

Loneliness Support Toolkit



About loneliness

Loneliness can affect us at any age and stage of our lives, and challenging life experiences, including bullying, bereavement, unemployment, disability and low income can make it more likely. Clearly the Covid pandemic has brought added challenges for all of us but especially for people living with these issues.

When we have not experienced positive relationships for a long time, it can be hard to find the confidence as well as the opportunities to connect with those around us, as we begin to increasingly anticipate rejection or embarrassment, and we may need some help and support. Professionals have a key role in helping to identify people who may be suffering from being isolated, and sometimes psychological therapies may be needed, but many people can find their own way out of loneliness. Either way, in the longer term it is only within our communities, whether of place or of shared interests, that people can build new friendships.

We all have a role to play in creating the kind of communities that welcome and support people to join in with whatever we are doing, and this guide sets out to provide a brief guide to how we can reach out and support each other. It is intended for everyone – professionals, volunteers, families and friends.



Terminology

In recent years a lot of work has been undertaken to help us understand loneliness and the resources listed at the end of this document are well worth looking up. While there should be no shame in admitting to feeling lonely, people often see it as a personal failure and may find the label itself makes them feel more excluded.

As a result, some individuals may not identify with the term 'lonely'. Specialist support agencies recommend using the term '**social isolation**' when talking to someone about this issue.

Tips to ease loneliness

Smile and wave

Taking the time to smile at your neighbour or wave at someone on the street can really brighten someone's day.

Stop and say hello

Sharing a quick, simple greeting is a great way to make a connection and can only take a couple of minutes. As you do your weekly food shop in the supermarket, try making eye contact with the cashier and saying hello.

Ask someone how they really are

If you have five minutes or more, take the time to ask someone how they *really* are.

Have a chat

A quick chat can mean a lot to someone. If you are stuck on what topic to pick to make a conversation, the weather is always a good place to start!



Volunteering

Volunteering is a great way of connecting with people who share common interests and passions, and if you feel someone you know maybe lonely asking them to help is a way of helping them to connect without them having to admit to feeling lonely.

Ask someone how they are

Call an old friend for a chat, check up on a family member or chat with the waitress, see how they're doing today. If you know someone who's living alone, take the time to check-in with them.

Tips for looking after yourself

Zoom quiz

Get your friends and family together for a virtual pub quiz, truth or lie, guess the intro or even Stars in their Eyes.

Organise a whatsapp group for your street

A great way to feel a part of your community, make new friends, help out and be helped out by your neighbours.

Cooking together

Some friends and families are choosing recipes, sharing them and then cooking the same food at the same time whilst talking virtually.

Become a befriender

Meet new people and help reduce loneliness for others by volunteering as a befriender.

Organise virtual tea breaks

If you are working you may be missing the social interaction the office usually brings. Scheduling a virtual tea break or 'visit to the pub' after work will help to ensure you maintain some social interaction.



Tips for organisations and community leaders

Reach out to others not involved in community activities

Tailor interventions based on the needs of the person

Ensure groups and activities are welcoming and open to all

Practical, flexible and low level support is often most effective



Ensure community assets are used to their full potential

Make every contact and conversation count

Talk about loneliness. Normalise asking for help

Support Services available in Stockport

Organisation	Details	Contact
Stockport Council - Coronavirus helpline	Support for people affected by Covid and the restrictions in place, including social contact. Lines open Mon - Thurs 9am to 5pm Fri - 9am to 4:30pm Closed mid Christmas eve until Tue 29 Dec	0161 217 6046 www.stockport.gov.uk/coronavirus-help-vulnerable-people
Age UK Stockport	Information advice and individual support – practical, social, and emotional. Lines open Mon - Fri 9am to 5pm Closed Bank Holiday	0161 480 1211 www.ageuk.org.uk/stockport
Stockport College	The community care letter exchange scheme connecting isolated older people with students.	michelle.mclaughlin@tcg.ac.uk
Signpost for Carers Stockport	Information and support for unwaged carers in Stockport, including online groups and young carer's support. Lines open Mon - Fri 8am to 4pm	0161 442 0442 or 0161 947 4690 for the Young Carers Team www.signpostforcarers.org.uk
Mind Stockport - Isolation and Social Engagement Service	Individually tailored support for 16+ year olds experiencing loneliness or other mental health & wellbeing needs. Lines open Mon, Wed 9.30am to 1pm Tues, Thur 9.30am to 4.30pm (closed for lunch 1-1.30pm). Open between Christmas and New Year	0161 475 6229 info@stockportmind.org.uk www.stockportmind.org.uk/isolation-social-engagement-service/

