

Report on	Loneliness Network
Date of Meeting	13 th October 2020
Reporting Officer	Fiona McClements

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To inform Members of the development of a Mid Ulster Loneliness Network, raise awareness of the launch of the network and advise on a request for funding towards community projects.
2.0	Background
2.1	Loneliness and Isolation have been major issues in society and especially during the current pandemic. 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. During the Covid 19 pandemic, the restrictions have exacerbated this issue for everyone.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Through collaboration with others, the Northern Health Trust are leading on the development of a Loneliness Network for the Mid Ulster area. Some initial discussions were held between statutory and community organisations to discuss the need for and potential benefits of developing a Mid Ulster Loneliness Network. Staff from the community development and Environmental Health sections were invited to the initial meeting but then the situation changed through COVID-19. The initial aim of the collaboration of the Statutory, Voluntary, and Community sectors was to help raise awareness of loneliness, share best practice and learning on ways to address and prevent loneliness and so promote positive mental wellbeing throughout MUDC. This working in partnership with local communities, aims to reach into communities to identify, support, and help those who may be suffering from isolation and loneliness.
3.2	In order to progress this work during the COVID-19 pandemic and get voluntary and community sectors involved and gauge the level of need and support, the Mid Ulster Loneliness Network was launched virtually and a short video made by the Chair, Sandra McKenna can be viewed at https://vimeo.com/user28617732/review/448512271/adba5c0f70
3.3	Associated with the launch has been the request for community / voluntary / statutory group to become members of this network, so that all members can collectively look at the isolation and loneliness needs for ALL generations in the

	<p>Mid Ulster District Council area. Information is requested from members outlining the current needs of their community and how the network can best address these needs. The aim is to keep connected, work collectively, share information on best practice and most of all reduce the risk of and address loneliness within Mid Ulster. The attached flier outlines what the Network hopes to achieve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • raise awareness on loneliness and isolation • share practice and learning • reduce the stigma of talking about loneliness and • barriers to participation.
3.4	<p>It is planned that the network will in the short term provide opportunities, through an activity programme, for members to apply for funding for small projects to help address issues identified and to reduce the challenges and risks of loneliness in the coming months as the Pandemic develops. The Northern Trust has advised of a funding amount, in the region of £3,000 being available to groups and Mid Ulster Council have been asked if they wish to contribute so that further small grants programmes can be planned. There hasn't been a specific amount requested.</p>
3.5	<p>Being involved with the network helps MUDC drive the Age Friendly agenda and progress towards a society for ageing well. This links closely with the Community Planning targets under the Health and Wellbeing thematic group to develop and implement an integrated response to mental health and wellbeing.</p>
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	<p>Financial: A request has been made for a contribution to the small grants programme. The overall allocation being considered by the network is in the region of £3,000 for an Activities Programme (on behalf of Mid Ulster Loneliness Network) which will be open to Network members to apply for £300 – 500 for project work to tackle / reduce the risk of loneliness. A request has been made asking if Council can add to this.</p>
	<p>Human: Staff time</p>
	<p>Risk Management: N/a</p>
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	<p>Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/a</p>
	<p>Rural Needs Implications: N/a</p>

5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	It is recommended that MUDC staff continue to assist partners in the development of the loneliness network and be members of the Network.
5.2	Elected Members are requested to consider a match funding contribution of £1,500 towards a pilot small grants programme.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	Appendix 1 – Launch flyer.
6.2	Appendix 2 – Community application form.