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**REACH OUT: Make a difference to someone who’s lonely**

Dear Colleague

NHS Highland is leading a major campaign called **‘Reach Out’** which aims to tackle loneliness and social isolation. The reason that NHS Highland is focusing efforts on this issue is because there is strong evidence to suggest that feeling lonely and isolated can have a major impact on people’s mental and physical health and wellbeing. Evidence suggests that being lonely is as bad for your health as being overweight or not being physically active and increases the risk of dying prematurely by 10 per cent.

Members of the public, individuals, companies and services/organisations are being invited to complete a ‘pledge’ in which they will undertake to carry out a task/activity of their choosing to address loneliness and social isolation. The pledge is available online at: [www.reachout.scot.nhs.uk/sign-the-pledge/](http://www.reachout.scot.nhs.uk/sign-the-pledge/) or you can complete a postcard in the enclosed pack and return it using the freepost address.

Within your organisation signing the pledge could be something you do as individuals or as a practice, or something you promote to your patients. It may very well be that you already come in to contact with individuals who are lonely and isolated so signposting sheets have been developed to support you direct patients to local services and organisations.

The campaign has already been backed by a number of agencies and individuals and I am asking for your support to promote the campaign and to take the opportunity to think about what more you or your practice could do to help raise awareness of the issue and combat loneliness within the community that you serve.

Promotional and support materials are available for download from the campaign website. Additionally printed materials can be ordered from Health Information and Resource Services (HIRS). Register online <http://healthyhighlanders.co.uk/HPAC> or call 01463 704647. I would encourage you to actively support Reach Out, and for your practice to help make a difference to someone who’s lonely.

Yours Sincerely



Dr Paul Davidson

Associate Medical Director – Primary Care