

Tackling Loneliness in Worcestershire



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Tackling loneliness has always been a priority in Worcestershire but now more than ever following the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. We recognise that there are people of all ages who may be feeling lonely or isolated and we want to encourage everyone to take simple steps to help them feel more connected.

There are many ways in which you and those around you can feel less lonely. Some people find connecting with others is the best way to help with their loneliness while others prefer to deal with their loneliness alone. Please see below for suggestions on ways in which you can stay connected or how you can help friends, family or other individuals with their feelings of loneliness. Also, please visit www.worcestershire.gov.uk/loneliness for information on local and national signposting.

Understanding Loneliness

“Loneliness is a subjective, unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship, which happens when there is a mismatch between the quantity and quality of the social relationships that we have, and those that we want”

(Perlman and Peplau, 1981)

There are different types of loneliness including emotional and social. These are defined as the absence of a significant other and a lack of wider social networks including friends, neighbours and colleagues. The feeling of loneliness is different for everyone, it can come and go, occur at certain times or be present for all or most of the time.

Loneliness can affect anyone at any time in their life, but there are a number of key life transitions that can trigger the feelings of loneliness. These include being recently bereaved, becoming a new parent, retirement, moving to a new house or becoming a carer. There are also a number of risk factors that can make someone more likely to experience feelings of loneliness. These factors can include being socially isolated, living alone, living in care, having poor health and a low income.

Loneliness can be felt by anyone of any age, however as we get older the risk factors that might lead to loneliness begin to increase. There is also hidden loneliness amongst the younger generation which is often not recognised or talked about. The triggers of loneliness for young people can include finding it hard to make new friends, moving school, being bullied, abused, or living in care.

What can I do if I am feeling lonely?

Loneliness can have a detrimental effect on your physical, mental and emotional wellbeing, so it is really important to stay physically and creatively active, which improves your physical and mental health. There are also lots of other things you can do to feel less lonely, which can, and do help. Some people find connecting with others is the best way to help with their loneliness while others prefer to deal with their loneliness alone. Below are some suggestions of how to help with your individual feelings of loneliness and ways in which you can stay connected.



Connecting with others.....

- **Don't keep it to yourself** - Talking to someone about your feelings of loneliness and learning positive coping techniques such as connecting with others, doing more of the things you enjoy, learning new skills and looking after yourself are all helpful ways to deal with the negative emotions associated with loneliness. For more information about talking to someone please visit [Now We're Talking | Healthy Minds](#)
- **Catch up with old friends** - Reach out to your friends by picking up the phone or contacting them through social media.
- **Connect online** - Technology is a great way to stay in touch with friends and family using social media i.e. Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp. There are lots of free courses available to help improve your skills in this area.
- **Invest time in new connections** - Joining groups based on your interests is one of the best ways of making new connections. Think about activities and hobbies you enjoy, or perhaps something new you would like to learn. This can also include getting involved in community activities by joining groups such as Women's Institute, the Rotary Club etc.
- **Little things can make a difference** - Having deep connections with close friends is important but brief exchanges with others e.g. saying hello to a neighbour, a shop keeper or someone at the bus stop can also have a positive impact on how you feel about yourself.
- **Volunteering** - Is an excellent way to get involved and you can draw on skills or interests you have developed over your lifetime. Volunteering is more important than ever and can be a way of connecting and meeting new people. People can offer their time by supporting a family member, friend or neighbour or by getting involved in initiatives such as the Good Neighbour Network or by using apps such as Next Door.
- **Befriending** - Some people may benefit from a more formal social arrangement such as befriending, where you are matched with a befriender who can either contact you via phone or in person.



Things you can do alone.....

