

# A Connected Scotland: Comments from the Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care

## About the Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care (SPPC)

The Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care (SPPC) brings together health and social care professionals from hospitals, social care services, primary care, hospices and other charities, to find ways of improving people's experiences of declining health, death, dying and bereavement. We also work to enable communities and individuals to support each other through the hard times which can come with death, dying and bereavement.

Sometimes our field is described as "palliative care" but depending on what people understand by this term, this language can cause confusion. One way of thinking about "palliative care" is to talk in terms of providing "good care" to people whose health is in irreversible decline or whose lives are coming to an inevitable close. However, the work of the SPPC is not synonymous with death – it is about life, about the care of someone who is alive, someone who still has hours, days, months, or years remaining in their life, and about optimising wellbeing in those circumstances.

SPPC was founded 26 years ago and has grown to be a collaboration of over 50 organisations involved in providing care towards the end of life. SPPC's membership includes all the territorial NHS Boards, all the hospices, a range of professional associations, many national charities, local authorities, social care providers and universities.

**Although in this response we have only answered 3 questions directly the resources and activity to which we refer have quite wide implications and are relevance to some of the other questions too.**

**Question 7: Are you aware of any good practice in a local community to build social connections that you want to tell us about?**

The *To Absent Friends Festival* runs in Scotland from 1-7 November each year.

([www.toabsentfriends.org.uk](http://www.toabsentfriends.org.uk)) Born from a desire to address the social isolation of people who have been bereaved, it is a non-prescriptive, participative festival that creates opportunities for people to connect over common experiences of loss. An evaluation of the 2017 festival is available here:

<https://www.palliativecarescotland.org.uk/content/publications/TAF-2017-Final-Evaluation.pdf>

Feedback has shown that the festival helps build communities, addressing social isolation and loneliness. Key findings included:

- 62% took part because they wanted to be part of a community event
- 62% said they found being part of a community was one of the most valuable aspects of To Absent Friends

**Question 11: What do we need to be doing more of (or less of) to ensure that we tackle social isolation and loneliness for the specific life stages and groups mentioned above?**

*A Road Less Lonely* was recently published by the Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care and Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief:

<https://www.palliativecarescotland.org.uk/news/news/launch-of-new-report-a-road-less-lonely/>

Drawing on the expertise of a wide range of people and organisations, it focuses on how to encourage more open and supportive attitudes and behaviours relating to deteriorating health, dying and bereavement. Amongst other things, the report highlights the importance of supporting community development approaches. The report also highlights various work that is ongoing in Scotland and further afield to create ‘compassionate communities’ relating to death, dying, loss and care that might be learned from.

**Question 13: How can we ensure that the social care sector contributes to tackling social isolation and loneliness?**

The social care sector already contributes a great deal to tackling social isolation and loneliness. More resource needs to be made available to the sector if we want them to do more – see Scottish Care report *Supporting Solace*:

<http://www.scottishcare.org/innovation/supporting-solace/>

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