

Community groups tackling loneliness to benefit from £4m fund

Book clubs, walking groups and other community projects will be able to apply for a £4 million fund designed to help reduce loneliness in the coming months.

The Local Connections Fund – made up of £2 million from the Government and £2 million from The National Lottery Community Fund – will be used for hundreds of small grants worth between £300 and £2,500.

These investments are designed to help local organisations bring people and communities together as the country recovers from the coronavirus pandemic.

Minister for Civil Society, Baroness Barran, said:

A great way to reduce loneliness is to do something you already enjoy with like-minded people, whether that's walking, volunteering or joining a book club. During the pandemic I've been so impressed with the way community groups have adapted their work to bring people together in new and innovative ways.

By investing directly in local charities and organisations, the £4 million Local Connections Fund will get support to where it's needed quickly and help bring people together through shared interests, so that no one needs to feel isolated in the months ahead.

Elly De Decker, Director of England Funding at The National Lottery Community Fund, said:

Throughout the pandemic, we've seen charities and community groups be a powerful force for good, tackling loneliness.

Small organisations are making a big difference, often on only small sums of money – supporting individuals to connect, reducing feelings of isolation, and helping communities thrive.

Su Moore, Stronger Communities Director at the Jo Cox Foundation, said:

The power of connection is a thread that runs through the work of the Jo Cox Foundation. Throughout 2020, we've seen our Great Get Together and More in Common community organisers mobilise to support their neighbours, to tackle loneliness.

Local people understand the issues in their communities, and by

supporting them, we can make a real difference.

This announcement builds on previous work by the Government to reduce loneliness during the pandemic. Over £24 million of the [£750 million charity funding package](#) has gone directly towards reducing loneliness, and a further £45 million to organisations supporting people with their mental health.

And in June we relaunched our long-running campaign, Let's Talk Loneliness, to remind people that there's no shame in asking for help. The [website](#) has lots of useful advice on how to help yourself and others safely.

Throughout December, the [Let's Talk Loneliness advent calendar](#) is sharing practical advice, inspiring stories, and support routes to encourage people to take the first steps to alleviate loneliness in themselves and others.

The Local Connections Fund will be split into two rounds of funding – each with its own application window, one in January 2021 and one in the summer 2021.

Funding will be available to small charities and community groups in England with an annual income of £50,000 or less, which are working to reduce loneliness by helping people feel more connected.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport will provide the first round of funding, totalling £2 million, and this will open for applications on 5 January 2021.

Organisations should apply via [The National Lottery Community Fund](#), the largest funder of community activity in the UK. Grants from this round will be distributed and spent by the end of the financial year.

Notes to Editors:

Three tangible actions for anyone feeling lonely and three actions for people wanting to help

If you are lonely you can:

- Keep in touch with friends, family and neighbours
- Ask for help if you are feeling lonely by getting in touch with organisations that offer support – there's a list on the Let's Talk Loneliness website.
- Set a routine with online activities, regular tasks or by volunteering

If you are worried about someone who is lonely:

- Phone a friend or send a letter to a family member you think may be lonely
- Smile, wave or chat from a safe distance with a neighbour
- Help out through volunteering with local groups or by offering regular

conversation to someone living alone

Over the last two years, the UK Government has been leading the way on tackling loneliness:

- It created the world's first Minister for Loneliness and published the world's first Government loneliness strategy in October 2018, containing 60 commitments from nine Government departments. Implementation of the strategy is ongoing and the Government published a first annual report in January 2020 setting out our progress;
- It launched the first Government fund dedicated to reducing loneliness worth £11.5 million, which is supporting 126 projects to transform the lives of thousands of lonely people across England;
- It launched the inaugural #LetsTalkLoneliness campaign in June 2019 to help raise awareness and tackle stigma.

We are the largest community funder in the UK – we're proud to award money raised by National Lottery players to communities across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Since June 2004, we have made over 200,000 grants and awarded over £9 billion to projects that have benefited millions of people.

We are passionate about funding great ideas that matter to communities and make a difference to people's lives. At the heart of everything we do is the belief that when people are in the lead, communities thrive. Thanks to the support of National Lottery players, our funding is open to everyone. We're privileged to be able to work with the smallest of local groups right up to UK-wide charities, enabling people and communities to bring their ambitions to life.