

What can we learn from the COVID-19 crisis about social connection with isolated groups? A Social Integration All Party Parliamentary Group Inquiry

The COVID-19 crisis has already seen many examples of civic contribution and local solidarity. It has also shone a light on the challenges of social isolation. People are being asked to socially distance, which is important for public health, but at the same time we need to avoid social isolation. Concern has been expressed about older people, those in sparsely populated rural areas, homeless people and some minority ethnic and migrant groups, who may be vulnerable due to such isolation. Public health information may not reach them, and they may not have friends and family who can support them in situations of self-isolation or wider societal 'lock down'. Long-term isolation may exacerbate loneliness and damage wellbeing and mental health.

Despite these concerns, there is a growing number of initiatives that are already reaching out to these groups. In the current situation it is important that we share good practice in reaching out to socially isolated groups. The Social Integration All Party Parliamentary Group has decided to run a short inquiry that focuses on what we can learn from the COVID-19 crisis about social connection with isolated groups. The inquiry will have two parts.

Part One opens now. We can't meet in person, so we are launching a written call for evidence, which will close on **Tuesday 14th April 2020**. We would like to hear both from organisations who have been working in this area for some time and also from people or new groups who have got involved by taking action in response to COVID-19. We wish to hear about positive examples of good practice and the challenges that they have faced and how such difficulties have been overcome. We are also keen to hear from businesses and public services such as councils, too.

We are asking organisations and individuals working with socially isolated groups to think about the questions below and send in written evidence to info@britishfuture.org

We don't want to take you away from your essential work, so feel free to make your answers short. You can contact us via social media, tweeting at @integrationAPPG or using the #socialintegrationappg hashtag; or film what you want to say on your camera and transfer the file by WeTransfer.

Questions

What issues has the COVID-19 crisis raised for socially isolated groups?

How are you/your organisation responding to these challenges to reach these groups?

What barriers and challenges have you encountered in your work to reach and support socially isolated groups? How have you responded to these barriers and solved such problems?

Is there best practice you would like to share with others working in similar situations? What doesn't work in these situations?

What should the Government be doing to support you in your work to reach and support socially isolated groups? What support would be useful from other relevant groups such as councils, the NHS and other civil society bodies?

We aim to produce a report by the end of April. **Part two** of the Inquiry will take place when the situation begins to return to normal and will focus on the lessons learned from this crisis.

About the Social Integration APPG

The Social Integration APPG is a cross-party group of parliamentarians that aims to drive forward a cross-party conversation on policy solutions to break down barriers to integration and create opportunities for people from all walks of life to connect with each other and build bonds of trust. It is chaired by Holly Lynch MP and its secretariat is the think tank British Future: contact us at info@britishfuture.org.