

## **REQUEST FOR SUBMISSIONS FOR LONELINESS TASKFORCE**

Senator Dr. Kevin Swanick, has recently established Loneliness Taskforce in collaboration with Seán Moynihan of ALONE to coordinate an All-Ireland response to the epidemic of loneliness and social isolation in Ireland. As part of the Loneliness Taskforce we have been working with a range of groups to help increase awareness about the issue and to produce a set of recommendations for Government, state agencies and all policy members.

It is known that loneliness and social isolation are some of the greatest public health risks of today. Loneliness is now as prevalent in the young as it is in the elderly, it just manifests itself differently.

Some things to consider about loneliness and social isolation:

- 1 in 3 older people live alone and research shows that loneliness can decrease life expectancy by up to 10 years
- Research shows that loneliness and social isolation are harmful to our health and are worse for us than well-known risk factors such as obesity and physical inactivity
- In the UK, research in 2014 showed that 40% of all older people say the television is their main company
- Loneliness never discriminates between young and old, rich and poor or urban and rural and that is why more needs to be done to tackle the scourge of loneliness and social isolation.

Through the Loneliness Taskforce we will produce a report on what is needed to tackle the epidemic of loneliness across the island of Ireland. The Taskforce includes a range of people from the community and voluntary sectors, nursing, sport, business, medicine, youth work, psychiatry and NGO's.

I understand the Public Participation Networks give citizens a greater say in local government decisions which affect their own communities. I believe this to be very important work; it is democracy at its best.

The Loneliness Taskforce would like to formally request your input into the report we are compiling. We would like to hear your suggestions or proposals, to incorporate them into the report that will be published in the coming months. We would be most grateful if you would consider making a submission, but also if you would bring this to the attention of your members who may also be interested in making submissions.

We are asking for suggestions to be broken down into three categories:

- (a) Short term proposals (that can be introduced immediately)
- (b) Medium term proposals (that may require a longer lead in period)
- (c) Long term proposals (that may require long term planning or significant changes)

Detailed submissions or suggestions to the Loneliness Taskforce can be made via [www.lonelinesstaskforce.com](http://www.lonelinesstaskforce.com) or by post to:

Dr. Keith Swanick,  
Chairperson of the Loneliness Taskforce,  
Seanad Éireann,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2  
Ireland

The deadline for receipt of submissions is Monday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2018

Should you be in a position to do so and should you wish, we would be most grateful if you could tweet your support to @LonelinessTask1

Yours sincerely,



**Senator Dr. Keith Swanick**  
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**Spokesperson on Health and Mental Health**