

Loneliness harms health

Action nine

Meeting the influencers

Arranging meetings with MPs, councillors and other organisations is one of the best ways of trying to get loneliness on the agenda of the health and wellbeing board. As a constituent, your input and opinions should always be of value to people elected in your area.

Councillors: There will be elected members on the health and wellbeing board (councillors). They may be a good way in; their role is to listen to you and take your concerns on board. Try and arrange for either yourself or your group to meet with the 'portfolio holder' (someone who takes the lead on an issue on the council) for health and wellbeing or adult social care. Send an email or letter explaining the campaign and why you'd like to meet with them. If you don't get a response, do follow up with a phone call. Be persistent and they will contact you.

They may also have a regular surgery so you can book an appointment and go along to see them. Once you have a meeting arranged, ensure that you are

prepared. You should go along knowing what outcomes you want from the meeting. These could include:

- Ensuring the councillor understands the health impact of loneliness (make sure you have useful information to hand)
- Ensuring the councillor understands the prevalence of loneliness in your area
- Ensuring the councillor understands that measures to alleviate loneliness in older age can be relatively low cost and community based (you might want to have some case studies to hand)
- Ensuring the councillor understands what you'd like to see from the health and wellbeing board
- What outcomes you want from the meeting and what would be a very successful outcome

It will also be useful to leave some information with the person you're meeting so that they can refer to these at a later date.

Local Authority Officers: You could also contact the director for adult social services and the director of public health – both of whom will be sitting on the health and wellbeing board and will have an excellent understanding of health issues in your area.

It is easy to identify the director of adult social care by checking out the [ADASS website](#) (Association of Directors of Adult Social Services) or calling them on 020 7072 7433. Your director of public health should be named on council and NHS websites and can be found by using search engines. Otherwise, give your council a call and they will provide you with this information.

These are busy people and the first step might be to write them a letter introducing yourself and your campaign. Once you have met the relevant councillors and got them on board, you could ask them to arrange a meeting with the relevant local authority officers which you could attend together.

MPs: Contacting your MP as well will mean that you have covered all possible people who should be listening to your views about

loneliness in your area. You can do this either by writing a letter or attending a surgery. A surgery is a time that they have set aside to meet with and address their constituents' concerns. If you don't know who your local MP is or you can't find their contact details, take a look at www.theyworkforyou.com. MPs won't have any direct control over the priorities of the health and wellbeing board. However, they can certainly have an influence by lending their voice to your campaign. You could ask them to write a letter to the health and wellbeing board highlighting their concern about the issue and asking the board what action they are currently taking or planning to take to ensure that this issue is included in their commission plans. Take a look at our template letter to MPs (resource 2). You could also send your MP a copy of our [Constituency Campaign Pack](#).

Depending on their response to the issue, you could also ask them for a quote of support to include in your publicity or even to give a speech at any events you decide to hold. MPs are great for generating media interest and exerting influence, so do have a go at getting them on board with your campaign.

Share your activities— log your action on the [online map](#) on our website to inspire others