

**April 2017**

## **Campaign launched to End Loneliness in Mendip**

Key public service providers operating in Mendip have joined forces to tackle the problem of loneliness.

Mendip District Council is working alongside a number of leading local health and wellbeing service providers, including Health Connections Mendip, Somerset Public Health and Mendip General Practices, to launch the End Loneliness in Mendip campaign, which aims to raise awareness of the support available for older people who are suffering from loneliness.

As part of the campaign, which will be launched on Monday 24 April, a dedicated website has been set up – [www.endlonelinessinmendip.org.uk](http://www.endlonelinessinmendip.org.uk) – where people can go to find out about the support available and how to get involved in the campaign.

The website also includes information about volunteering with local community groups, as well as information on how to become a 'Community Connector' and spread the word about the support available.

There is also a section of the website where local public service providers and individuals can pledge their support for the campaign and say what they will be doing to reduce loneliness in Mendip.

The district council has already made its pledge, stating: "We are going to promote the ending of loneliness as part of our Corporate Plan, building on the event we held last year to promote groups tackling loneliness to our parishes. We will train our staff to understand the impacts of loneliness on mental health and what signposting they could provide to help residents access opportunities."

Jenny Hartnoll, Health Connections Service Lead, said: "If your organisation has not pledged an action, then ask them to look at the website and contact us so we can add their pledge to the website. If you are an individual and you would like to do something to help end loneliness in Mendip, then do contact us with your pledge too. We may not have the answer but together we can make a difference."

As part of the campaign the website will also feature a series of monthly case studies focusing on local support groups, looking at what they are doing to tackle loneliness. There are plans for a month that encourages people to 'take time and smile', another month that will highlight volunteering opportunities, another that will focus on support for people who have retired or been bereaved.

Tracy Aarons, Deputy Chief Executive at Mendip District Council, said: "Mendip District Council will be playing an active role in this very important campaign. The impact of loneliness can have a devastating impact on an individual's mental and physical health. I'm confident that this campaign will make a real difference and go a long way towards ending loneliness in Mendip."

Dr Geoff Sharp, Chair, Mendip Local Implementation Group, which is spearheading the campaign, said: "It is known that loneliness can lead to both poor physical and mental health outcomes and to a large extent the problem goes unseen - what we do see is the 'tip of the iceberg'. I hope people will be able to support the campaign by pledging an action, spreading the word about support and getting involved in the monthly focus projects."