- **Plan your week to do something you enjoy** - Take time to plan ahead and include a pastime that makes you feel good. This can include doing something creative, going outside for a walk, reading, gardening, cooking or listening to music.
- **Spend time outdoors** - Going outside regularly, be it in your garden or a walk to the park is a great way of feeling better. It can help you feel more connected to nature and your neighbourhood, enjoying the natural world and your local environment.
- **Challenge negative thoughts** - When you're feeling lonely it can be easy to fall into a negative mindset and have negative thoughts. It is important to challenge these thoughts, take a step back and consider these thoughts objectively from a new perspective, often it can be helpful to write these thoughts down. Please visit [Now We're Talking | Healthy Minds](#) for some helpful tools and resources.
- **Look after yourself** - Prioritise looking after yourself, making sure you are eating healthily, keeping hydrated, being as active as you can and sleeping well.



What can I do if I am a young person feeling lonely?

As a young person there are some key things you can do and tools you can use to feel less lonely and more positive (please click on the links to open a new window): As a young person there are some key things you can do and tools you can use to feel less lonely and more positive (please click on the links to open a new window):

- Tell someone you trust how you feel
- Get support from others who are feeling the same - [message boards](#)
- Track how you feel by writing down your thoughts and seeing what makes you feel better or worse - [Mood Journal](#), [Art box](#)
- Get positive ideas on how to lift your mood - [Boost your Mood, coping kit](#)
- Get advice about building your confidence and self-esteem that can make you feel more confident when meeting new people - [building confidence and self-esteem](#)
- Join a club or group where you can meet new people - [hobbies and interests board](#)
- Talk to a [Childline counsellor](#) for support
- Don't be hard on yourself - it can take time to feel better



[Childline](#) has lots of other fantastic resources on making friends, bouncing back from bullying, being assertive, coping with anxiety and taking care of yourself. Please visit their website for more information www.childline.org.uk.

Stay Connected Pledge



In Worcestershire as a way of encouraging and supporting people to stay connected we have launched the **Stay Connected Pledge**. The Pledge works with

organisations to ensure their groups and activities are inclusive, welcoming to all and provides opportunities to connect with others. The stay connected logo above identifies which organisations have signed the pledge. For more information about the pledge, how to sign and a list of organisations who have already signed please visit [Loneliness and isolation | Worcestershire County Council webpage](#).

Here2Help Worcestershire

Here2Help provides support for people of all ages and is available for both residents and organisations to access information, advice, tools, guidance and local support to them or others in the local community based on their needs. For more information please visit [Here2Help Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) | Worcestershire County Council webpage](#).



People Like Us (PLUS) Service

People Like Us (PLUS) is a service that works across Worcestershire to support adults of all ages who are experiencing loneliness or isolation. PLUS enables individuals to connect with others and supports them to become more active and engaged in their communities. The service is delivered by ONSIDE with their two delivery partners Worcester Community Trust and Simply Limitless. For more information please call 01905 27525 or 07485 312463 or visit www.onside-advocacy.org.uk/plus.

Worcestershire Healthy Minds

Worcestershire Healthy Minds supports people experiencing more common mental health problems, such as worry, low mood and depression which can affect all of us at some time. You can contact the service yourself directly and talk to our team about how you're feeling, and they can help you access help and advice. Healthy Minds runs online courses, group sessions and more traditional talking therapy and they can also help you access a wider range of support available in your local community. You can contact the team yourself on 0300 013 57 27 or visit [Healthy Minds](#).

Helpful National Links

Below is a list of helpful national organisations and services that can support people of all ages (please click on the links to open a new window):

Adults

[Independent age](#) providing befriending services: **0800 319 6789**. Independent Age have also produced a helpful free guide, [If you're feeling lonely](#). It can be downloaded from their website or by calling 0800 319 6789.

[Royal Voluntary Service](#) for help, advice and support: **0845 608 0122**.

Call [The Silver Line](#) for information, advice or just for a chat, 24 hours a day and 7 days a week **0800 470 80 90**.

Visit [Friends of the Elderly](#) for year-round support or call **0330 332 1110**.

[Age UK](#), support and advice for older people, advice line: **0800 169 6565**.

[University of the Third Age](#) (U3A) operates in many areas, offering older people the chance to learn or do something new.

[Sense](#), for advice and support on deaf blindness **0300 330 9256** or **020 7520 0972**. Textphone: **0300 330 9256** or **020 7520 0972**.

