point was echoed in our discussions with members of both groups who discussed the need for: accessible information on transport, physical accessibility of transport and challenging negative attitudes from some bus drivers and members of the public toward individuals with learning disabilities. One person spoke about being called names on the bus and the driver not intervening. Another member said some bus drivers could be unhelpful towards them even when they showed the Thistle Assistance Card[33].

SCLD sees transport services as critical to enabling people with learning disabilities lead full social lives. However, we would welcome the following:

- Better accessible information about transport services and timings;
- Awareness raising and training for transport staff;
- Removal of physical barriers to transport;
- Better transport provision for those living in rural communities;
- Travel training as part of the curriculum for people with learning disabilities at schools and colleges.

By following the High Level Action Plan in 'Going Further – Scotland's Accessible Travel Framework' the above can be achieved.

Kindness and respect

(Question 8: How can we all work together to challenge the stigma around social isolation and loneliness and raise awareness of it as an issue? Are there examples of people doing this well that you are aware of?

---

[32] Abbot, S & MCConkey, R (2006)
[33] Thistle Assistance Card is a card which lets transport operators know a person has a disability and will require assistance.

Question 9: Using the Carnegie UK Trust's report as a starting point, what more should be doing to promote kindness as a route to reducing social isolation and loneliness?).

In our conversations with both The keys to life Expert Group and NIN, we asked individuals to think about what places were important to them in their communities. Responses included: emergency services, leisure centres, pubs, local shops, supermarkets, shopping malls, cafes, libraries, community centres, churches, schools, colleges, parks, cinemas, social clubs, day centres, night clubs and local self-advocacy groups (See Appendix 1).

What emerged from this conversation was that while the places themselves and their physical accessibility were important, it was how individuals were treated within these spaces that really mattered. Throughout our discussion, themes of not being made to feel welcome, feeling belittled and not feeling safe were discussed. Examples of this can include not being addressed directly but via support staff, being called names in public spaces and cases of exploitation.

Individuals told us that these types of experiences could make people shy and that they might find it hard to join new groups or clubs as a result. Because of this they valued groups and spaces which were specifically for people with learning disabilities, peer support and self-advocacy. However, individuals also wanted to be included in mainstream community places. One member of The keys to life Expert Group said that for people with learning disabilities to be accepted in communities, there had to be opportunities for people to get to know one another. Despite this desire there were some fundamental barriers for people with learning disabilities getting to know their wider community including: hate crime, cruelty and a perception of stigma. These barriers are outlined below.

Hate Crime and Cruelty

Gravel's (2012)[34] research which interviewed 67 people with learning disabilities about their experience of harassment, abuse and crime in their communities found that 62 people had experienced this. These experiences predominantly took place in public as well as in and around individuals' homes. The perpetrators of these types of incidents were varied and ranged from strangers to the respondents own families and support staff. The types of incident reported ranged from verbal attacks, physical attacks, financial abuse and emotional as well as sexual abuse and exploitation. One person interviewed as part of this study talked about how their family had been targeted by a group of seven local individuals who followed them home and would shout names at them. They would also bang on their front door late at night wearing masks. This led to them cutting themselves off from the majority of the local community. They said, "It lasted for 6 weeks I'd say at its peak. We kept the door shut and locked. It was horrible. We wanted to move out and keep our daughter

---

[34] Gravell, C (2012)

safe…We don't' mix with anyone anymore on the estate we only talk to our next door neighbours now." (Gravel, 2012, p.32).

Stigma

There are more subtle ways in which people with learning disabilities can be made to feel excluded. In our discussions with NIN we were told that people often felt judged in their communities. This can happen as result of stigma and peoples negative attitudes. This has been discussed by Goffman (1963)[35] who highlighted the devalued self-identify of individuals who were viewed as different or other. Abraham et al (2002) study demonstrated that lower self-esteem directly related to higher levels of the experience of stigma. From this we can determine that stigmatised individuals may be less likely to feel able to actively seek out social connections in their community, due to low levels of self-esteem.

