

## **Social Connection Statement – June 2023**

The COVID-19 pandemic had an unprecedented impact on our lives; from the ramifications on health and the delivery of healthcare, to our jobs, and on our ability to socialise and connect with others, at a time when perhaps we needed it most.

The collective trauma experienced is predicted to adversely affect our mental health and wellbeing for some time to come [Ref: 1].

We know that healthy and meaningful social connections are essential for good health and wellbeing.

Social connectedness promotes overall health. Lack of social connectiveness as was demonstrable during the COVID-19 pandemic due to 'Lock Down' was determinantal in highlighting the risks of loneliness on all age groups. The most vulnerable groups were teenagers, young adults and adolescents and the elderly [Ref: 1 – 3]. The feeling of loneliness was directly proportional to adverse outcomes such as major depressive disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, which lead to lower levels of physical activity [Ref: 1 – 3].

Whilst social-distancing and self-isolation were needed to protect ourselves and others, these interventions impacted our day-to-day relationships and led to a much-documented increase in loneliness [Ref: 1 – 3].

We therefore seek to prioritise the importance and amplify the vast benefits of connecting, by encouraging essential social networks and community activities that are central to our wellbeing and happiness [Ref: 1 – 2].

### **Declaration**

We will work with the schools and other organisations and groups to develop, sustain, and promote projects, events and programmes that promote social connection for all age ranges in the Parish.

We will publish and maintain a directory of services and activities that promote social connection in digital form on the Parish Council website for residents to access.

We will encourage residents to engage as volunteers in activities that promote the well-being of the community.

We will promote friendship groups such as Parent and Toddler groups, Men in Sheds (which welcome women too!) and others.

We will work with the CDC Wellbeing team and Gloucestershire Community Wellbeing Service to learn from and implement best practice.

To investigate bringing back annual community events such as the Bourton-on-the-Water Carnival.

#### **References:**

1. Christoph P. et al. Mental Health During COVID-19 Lockdown in the United Kingdom. Psychosomatic Medicine, J of Biobehavioural Medicine 83(4): 328-337, 2021.
2. Panchal U, et al. The impact of COVID-19 lockdown on child and adolescent mental health: Systemic Review. European Child and Adolescent Psychiatry 16(3): 1-27, 2021.
3. Webb L. COVID-a9 lockdown: A perfect Storm for older people's mental health. Journal of Psychiatry and Mental Health Nursing 28(2): 300, 2020.