

Press release: £11.5 million fund to tackle loneliness across England

- Tens of thousands of people experiencing loneliness to benefit from new £11.5m fund
- Building Connections Fund to be invested in organisations throughout England
- 126 organisations to receive funding to expand programmes

Tens of thousands of people will be given greater access to befriending services, community arts groups and support schemes through a new £11.5 million fund to tackle loneliness in England, Minister for Loneliness Mims Davies announced.

The 126 organisations to benefit from the new funding include new community transport links to support those most at risk of isolation, innovative digital solutions that enable elderly people and young care leavers to connect with their peers and one to one support for LGBT+ people suffering from loneliness.

The Building Connections Fund is the first ever Government fund dedicated to reducing loneliness in England and will target people from all age groups and backgrounds.

Funding will also go to expanding existing programmes that harness sport, arts or music as a way to encourage people to establish lasting and meaningful friendships with those who have similar hobbies and interests.

Minister for Loneliness, Mims Davies, said:

There is no one cause of loneliness and therefore no one solution. That is why we are working alongside a broad range of businesses, voluntary organisations and local councils to ensure that those who feel alone are best supported.

From new digital communities, to sports classes that bring people together, this fund will go a long way to achieving that goal. I am committed to encouraging open conversations around this sensitive topic to reduce the stigma and create an environment where everyone is better connected.

The fund was created earlier this year in partnership between the government, Big Lottery Fund and the Co-op Foundation.

Dawn Austwick, Chief Executive of the Big Lottery Fund, said:

Loneliness can affect anyone, young or old. Across the country,

this money will enable organisations to deliver activities ranging from rural rambling groups and community cafes, to walking football sessions and a social media platform for care leavers. Whatever the focus of the project, they all aim to help people make new connections that boost wellbeing and help to reduce feelings of loneliness.

We're proud to work with DCMS and the Co-op Foundation to support this important work. It's wonderful to see funding raised by National Lottery players supporting a wide range of community-led activity that will reduce social isolation.

Jamie Ward-Smith, Chair of the Co-op Foundation, the leading funder of projects tackling youth loneliness in the country, said:

By partnering with government on the youth strand of the Building Connections Fund, Co-op Foundation is supporting groups of young people most affected by loneliness to strengthen their connections and sense of belonging.

Our funding will support young people, including young carers and those with experience of care and bereavement, to find innovative solutions to loneliness so they can build their confidence and skills.

We look forward to working with our new partners over the coming years, helping them to tackle youth loneliness at a community level and boosting our joint understanding of loneliness.

The grantee announcement is supported the Government's first ever loneliness strategy, launched by the Prime Minister in October, which provided a powerful vision to reduce loneliness in the long term.

Grants from the Building Connections Fund for successful applicants will run until March 2021.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- For further information – contact the DCMS press office on: 0207 211 2210.
- Full list of [grantees](#) (PDF, 231KB, 28 pages)
- New Philanthropy Capital has been appointed by DCMS, Big Lottery Fund and Co-op Foundation as the evaluation and learning partner to capture learning on the impact of the Fund and support capability building of grant-holders. New Philanthropy Capital will be working in partnership with the Centre for Youth Impact, the What Works Centre for Wellbeing,

Brunel University and Bryson Purdon Social Research.

- Co-op Foundation funding will be used by organisations to explore youth loneliness in greater depth, test youth-led innovations within their existing provision, and share their learning as part of its national Belong network.

About the Building Connections Fund Youth strand

- 22 projects have received funding from the Building Connections Fund Youth strand – a £2m partnership between government and the Co-op Foundation.
- Funding of up to £80,000, to be spent by March 2021, was available for projects that supported any groups of young people within the most deprived 30% areas of England or that mainly benefited young people with any one or more of the following circumstances:
 - Being a carer
 - Being unemployed or precariously employed
 - Experiencing bereavement
 - Having a disability or long-term health condition
 - Having been in the care system.

About Co-op Foundation

- Co-op Foundation is the Co-op's charity, set up to help communities UK-wide work together to make things better.
- Co-op Foundation is the leading funder of projects tackling youth loneliness in the UK. Its 'Belong' programme aims to connect and empower at least 5,000 young people while also strengthening youth services and tackling stigma associated with loneliness.
- The Foundation provides interest-free loans and grants to eligible organisations looking to grow sustainably-funded community spaces.
- Co-op Foundation is a working name of Co-operative Community Investment Foundation, a charity registered in England and Wales (1093028) and Scotland (SC048102).
- www.coopfoundation.org.uk