House of Commons Library

Loneliness and isolation in elderly and vulnerable people

Summary
There will be a Westminster Hall debate on loneliness and isolation in elderly and vulnerable people on Wednesday 6 December at 2:30pm. This debate has been sponsored by Derek Thomas MP.

1 Background

1.1 What is loneliness?

Loneliness is generally held to describe an individual who has a negative perception of the quality and quantity of their social relationships. The mental health charity Mind explains that loneliness is a personal feeling, so everyone experiences it in a different way.[1] Living or spending time alone does not necessarily mean somebody is lonely. Conversely, people can experience loneliness despite having lots of friends or family around them.

The UK Government's loneliness strategy defines loneliness as:

> Subjective, unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship. It happens when we have a mismatch between the quantity and quality of social relationships that we have, and those that we want.[2]

The subjective feeling of loneliness is distinguishable from social isolation, which is a measure of the quality and size of an individual's social network.[3] It is possible to be lonely when in a social network.

1.2 Prevalence of loneliness in England

Loneliness is often held to be more common among older and more urban communities.

In 2021, 18% of the population were aged 65+, compared to 5% in 1911, making the population more likely to be in retirement, live in smaller households, and experience ill health and disability.[4]

A higher proportion of the population also now lives in urban areas and a larger proportion of households are solitary (8-10% of households in 1911, compared to 28% in 2016), and are less likely to contain a mix of age groups.[5]

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[1] Mind, Loneliness, accessed 29 November 2023.

[2] UK Government, A connected society: A strategy for tackling loneliness, October 2018, p19.

[3] Aparna Shankar et al., Loneliness, social isolation, and behavioural and biological health indicators in older adults, Health Psychology, volume 30, 2011, pp377-385

[4] ONS, Population and household estimates, England and Wales, 28 June 2022

[5] UN Population Division, World urbanisation prospects: Table FO2; K.Schürer, E.M. Garrett, H. Jaadla and Alice Reid, Households and family structure in England and Wales (1851-1911): continuities and change, Continuity and Change, volume 33, December 2018, pp365-411; ONS, Living longer, 13 August 2018, figures 4 & 5; Centre for Population Change, (Un)Affordable housing and the residential separation of age groups, Briefing 45, November 2018
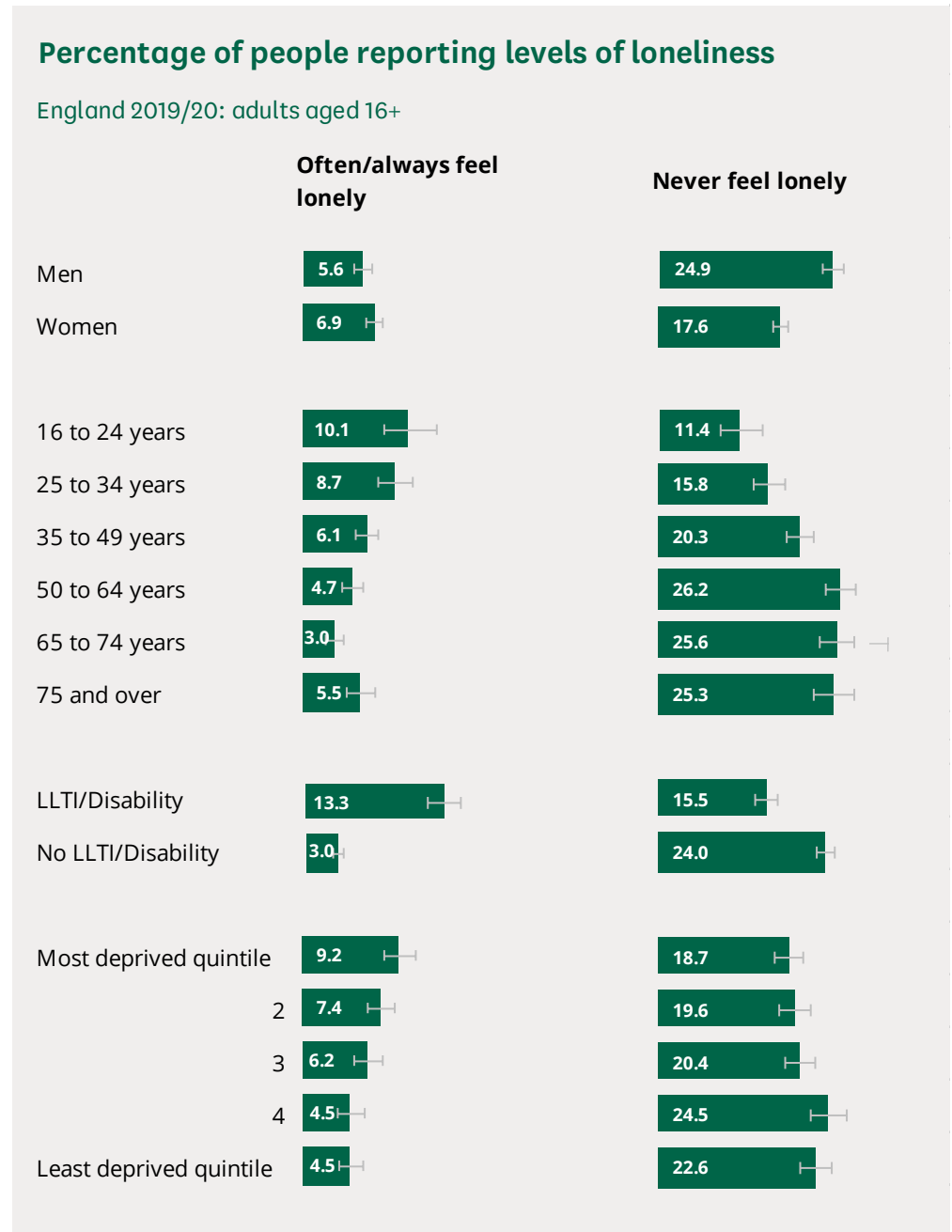
While historical and comparative data on loneliness is lacking, recent research can be limited by the lack of an agreed definition of loneliness, and reliance on self-reporting.[6]