When life is difficult, [Samaritans](#) are here – day or night, 365 days a year. You can call them free on **116 123** or email them at jo@samaritans.org.

[Every Mind Matters](#) provides some helpful advice on how to look after your mental health and wellbeing for people of all ages.

For further information and support you could also visit [Mind's How to cope with loneliness](#) or call **0300 123 3393**. Mind also have a list of really helpful contacts [Mind - Useful contacts](#).

For information and support on volunteering please visit the [Volunteering Matters](#) website.

For more information on Befriending Service please visit the [Befriending Network](#) website.

[Re-engage](#) that offer a call companion service for older people who live alone and feel they would enjoy a friendly phone call every week or two.

The [Chatty Café Scheme](#) is where café and other venues who have signed up to the scheme have a Chatter & Natter table which is where customers can sit if they are happy to talk to other customers.

To find out more about Community Connectors in your areas please visit the [British Red Cross](#) website.

For more information on getting involved in walking in your local area please visit the [Ramblers Association](#) website.

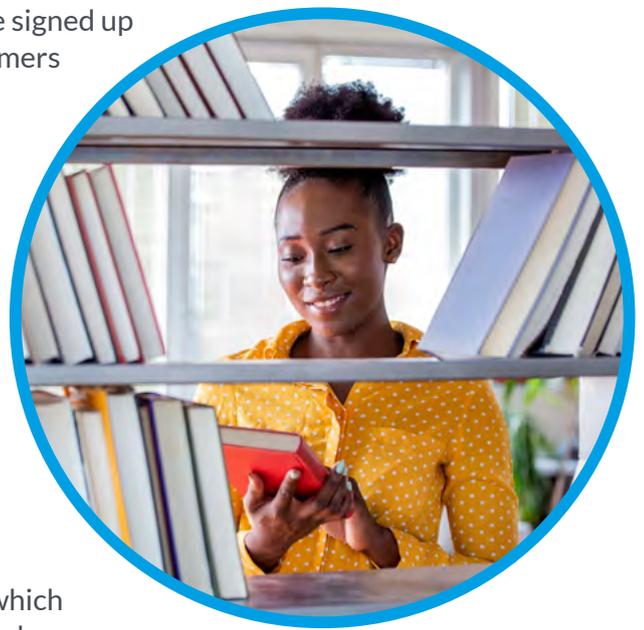
Young People

If you are a young person and feeling lonely please visit [Childline](#) for some great advice and support.

If you are under 25, you can also call [Get Connected](#) on **0808 808 4994**.

If you are younger and feeling lonely, you can call the [Calm Zone](#), which is a helpline offering support to men in the UK, of any age, who are down or in crisis, **0800 585858**.

Mentor Link is a registered charity dedicated to providing social and emotional support to distressed children and young people. Please visit [Mentor Link](#).



Loneliness Campaigns

There are several national **loneliness campaigns** that aim to raise awareness of loneliness and reduce stigma, including Campaign to End Loneliness and Let's Talk Loneliness. Every year there is also a national **Loneliness Awareness Week** which is a great opportunity to get involved by talking about loneliness, supporting people to stay connected and ensuring people know where they can go for further advice and support.

[Campaign to End Loneliness](#) – Aims to raise awareness of loneliness and reduce stigma through various campaigns:

- In 2017 Campaign to End Loneliness launched [The Loneliness Project](#) which includes a short film showing the effect loneliness can have on wellbeing.
- In 2018 Campaign to End Loneliness launched [Be More Us](#) which celebrates small moments of connections with others, e.g. saying hello to a neighbour or friend.

The Government aims to raise awareness of loneliness through its [Let's Talk Loneliness](#) campaign that encourages everyone to start the conversation and say it's OK to feel lonely and it's OK to talk about it.

The [Marmalade Trust](#) four years ago launched Loneliness Awareness Week. Since then 100's of organisations across the UK have got involved to raise awareness of loneliness through hosting events and raising money.

