

# “Loneliness and isolation in rural Wales is a ticking time bomb” – Huw Irranca-Davies

Tackling loneliness and isolation is a national priority for the Welsh Government. According to the 2016-17 National Survey for Wales, around 17% of the population of Wales, or around 440,000 people, report being lonely.

People living in rural areas are particularly vulnerable to loneliness and isolation. Farming communities by their nature often are isolated from each other and from mainstream public services. Nearly 20% of the Welsh population live in communities of less than 1,500 people.

During the visit, the Minister will discuss with a range of farming and rural organisations what the Welsh Government can do to help tackle loneliness and isolation in farming and rural communities across Wales, as part of its forthcoming strategy on the issue, which will be published for consultation later this year.

Speaking ahead of his visit, Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“Loneliness and isolation is a growing issue in communities’ right across Wales. It affects everyone – be it a young person or an older person, a farmer or a doctor, a single person or a married couple, and can potentially lead to a range of serious health and social care problems.

“We want to help secure the best possible quality of life for people in all parts of Wales, including in our farming and rural communities. This is why the Welsh Government has made tackling loneliness and isolation a national priority.

“I’m at the Royal Welsh Show today to hear directly from people who live and work in rural Wales about their experiences, and to learn what we as a government can do to tackle what I consider to be a ticking time bomb.”

Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths added:

“The farming lifestyle of working long hours every day of every week, very often alone, means any opportunity for interaction with others is often greatly reduced. Added pressures such as running a business, animal disease and the uncertainties Brexit presents, can often lead to increased feelings of loneliness and hopelessness.

“Failing to deal with mental health issues can often lead to further issues. There is a wide range of support available to farmers and rural communities and I urge anyone suffering to not suffer alone and access the help available.”

Contact details for organisations able to provide support are available in the Welsh Government summer, winter and spring updates; Gwlad E-news bulletin and the Farming Connect Technical Publication.