 SCLD agree with is consultation document's premise that kindness can play an important role in challenging stigma and cruelty while improving social connections. For people with learning disability it is vital to feel of value and safe. Therefore, SCLD also would highlight the importance of respect alongside kindness in the national guidance.

Community Kindness

Ferguson (2017)[36] stated that kindness matters because it plays a role in "Reducing social isolation, tackling loneliness and improving wellbeing" and "Providing the building blocks for community empowerment through positive relationships and values" (p.3). SCLD agree and support this. Evidence of community based kindness playing an important role in reducing loneliness and isolation for people with learning disabilities was demonstrated in our conversation with a keys to life Expert Group member who talked about the kindness they had experienced from their church members. They invited this person round to their house for meals on special occasions like Christmas and their birthday and on days which the Church members knew might be challenging for them.

In our conversations with both The keys to life Expert Group and NIN, Churches were highlighted as important places. One person told us that an important part of their social life was taking part as a volunteer at a local church Sunday school (See: *Community Engagement and Empowerment*). Another person said they liked going to Church because the people who attended the church were their friends and were "good people".

Community kindness could also be found in less traditionally expected places; for example, their local library with one member of NIN telling us they liked going to their local library because, "there is a library lady to help you". We also spoke to an

---

[35] Goffman, E (1963)
[36] Ferguson, Z (2017)

individual who enjoyed regularly attending their local gym because they lived near it and knew everyone there.

Sites of community kindness ranged from both traditional and expected spaces (e.g. Churches) to less obvious locations (e.g. gym). The role of less obvious locations is highlighted by Ferguson (2017) with regard to the case study of Tesco Maryhill. The distinguishing features of locations of community kindness were proximity, knowing people, feeling welcomed and accepted.

Professional Kindness

With regard to kindness in the professional sphere, Ferguson (2017)[37] has highlighted that regulation, professionalism and performance management can get in the way of individuals acting with kindness. This will be of importance to people with learning disabilities in regard to support and community based service as shift patterns and changes can impact on access to participation. In community organisations and advice centres appointment times may be restricted which can present challenges for people with a learning disability. Ferguson's (2017) presents a helpful challenge and states that professionalism would not be a barrier to kindness if it meant being 'more human' rather than a prevailing understanding of professionalism as authority, knowledge and efficacy.

Such a focus has an effect on small community organisations, who may demonstrate kindness and flexibility daily, but may also be influenced by the pressure to secure short term funding and targets. This can have an impact on staff's time and ability to continue to conduct themselves with kindness (See: *Example Case Studies*). Over regulation and performance management can lead to a type of professionalism which is to the detriment of social connections and the social lives for many people with learning disabilities.

In our conversations with The keys to life Expert Group and NIN, we asked people to think about who the important people in their community are. While some expected people were discussed including: doctors, local councillors and community workers, what stood out was the inclusion of less expected individuals like caretakers and bin men. This tells us that those who show the greatest kindness and connect communities together are not always who we expect, perhaps due to a level of flexibility in these roles.

SCLD would therefore support professional conduct which places kindness and flexibility at its centre. To achieve this, SCLD would welcome staff in direct service provision and community organisations having innovative approaches to training which helps staff to better balance boundary management and a whole hearted

---

[37] Ferguson, Z (2017)

humanistic approach. In order for staff to achieve this, they themselves need to be valued. This is demonstrated in Fergusons (2017) [38]case study of Tesco Maryhill.

The importance of respect

SCLD would welcome community kindness and professional kindness being underpinned by respect. The keys to life expert group told us that being respected in their community and a focus on what people with learning disabilities could contribute as citizens was important. This will involve challenging stigma and in particular a prevailing view of people with learning disabilities as eternal children (Wolfersberger, et al,1972)[39].

Viewing people with learning disabilities as eternal children can have a detrimental impact on people with learning disabilities achieving their aspirations. People with learning disabilities should instead be viewed as full and active social citizens with the potential to, enter into social contracts (E.g. employment or parenting) with the rights and responsibilities this entails. However, for many support will be required to meet these responsibilities. (E.g. supported parenting).