Key

Older people ●
Young people ●

Specialist ●
Life support ●

General ●

Support Services available in Stockport

Organisation	Details	Contact
The Prevention Alliance	Support with all aspects of wellbeing including loneliness, relationship issues, housing, benefits and finding employment. Lines open Mon - Thurs 9am to 5pm Fri - 9am to 4.30pm Phoneline closed from Fri 25 Dec until Mon 4 Jan 2021	0161 474 1042 For people with hearing loss, by text: 07539 468560 info@stockporttpa.co.uk https://stockporttpa.co.uk
The Wellbeing and Independence Network (WIN) - AGE UK	Age UK Stockport deliver WIN at Home, enabling people to continue living in their own homes, independently and safely. Lines open Mon - Fri 9am to 5pm Closed Bank Holidays Closed midday Christmas Eve until Tues 29 Dec	0161 480 1211 www.winstockport.co.uk
The Wellbeing and Independence Network (WIN) - Pure Innovations	Pure Innovations deliver WIN In the Community supporting people to take part in a wide variety of social, civic, leisure, learning, work, or volunteering opportunities Lines open Mon - Fri 9am to 5pm Closed midday Christmas Eve to 28 Dec Open 29-31 Dec until 4pm. Closed on 1 Jan	0161 804 4416 www.winstockport.co.uk
The Wellbeing and Independence Network (WIN) Community Transport	Stockport Car Scheme deliver WIN Community Transport by organising and providing journeys for adults who would struggle to use public transport. Lines open Mon - Thurs 9am to 4.30pm Fri 9am to 4pm. Closed Bank Holidays 29&30 Dec 10am-4pm 31 Dec 10am-1pm	0161 476 281 info@stockportcarscheme.org.uk www.winstockport.co.uk
Wellbeing & Self Care Team	GP Practice-based Self Care Coordinators offer 1-2-1 and group work to support people who are experiencing loneliness and social isolation.	People can self-refer themselves via their doctor's receptionist. www.viaductcare.org.uk/our-services/wellbeing-and-self-care-service

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Ebony and Ivory Community Organisation	Activity learning group for African and Caribbean young people and their families.	0161 477 1914
Stockport User Friendly Fellowship (STUFF)	Providing support for people in the Stockport area suffering and recovering from a range of mental health/alcohol problems.	07845 928227

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National Support Services

Organisation	Details	Contact
Chit Chat Britain	Chat with a volunteer for up to 20 minutes. Lines open 9am to 9pm	0800 001 4455 Freephone number
Independent Age Befriending over 60's	Call service led by volunteers Lines open Mon - Fri 8:30am to 6:30pm	0800 319 6789 charity@independentage.org www.independentage.org/get-support/receive-regular-visits
Mind	Offers callers confidential advice on mental health concerns. Lines open Mon - Fri 9am to 6pm (except for bank holidays).	0300 123 3393 www.mind.org.uk
MUSH	Connecting mothers of young children	https://letsmush.com
British Red Cross	Coronavirus support hotline Lines open everyday 10am-6pm	0808 196 3651 www.redcross.org.uk/get-help/get-help-with-loneliness
Reengage - over 75s	Telephone befriending service for older people Online referral for regular calls	0800 716543 info@reengage.org.uk www.reengage.org.uk/about-us/

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Organisation

Details

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Age UK Helpline

Free, confidential up to date information and help to access advice needed
Lines open 8am-7pm, 365 days a year

0800 678 1602

Mirthy Talks

Mirthy's mission is to reduce loneliness and keep older adults connected in their communities. They have public talks every Thursday with a live Q&A: you can ask the speaker questions and interact with fellow attendees using the chat function.

[Facebook Mirthy community group.](#)

<https://mirthy.co.uk/>

Silverline

Free confidential helpline providing information, friendship and advice to older people.
Lines open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year

0800 470 8090
www.thesilverline.org.uk

The Mix

Offers support for anyone aged 13 to 25 with any sort of challenge – from mental health to money, break-ups to drugs, finding a job to homelessness.
Lines open 24 hours a day, seven days week

0808 808 4994
Text THEMIX to 85258
www.themix.org.uk
(includes online chat)

The Samaritans

Support line for anyone struggling with their mental health.
Lines open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year

116 123
www.samaritans.org

WAY: Widowed and Young

A peer-to-peer support network for anyone who's lost a partner before their 51st birthday.

www.widowedandyoung.org.uk

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Useful online resources

Be More Us

Set up by the The Campaign to End Loneliness, this website has lots of videos and resources to help you connect, to help others and/or to help yourself.

<https://bemoreus.org.uk>

Campaign to End Loneliness

They share research, evidence and knowledge with thousands of other organisations and the public to make a difference to older people's lives.

www.campaigntoendloneliness.org

What Works Wellbeing

An independent collaborating centre that develops and shares robust and accessible wellbeing evidence to improve decision making

<https://whatworkswellbeing.org>

Joseph Rowntree Foundation

A set of resources to help individuals, groups, communities and neighbourhoods take a closer look at – and to reduce – loneliness.

www.jrf.org.uk/report/loneliness-resource-pack

Befriending Networks

A collection of resources for befriending

www.befriending.co.uk/resources

Jo Fox Foundation

Connection Coalition

A growing network of organisations, charities, companies and groups united in belief that we can build a better future for everyone by building strong relationships and connected communities.

www.connectioncoalition.org.uk

Volunteering

In Stockport we have hundreds of different community and voluntary organisations operating and you can find out about them via the [Stockport Local Directory](#). Anyone looking for opportunities to volunteer can contact the volunteer hub at [Healthwatch Stockport](#), to register and find out which organisations are looking for help, or visit [Stockport Jobs Match](#) to search for voluntary opportunities.

Looking for paid work

Being out of work can be a lonely experience as we may lose our social networks that went with our work. [Stockport Jobs Match](#) website is the place to look for paid employment and information and advice on jobhunting, to help you make new connections.