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has developed harmonised measures to ensure official surveys to measure loneliness are consistent.

England's Community Life Survey

Results from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's Community Life Survey 2021/22 for levels of loneliness in England amongst those aged 16+ are shown below.

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[6]   University of Oxford/Our World in Data, 'Is there a loneliness epidemic?', 2019

Percentage of people reporting levels of loneliness

England 2019/20: adults aged 16+

	Often/always feel lonely	Never feel lonely
Men	5.6	24.9
Women	6.9	17.6
16 to 24 years	10.1	11.4
25 to 34 years	8.7	15.8
35 to 49 years	6.1	20.3
50 to 64 years	4.7	26.2
65 to 74 years	3.0	25.6
75 and over	5.5	25.3
LLTI/Disability	13.3	15.5
No LLTI/Disability	3.0	24.0
Most deprived quintile	9.2	18.7
2	7.4	19.6
3	6.2	20.4
4	4.5	24.5
Least deprived quintile	4.5	22.6

Notes: Table excludes respondents who answered "don't know" and those with missing answers. A limiting long-term illness (LLTI) or disability is classified as someone having any physical or mental health condition or illness which are expected to last for 12 months or more and their condition and/or illness reduces their ability to carry out day to day activities. "Quintiles" represent 20% or one-fifth of all areas. Data presented with error bars for 95% confidence interval.

Source: Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Community Life Survey 2021/22

The Community Life Survey found:

- 47% of adults (16+) experience some degree of loneliness. 21% reported that they never felt lonely; 32% hardly ever; and 47% occasionally/some of the time/often/always.

- 6% of adults reported they 'often' or 'always' feel lonely.

- Men were more likely to say that they never felt lonely than women (25% compared with 18%).

- People aged 16 to 24 were more likely to say they feel lonely often/always (10%) than age groups of 35 years and over (3-9%).

- People with a limiting long-term illness (LLTI) or disability were more likely to say they felt lonely often/always than those without (13% compared with 4%).

- Those living in the most deprived areas were more likely to feel lonely often/always than those living in the least deprived areas (9% compared with 3%).

- No significant variability was seen between the different ethnic groups or regions.