Considering the above, SCLD would welcome the following being included in the national guidance to challenge stigma and promote kindness and respect.

Challenge Stigma

- Give people with learning disabilities the opportunity to attend mainstream groups and places to get to know their local community;
- Support to report hate crimes and cruelty as well as counselling to aid recovery from distress for people with learning disabilities;
- Provide confidence building tools/ resources and coaching for individuals who have been stigmatised. This can include specialist groups, peer support and self-advocacy;
- Equality and diversity training with a focus on learning disability awareness.

Promoting kindness and respect

- Learn from pre-existing projects and community resources with kindness at their centre. For example religious organisations and community projects with demonstrable kindness based outputs and share these widely;
- Inclusion of kindness and respect in organisations policies;
- Redress rigid performance measures in community organisations and support ;services where appropriate: for example: time restrictions or appointment waiting times,
- Training for those working in support services and community organisation about balancing professional boundaries with kindness and respect;

---

[38] Ferguson, Z (2017)
[39] Wolfenberger, P, W (1972)

- Utilising the kindness of unexpected community members as examples to others (The Evening Times Community Champion Awards in Glasgow is way in which this can be achieved);
- Consider the wider impact of short term funding cycles on inhibiting kindness (See example Case studies p.14-15);
- Highlighting the achievements and capabilities of people with learning disabilities in their local communities (For example: SCLD Learning Disability Awards).

Support

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

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

SCLD agrees that health, wellbeing and social connections are linked. For this reason SCLD support the new Health and Social Care Standards taking an approach which includes lifestyle aspirations and participation in the community.

SCLD sees health services having an important role in improving social connections. This can be demonstrated by, The Links Worker Programme which works to support individuals to engage with a wide range of health and community supports. Such programmes are consistent with Scotland's emerging public health priorities[40] which include key themes of place and community and addressing poverty and inequality. In addition Local Area Coordinators can play an important role in engaging with and supporting people with learning disabilities. Community Connectors also support active engagement with older people

 In considering this, SCLD would welcome The Links Worker Programme, Local Area Co-coordinators and Community Connectors being included in the National Strategy and developing the opportunities this type of provision can provide in work with people who have learning disabilities. For people with learning disabilities having these valuable supports embedded and linked to both Health and Social Care services can provide improved equity of access to their local communities.

SCLD also agrees with the consultation document that for many people good quality social care can go a long way to reducing social isolation and loneliness. SCLD would therefore support the national guidance exploring what good social support looks like. This could include:

---

[40] Public Health Reform Update April 2018

Balancing life and risk

In Control Scotland[41] have discussed the barriers professional risk management can present to individuals living the life they choose. In their report they state that when individuals become involved in services, their choices and options are restricted by professionals whose role it is to ensure a person is safe. While ensuring a person's safety is critical, a balance needs to be struck to ensure that a person has choice, control and assistance to mitigate risks.

Changing Expectations

Bates and Davis (2010)[42] highlighted that there was some danger of social care staff defining service users own personal choice or lifestyle by their own personal preferences. They gave the example of one day centre worker who described his own leisure time spent watching television by themselves and didn't understand why social isolation may be an issue for people with learning disabilities. Moreover, MCConkey and Collins (2010)[43] demonstrated that social care staff placed a higher number of care tasks as having high priority, compared with the social inclusion tasks. Another finding from this study showed that some social care staff did not view social inclusion as part of their role, most notably staff in part time or relief contracts. It is important to note that while support staff play a role in supporting individuals to form and sustain social relationships, the professional relationship with a person with a learning disability is not a substitute for actual social relationships and friendships.

In addition, some people with learning disabilities often feel that they are under higher levels of scrutiny and expectation, for example with regard to parenting (Stewart et al, 2017)[44]. It is important therefore that social care staff are equipped with the resource, training and skills development to embrace social inclusion and equity of expectation as a key element of their role.

