

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK 9-15 MAY 2022 THEME: LONELINESS

Melanie Wicklen, Chief Executive Officer
Beverley Young, Chief Partnerships Officer



Housekeeping:

- Presentation will last about 40 mins
- Will be Q&A's at end
- Pop questions in the chat box
- Slides will be shared

Topics that will be covered:

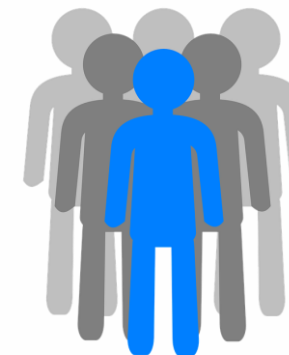
- Isolation and loneliness – understanding the difference and why it matters?
- What factors increase the risk of loneliness?
- What is the impact on health and well-being?
- What is the prevalence of loneliness among people aged 50 and over?
- Impact of Covid and rising cost of living.
- How can we help people overcome feelings of loneliness?



Isolation and Loneliness - understanding the difference and why it matters

Loneliness is **not the same** as social isolation.

- People can be isolated (alone) yet not feel lonely.
- People can be surrounded by other people, yet still feel lonely.



How do they differ?

- Social isolation is an **objective measure** of the number of contacts that people have. It is about the quantity and not quality of relationships. People may choose to have a small number of contacts.
- Loneliness is a **subjective feeling** about the gap between a person's desired levels of social contact and their actual level of social contact.

Loneliness has been an emerging social issue for many years, with organisations including Age UK and the Campaign to End Loneliness raising its profile.

What factors increase the risk of loneliness?

Whilst everybody can experience loneliness certain factors can increase this:

- Being widowed
- Being single
- Being unemployed
- Being in poverty
- Living alone
- Having a long-term health condition or disability
- Living in rented accommodation
- Being between 16 and 24 years old
- Being a carer
- Being from an ethnic minority community
- Being LGBTQ+



Context



24% of people aged 50+ living in England feel lonely some of the time, while 7% (equating to around **1.4 million people**) **feel lonely often** (Age UK, 2018a).

Approximately **one third of referrals** to local Age UK services are for loneliness in older adults

Three quarters of GPs across the UK say they see between 1 and 5 people a day who have come in mainly **because they are lonely** (The Campaign to End Loneliness, 2013).

Depression is the most common mental health problem in older adults – it is estimated that it affects 22% of men and 28% of women aged 65 and over

Depression affects 40% of **older people in care homes** (Age UK, 2016)

Depression in later life is the major **risk factor for suicide** – 80% of people over the age of 74 who die by suicide have depression

What is the impact on health and well-being?

**IT'S A PUBLIC
HEALTH
CONCERN.**

- Loneliness is a **major public health concern**.
- Research shows that being lonely can have a **negative impact on physical and mental health**.
- **Three quarters of GPs** surveyed have said they are **seeing between one and five people a day suffering with loneliness**, which is linked to a range of damaging health impacts, like **heart disease, strokes and dementia**.
- Around **200,000** older people **have not had a conversation** with a friend or relative **in more than a month**.
- Launch of PM's Loneliness Strategy in 2018 – **This is not a new issue**.



What is the prevalence of loneliness among people aged 50 and over?

- Loneliness is growing - **44% increase** in number of 65-74 year olds living alone
- **Over 152,000** people aged 65 or over living in **our county**, at least 11.5% of whom live alone East of England perspective, recent survey
- Around **65,000 of older people** in the East of England didn't have anyone to celebrate the festive period with last year
- Loneliness can be more prevalent during the festive period – around 163,000 over 65s said they usually feel lonelier at Christmas than any other time of year, and around **121,000** said they were **eating dinner alone on Christmas Day** .
- But loneliness is something that can affect those in later life all year round too, and recent ONS statistics show that around two million (**23%**) **people aged 70+** in Great Britain **reported feeling lonely** at least some of the time .



Impact of Covid and rising cost of living on loneliness

"I seem to have become less able in many ways. I think the less you use it the more you lose it"

"It's sad to see how much lockdown has drained her confidence - gone from someone who attended regular groups out daily - to someone who is scared to go over her doorstep. Complete lack of confidence in their ability to cope with day to day tasks and everyday living"

- 35% now have less energy
- 20% feel less steady on their feet
- 25% can't walk as far as before
- 20% are finding it harder to remember things
- 30% people have felt more anxious since the start of the pandemic
- 20% are less confident leaving the house by themselves



How can we help people overcome feelings of loneliness?

- Our services
- Volunteer opportunities
- Engage with communities
- Working cross sectors to explore all opportunities for those who are feeling lonely or at risk of feeling lonely – GP NHS (awareness of voluntary sector support) referrals
- Links well with integrated care system putting individual needs at the heart of everything we do



[CLICK HERE TO VIEW VIDEO \(1MIN\)](#)



Service User feedback

Reducing Isolation and Loneliness – impact:

“Without my home support worker I don't know what would have happened to me, she called an ambulance and I believe she helped to save my life.”

“It's a comfort knowing my warden is visiting or contacting me to check I'm OK. It makes me feel less anxious.”

“I feel as though we are both volunteering, not just me; we share stories, reminisce and enjoy keeping each other company.”

“As soon as I see my volunteer and her smile I feel less lonely.”

“I feel lifted, talking to someone who is willing to listen means so much. I'm managing much better.”

Further Research and Resources

[Mental Health UK - Forward Together \(mentalhealth-uk.org\)](https://www.mentalhealth-uk.org)

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/policy-research/loneliness-research-and-resources/>

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/policy-research/loneliness-research-and-resources/loneliness-depression-and-anxiety-exploring-the-connection-to-mental-health/>

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/consultation-responses-and-submissions/health--wellbeing/loneliness-and-covid-19---december-2021.pdf>

https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/loneliness/loneliness-report_final_2409.pdf

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/mental-health-awareness-week>

<https://mentalhealth-uk.org/get-involved/mental-health-awareness-days/mental-health-awareness-week/>

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