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Dear Colleague,

I am writing to tell you that the government is publishing its strategy for tackling loneliness in England today. I will be launching the strategy at 5pm today in the Attlee Suite of Portcullis House and I am delighted to welcome all MPs with an interest to join me.

As the country's first Minister responsible for cross-government work on loneliness, I am enormously privileged to be shaping a national response to tackling loneliness. I know that many of us witness the consequences of loneliness, and the good work that's going on to bring communities together, in our constituencies every week. I am grateful for the examples that many of you have shared with me. The advice and information that you have passed on, particularly the contributions of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Loneliness chaired by Rachel Reeves, have been an important factor in informing the government's work.

Loneliness is one of our most pressing public health issues. Feeling lonely often is linked to early deaths, on a par with smoking or obesity. It's also linked to increased risk of coronary heart disease and stroke, depression, cognitive decline and an increased risk of Alzheimer's. It's estimated that between 5% and 18% of UK adults feel lonely often or always.

You will already be aware of the work of the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness, set up by our late colleague Jo Cox. The government has accepted almost all the Commission's recommendations and corresponding plans are taking shape in the devolved nations. In January, the Prime Minister announced that, by the end of 2018, government would publish a strategy for tackling loneliness in England, would establish a grant fund, and would work on measuring loneliness more consistently and improving the evidence base.

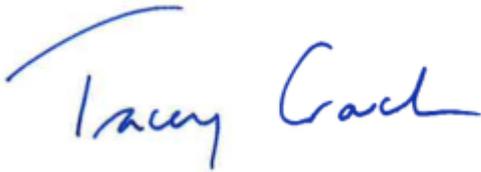
As announced in June, we have secured an additional £20million of grant-funding for work bringing communities together and tackling loneliness. £11.5million of this is available through the government's Building Connections Fund, which is delivered in partnership with Big Lottery Fund and Co-op Foundation.



The strategy published next week will set out government's vision for this country to be a place where we all have strong social relationships. Where families, friends and communities support each other, and institutions value the human element in their interactions with people. Where loneliness can be recognised and acted on without stigma or shame. Where we each make efforts to look out for each other, and ensure that even brief moments of contact are respectful and meaningful.

The strategy sets out a powerful vision on how we can all play a role in building a more socially connected society, and makes some important policy commitments. It will also include further detail on the government's commitments around measurement and evidence. Government will continue to work with communities, charities, businesses, local authorities, health bodies and others, building on the great work that is already under way to create the connected society that we all want to live in.

I look forward to continuing to work with the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Loneliness, and with colleagues on all sides of the house, on this vital agenda.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tracey Crouch". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'T'.

Tracey Crouch MP
Minister for Sport and Civil Society