Age and loneliness

Loneliness can affect people of all ages following a range of life events such as retirement, bereavement, ill health, or children moving away.[7]

However, young people are more likely to feel lonely. Life events and factors identified as potentially leading to loneliness among younger people include shifts in relationships, changing educational environments, social pressures to conform or succeed, physical and emotional development, leaving home, or going into employment. Children can be at particular risk of loneliness if they are victims of abuse or neglect or are in care or care leavers.[8]

A further potential cause for loneliness in younger people is that support services are more likely to be available for elderly people, and older people may be more likely to know where to turn for help.[9]

Further analysis of ONS's Community Life Survey, combined with data from the 2018 Good Childhood Index Survey, suggests relatively high feelings of loneliness among under 16s. Among children aged 10 to 15 years, around 11% said that they were "often" lonely. Children receiving free school meals and

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[7]   Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness, Combatting loneliness one conversation at a time, 2017, pp8, 18; Mental Health Foundation, The lonely society, 2010, p16; Age UK, All the lonely people: Loneliness in later life, 2018, p2

[8]   Action for Children, It starts with hello, 2017, pp7, 10-15; Co-op Foundation, All our emotions are important: Breaking the silence about youth loneliness, 2018

[9]   Red Cross and Co-Op Foundation, Trapped in a bubble: An investigation into triggers for loneliness in the UK, 2016, p17

children living in a city were most likely to say they often felt lonely, at 28% and 20% respectively. [10] The number of children feeling lonely is likely to have been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, and so these figures may not be fully representative of loneliness in children today.

Covid-19 Pandemic

The Community Life Surveys since 2017/18 have consistently found that 6% of adults reported they 'often' or 'always' feel lonely. This figure was found to be 5% in earlier Community Life Surveys.

However, other research has found that there was a large impact on loneliness during the pandemic. The ONS found that between early 2020 and late 2020/early 2021, the number of people saying they often or always felt lonely increased from 5% (2.6 million people) to 7% (3.7 million).[11] Loneliness during the pandemic was found to be highest in urban areas, areas with a younger population, and in areas with higher levels of unemployment.

The Campaign to End Loneliness reports that groups already at higher risk of loneliness, such as young people, those living alone, and unemployed people, were more likely to be impacted by Covid-19.[12] Although, the Campaign to End Loneliness believes many who experienced an increase in loneliness during the pandemic would recover once restrictions were eased, it was concerned this would not be the case for everyone. So far, information on the ongoing impact of Covid-19 and the surrounding changes to people's living conditions is minimal.

Who is at risk of loneliness?

Using data on loneliness collected for the Community Life Survey 2016/17, the ONS published further analysis on the characteristics and circumstances associated with loneliness in England. More recent in depth analysis has not been published. It is important to note that in the five years since this analysis was published, and more than six years since the data was collected, there have been significant changes, such as the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent social changes, that could have changed who is most at risk of loneliness.

This data showed that the loneliest groups in 2016/17 were:

- Younger renters aged 16-34, in good health, and with little trust and sense of belonging to their area. 61% reported that they felt lonely "occasionally" or more frequently.

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[10] ONS, Children's and young people's experiences of loneliness, 2018