Flexibility of Service Provision

For the needs of people with learning disabilities to be met, services will need to be flexible. Bert et al (2001)[45], highlighted that a barrier to leisure opportunities was access to both transport (See: *Transport*) and support. This was echoed in our conversation with NIN where one person said while their community facilities were good, they could not access these without support. This has been an issue with regard to accessing night time activities including, going to night clubs and concerts. The importance of this kind of social activity was discussed in our conversations with The keys to life Expert Group. The lack of night time support has been emphasised by The Stay up Late Campaign. As a result of this Gig Buddies Projects have been set up to enable people with learning disabilities to take part in these types of events.

---

[41] Close, L & Minty A, 'Risking a real – making good decisions together around issues of risk and opportunity'
[42] Bates, P & Davis, F (2010)
[43] MCConkey, P & Collins, S (2010)
[44] Stewart, A,et al (2017)
[45] Bert, S, et al (2001)

Therefore, more wide scale recognition is required that support should include the opportunities to take part in activities out with routine shift hours. Valuing support staff and personal assistants as well as a shift in working culture will be required to achieve this for all people with learning disabilities.

<u>Example Case Studies</u>

(Question 7: Are you aware of any good practice in a local community to build social connections that you want to tell us about?)

SCLD has gathered a range of good practice case studies on improving social connections for people with learning disability. These were published as part of our conference 'Building Bridges from Policy to Practice' (2017) about developing asset based approaches to better support people with learning disabilities. These case studies were published as a series of 'How to Guides'. Locally based good practice in building social connections with people with learning disabilities can be demonstrated across the ['How to Guides'](#).

Particular reference should be paid to the 'How to Guide' for social connectedness which provides case examples of the following projects: Fits for Supper, Growing for Growth, The Befriending Project and Cantray Crew Connects. Full information on these projects can be found [here](#).

It should be noted that it was not just projects with a specific focus on social connections that helped to reduce loneliness and isolation. The Support to Report Project by The Advocacy Project demonstrated improved social connections. SCLD would therefore suggest that all The Keys to Life Development Fund Project, 'How to Guides' are potential examples of improving social connections.

To sustain this type of work, SCLD sees a need for sustainable funding. This is because it takes time, experience and security for professional kindness and community capacity to be developed. Challenges with short term funding cycles on small community organisations has been discussed by Thomson and Caulier-Grice (2013)[46] who stated that "funding arrangements do not recognise that participation is a slow process, and results may not be visible within the time frame of the grant. Short term funding can inhibit the development of sustainable and creative solutions to poverty and social exclusion" (p.41).

Therefore SCLD would welcome a balance in focus between innovation and sustainability of investment in community projects with proven outcomes. A sole focus on innovation can at times lead to pre-existing community projects, already supporting the building of social connections, struggling to sustain themselves. This can ultimately lead to individuals' social support and networks being removed.

---

[46] [Thomson, L, Caulier-Grice, J (2013)](#)

Draft Performance Framework

(Question 25: Do you agree with the framework we have created to measure our progress in tackling social isolation and loneliness?

Question 25. Is there anything missing from this framework that you think is important for us to consider?)

In response to questions 25, SCLD welcomes a framework created to measure progress in tackling social isolation and loneliness. In response to question 26, we would wish to include additional indicators under the following outcomes.

Outcome: Fewer causes of social isolation and loneliness

Add Indicators: A reduction in Hate crime

Increased levels of employment of people with learning disabilities.

Outcome: Reduced harm from the effects of social isolation and loneliness.

Add indicator: People with learning disabilities are able to access counselling, peer support and advocacy to increase self-confidence.

Conclusion

At the heart of tackling social isolation and loneliness while building social connections for people with learning disabilities is the concept of social citizenship. As SCLD has stated, for people with learning disabilities to achieve full social citizenship they will need to have their rights recognised, experience kindness, be respected in their communities and have access to appropriate and flexible support.

