

KCC launches new select committee on loneliness and social isolation

Kent County Council's (KCC) Scrutiny Committee has established a Loneliness and Social Isolation Select Committee to identify ways it can support the county's older residents. The committee will investigate the current services available and identify initiatives and strategies to prevent or reduce the impact on residents.

The committee is cross-party and independent from the council's executive. It will gather information via several hearing sessions with relevant witnesses, off-site visits and the collection of written submissions from experts and interested stakeholders.

Loneliness and social isolation are serious issues with wide-ranging consequences. Although loneliness can affect anybody, its mental and physical effects can be particularly detrimental for older people, as the health risks associated with it increase as people age.

It has been estimated that about 30,000 people in Kent alone suffer from acute loneliness. While we are aware that tackling this problem is not easy, we believe that more can be done to alleviate suffering and improve the lives of our older residents.

The terms of reference were agreed at the committee's first formal meeting on July 23.

Loneliness and Social Isolation Select Committee – Terms of Reference

1. To put into context social isolation and loneliness, and to identify the groups of people who are particularly affected by social isolation and/or loneliness in Kent.
2. To investigate the impact of social isolation and loneliness on Kent's older residents.
3. To investigate the extent to which KCC's current service provision and partnership working is effective in dealing with social isolation and loneliness amongst older people in Kent.
4. To recommend initiatives and strategies to prevent or reduce the impact of social isolation and loneliness on Kent's older residents.

To help the committee gather as many views on this important issue as possible, KCC would welcome any written submissions about loneliness and social isolation.

If you would like to send information for the committee to consider, please email select.committee@kent.gov.uk by **midday on Monday, September 10, 2018**.

Once all the information has been considered, the committee will develop a report that puts forward recommendations for improvement to be considered at a full county council meeting in early 2019.

This is a very important committee aimed at assisting the individual, the carers, the families to make an improvement in all their lives.

Geoffrey Lymer
Kent County Councillor
Dover Ward West