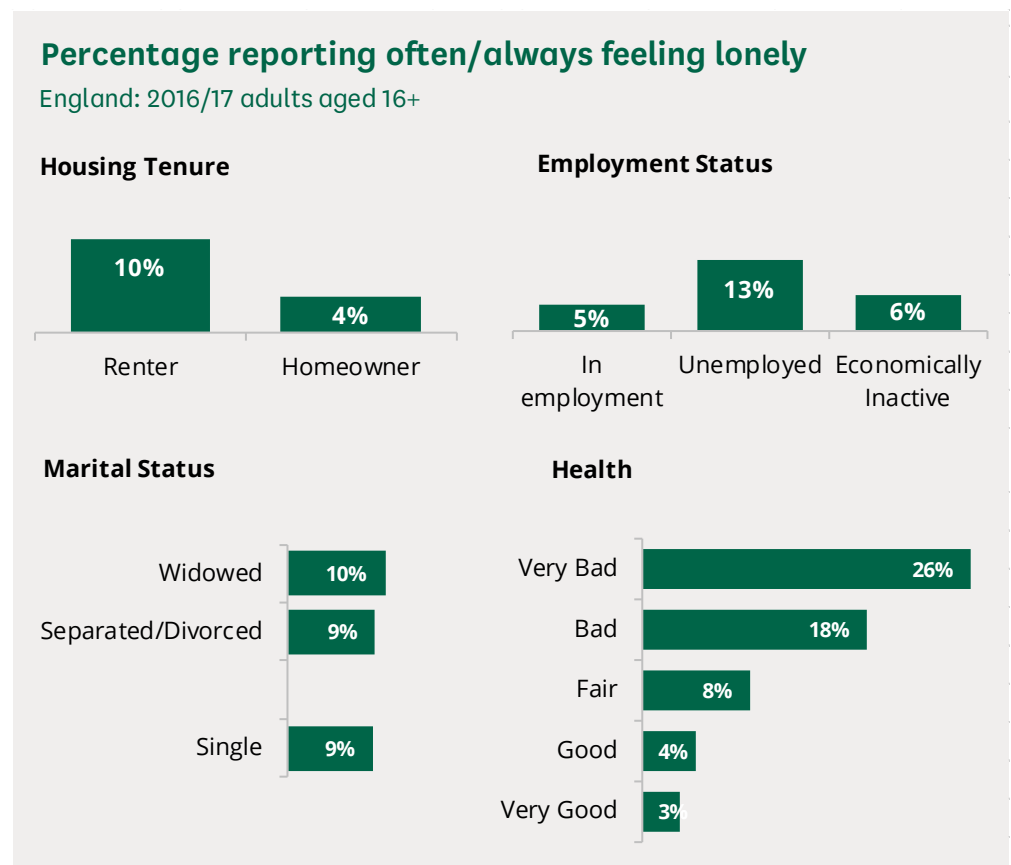[11] ONS, Mapping loneliness during the coronavirus pandemic, 7 April 2021

[12] The Campaign to End Loneliness, Loneliness beyond Covid-19, July 2021

- Widowed older homeowners living alone with long-term health conditions. 69% reported that they felt lonely "occasionally" or more frequently.
- Unmarried, middle agers, with long-term health conditions. 81% reported that they felt lonely "occasionally" or more frequently.
- Married homeowners in good health were the least lonely group. 15% reported that they felt lonely "occasionally" or more frequently.

The data below show the proportion of adults reporting often or always feeling lonely in the Community Life Survey 2016/17. This suggests that renters are more likely to feel lonely often/always compared to homeowners (10% versus 4%), and the unemployed more than those employed or economically inactive (13% versus 5% and 6%).

Reports of feeling lonely always/often were also higher amongst those not married or in a civil partnership, and those with worse health.

Percentage reporting often/always feeling lonely
England: 2016/17 adults aged 16+

Housing Tenure

Renter	Homeowner
10%	4%

Employment Status

In employment	Unemployed	Economically Inactive
5%	13%	6%

Marital Status

Widowed	10%
Separated/Divorced	9%
Single	9%

Health

Very Bad	26%
Bad	18%
Fair	8%
Good	4%
Very Good	3%

Source: ONS, Loneliness- What characteristics and circumstances are associated with feeling lonely?, 10 April 2018

In addition to the data analysed by the ONS, other research has identified further groups at greater risk of loneliness:

- **Members of the Armed Forces community:** The Royal British Legion 2018 survey suggested that 25% of the serving armed forces community

(serving personnel, reservists, veterans and family members/dependents) felt lonely or socially isolated "always" or "often". [13]

- **Carers**: 81% of carers felt lonely or socially isolated due to their caring responsibilities, according to a 2017 Carer's UK survey. [14]
- **Ethnicity**: The Red Cross and Co-op Foundation have argued "barriers to belonging", such as discrimination and difficulties accessing services, increase risk of loneliness amongst black and ethnic minority older people. [15]
- **Refugees and language**: The Forum, a charity for migrant and refugee community leaders, has highlighted loneliness amongst refugee groups. [16] Refugee Action has argued that difficulties in accessing language classes are a major barrier to integration and tackling loneliness. [17]
- **Sexual orientation**: The charity Stonewall has suggested that LGBT+ persons may be at increased risk of loneliness. [18]
- **Homeless people**: In addition to the loss of regular contacts and community, the charity Shelter has highlighted research showing that a leading driver of homelessness is relationship breakdown. [19]
- **Not being part of a social organisation**: Volunteering, or being part of a community group, can reduce loneliness levels. [20]

Research on factors associated with loneliness

In June 2022, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport published research investigating factors associated with loneliness in adults in England.[21] The research was based on data from the Community Life Survey (2013/14 to 2019/20) and the Understanding Society survey Waves 9 (2017/19) and 10 (2018/20).