Taking this consultation as a whole, SCLD has a number of suggestions on how this can be achieved at community, local and government level. This relates to Questions 1, 2 and 3 of the consultation document.

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

SCLD would support the following being implemented at community level to reduce social isolation and loneliness and to increase social connections for people with learning disabilities:

- Development of inclusive school communities and support;
- Provision of sustainable employment opportunities for people with learning; disabilities alongside, staff awareness training and adaptations in the recruitment process and supported employment;
- Adoption of asset based approaches to community based work through improving engagement for people with learning disabilities at all levels of the Third Sector and Social Enterprises;

- Developing opportunities for those working in communities to learn from pre-existing good practice with regard to asset based approaches;
- Expansion of the role of housing associations with regard to enabling community connections;
- Provision of training and awareness raising for people with learning disabilities and transport staff;
- Addressing hate crime, stigma and barriers to kindness and respect through support to report hate crime, counselling, peer support and advocacy and public awareness raising of learning disability;
- Valuing kindness and respect both in the community and from professionals;
- Developing and embedding social connection programmes with proven outcomes;
- Provision of good quality support for people with learning disabilities: which balances risk and life, challenges pre-convinced expectations and is flexible.

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

Key organisations and individuals in delivering the actions outlined under Question 1 are:

- Local authorities, head teachers, learning support teachers, parent teacher associations and all school staff;
- Local development agencies, businesses, public services, supported employment organisations and all staff and colleagues;
- Community planning partnerships, health and social care partnerships, third sector organisations, community organisations and social enterprises. There is also a role here for community and voluntary network organisations;
- Training and development organisations;
- Housing associations and tenants participation organisations;
- Transport providers;
- Police, social work and health providers;
- Support and advocacy providers.

SCLD would welcome all of the above organisations and individuals, together with people with learning disabilities, instilling kindness, respect and flexibility at the core or their organisations policies and practice. SCLD would welcome the removal of physical and structural barriers to accessing support, services and taking part in community life. Fundamentally, SCLD also recognises that all of us as equal citizens have a contribution to make in driving change forward.

Question 3: What does Government need to do nationally to better empower communities and create conditions to allow social connections to flourish?

SCLD would welcome the following actions from Government to allow social connections to flourish:

- Implement social security with consideration to supporting individuals with learning disabilities to live independently
- Consider the role of accessible information, advice and advocacy in supporting individuals to access social security;
- Encourage the development of asset based work, kindness and respect in communities, through sustainable funding;
- Develop a housing implementation plan to ensure people with learning disabilities are not being accommodated in health care settings unnecessary;
- Promote a national zero tolerance campaign that tackles stigma, cruelty and hate crime;
- Ensure effective implementation of The National Care Standards, with a understanding of the importance of social citizenship;
- Ensure good practice examples of asset based work is widely shared;
- Providing a national supported employment service to support people into work and develop their careers.

SCLD's response to this consultation document recognises that there are a number of cross cutting policies which will impact on the success of The National Guidance on tackling social isolation and loneliness and building social connections including social security and education. To improve social connections for people with learning disabilities a wide range of areas need to be considered. This includes areas of SCLD's commissioned work on: Employment, Housing, Parenting, Asset Based Approaches, Scrutiny, Hate Crime and Advocacy. In developing the national guidance reference could be made to these documents. Finally, SCLD believes that there is a responsibility for all citizens to work to improve social connections through rights, kindness, respect and support. It is our belief that good practice in working with people with learning disabilities would be a benchmark for good practice for all.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this important consultation.

Oonagh Brown
Scottish Commission for Learning Disability
Policy and Implementation Officer (Parenting)

Appendix 1: Consultation with The keys to life Expert Group and the Ayrshire National Involvement Network (NIN)

To aid our conversations with The Keys to Life Expert Group and NIN we gave both groups drawing of communities and asked them to place stickers on places of importance to them. We also asked them to add important places to the communities. We also provided group members with paper outlines of people to support conversations about important people in their community. This allowed us to best facilitate conversation about the consultation document. Included below is an example for your reference.