

Report on	Mid Ulster Loneliness Network 24/25
Date of Meeting	16 th May 2024
Reporting Officer	Kieran Gordon, Assistant Director Health, Leisure & Wellbeing
Contact Officer	Raisa Donnelly, Age Friendly Coordinator

Is this report restricted for confidential business? If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To update Members of the ongoing work around Age Friendly Communities and associated Networks across the Mid Ulster District Council Area and advise on a request for funding towards Mid Ulster Loneliness Network.
2.0	Background
2.1	The MUDC Age Friendly Coordinator is involved with a number of partners and networks that helps MUDC drive the Age Friendly agenda and progress towards a society for ageing well. There are close linkages with the Loneliness Network helping to deliver on Community Planning targets under the Health and Wellbeing Community Planning thematic group to develop and implement an integrated response to mental health and wellbeing.
2.2	Loneliness and isolation have been major issues in society and can lead to poor mental health. Traditional perceptions view loneliness and isolation affecting those in later life, however loneliness can also affect anyone from teenagers, new parents, carers, recently bereaved, to students and those with disabilities.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	The Mid Ulster Loneliness Network (MULN) was formed through collaboration between Northern and Southern Trusts, MUDC, and the Agewell Partnership. The Network works with Statutory, Voluntary, and Community sectors to raise awareness of loneliness, share best practice and learning on ways to address and prevent loneliness and so promote positive mental wellbeing throughout the MUDC area. By working in partnership with local communities, the aim is to reach into communities to identify, support, and help those who may be suffering from isolation and loneliness.
3.2	In September 2021, Members at the Environment Committee approved in principle the potential for recurring funding towards the Loneliness Network to allow for future planning and preparations (minute reference: E196/21) and previously in April 2023, Members at the Development Committee resolved to approve the request for a contribution of £3,000 towards the Loneliness Network for the April 2023 – March 2024 year in order to further promote and develop the network as supported by the other key partners of the Mid Ulster Loneliness Network including NHSCT and SHSCT (minute reference: D066/23). Members are asked to consider the continuation of a recurring contribution for a further 2 year period (April 2024 – March 2026) at a total of £3,000 per annum.

3.3	<p>In the last year the Age Friendly Co-ordinator has worked alongside MULN to deliver the following events/projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small grants - awarded 9 grants to eligible applications in December who delivered projects/activities that aimed to prevent and address loneliness across the generations and reduce barriers to participation and to enable them to become more connected. Some of the projects included: Herbal Walks, History Of Upperlands Linen, Agewell Monday & Tuesday Group Get Active, Grow Together, Candle Making Workshop, Prepare For Spring, Winter Wellbeing Forever Young Project. • The network have worked together and involved members/service users in planning, developing and delivering the 2024 calendars. The calendar was used to promote member organisations/community groups services amongst the community. • An information event was held on 29th September 2023 to celebrate 3 years of MULN to show case the work carried forward by the loneliness network and the need to continue to address this issue. The Age friendly strategy was also launched by the council at this event. • Continued work on and promotion of chatty benches, chatty cafes, chatty libraries and the kindness post-box.
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	<p><u>Financial & Human Resources Implications</u></p> <p>Financial: The request for £3,000 per annum contribution can be derived from existing budgets.</p> <p>Human: Existing staff resources sufficient to coordinate support. No additional staffing resource required.</p> <p>Risk Management: Considered in line with relevant Council policies and procedures.</p>
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	<p>Equality & Good Relations Implications: None anticipated at this juncture.</p> <p>Rural Needs Implications: None anticipated at this juncture.</p>
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	<p>To note the contents of this report and consider giving approval to the request for a contribution of £3,000 per annum for the period April 2024 – March 2026 towards the Loneliness Network in order to further promote and develop the network as supported by the other key partners of the Mid Ulster Loneliness Network including NHSCT and SHSCT.</p>
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	N/A