The key findings included:

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[13] Royal British Legion, Loneliness and social isolation in the armed forces community, 2018, p17
[14] Carers UK, The world shrinks: Carer loneliness, 2017, p3
[15] Red Cross and Co-op Foundation, Barriers to belonging: An exploration of loneliness among people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, 2019; Campaign to End Loneliness, Alone in the crowd: Loneliness and diversity, 2014, pp30-3
[16] The Forum, This is how it feels to be lonely, 2014
[17] Refugee Action, Safe but alone: The role of English language in allowing refugees to overcome loneliness, October 2017
[18] Stonewall Cymru, Submission to the Welsh Assembly Health, Social Care and Sport Committee into loneliness and isolation, 2017
[19] Shelter, 'I was all on my own': experiences of loneliness and isolation amongst homeless people, 2015, p1
[20] Royal Voluntary Service, The impact of volunteering on wellbeing in later life, 2012
[21] DCMS, Investigating factors associated with loneliness in adults in England, 12 June 2022.

- Women, young people (aged 16 to 34), those who live alone and those who were widowed were found to be at greater risk of loneliness. This supports findings in previous research.

- Some additional groups were also found to be at higher risk of loneliness, including gay, lesbian, and bisexual people, those not in work, and those who had recently moved to their current address.

- People with disabilities or longstanding health conditions were almost three times more likely to experience chronic loneliness as those without.

- Young people (16 to 34 years old) had over five times greater odds of chronic loneliness than those aged 65 or older.

- Mental wellbeing and loneliness were closely related.

The report said the findings highlighted the need to target interventions at people from different age groups. It added that an important area for future research was "further exploration of the role of protected characteristics in experiences of loneliness."[22]

1.3 Impact of loneliness

Occasionally feeling lonely is normal. However, often feeling lonely or experiencing chronic loneliness has been linked to adverse health impacts, including:

- Early death: the effect of loneliness on mortality is thought to be on a par with other public health priorities like obesity or smoking.

- An increased risk of depression, low self-esteem, reported sleep problems and increased stress response.

- Greater risk of cognitive decline and the onset of dementia. [23]

The Government's suicide prevention strategy, published in September 2023, also notes that loneliness has been "closely linked to suicidal ideation and behaviour".[24]

As well as affecting the individual, loneliness can also impact society more generally. For example, there is evidence that lonely people are more likely to be admitted to hospital or have a longer stay, visit a GP or A&E, and enter

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22   DCMS, Investigating factors associated with loneliness in adults in England, 12 June 2022.
23   Campaign to End Loneliness, Health impact, accessed 29 November 2023; UK Government, A connected society: A strategy for tackling loneliness, pp18-19.
24   DHSC, Suicide prevention in England: 5-year cross-sector strategy, September 2023.

local authority funded residential care.[25] Loneliness is also associated with poorer performance at work, with social interaction at work linked to increased productivity.[26]

A 2020 report, commissioned by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, estimated the financial cost associated with severe loneliness (feeling lonely "often" or "always"), stemming from impacts on subjective wellbeing, health and productivity, was around £9,900 per person per year.[27]

1.4 Causes of loneliness

It is difficult to provide a comprehensive guide to the causes of loneliness because of its subjective nature; the causes of loneliness will vary from person to person.[28] However, there are some common themes, including:

- Local infrastructure. When good, accessible transport links and community facilities are lacking they can become obstacles to making and maintaining connections.[29] This is a particular issue in some rural areas where the number of over 65s is forecast to grow over the coming years.[30]

- Social infrastructure deficiencies, such as the absence or unsuitability of support services, may increase levels of isolation and loneliness.[31]

- There is a stigma with loneliness which can make it more difficult for people to seek support.[32]

- Technology has allowed people to work more flexibly but can also limit opportunities for interaction.[33]

- Certain life events, including becoming a carer, bereavement, or moving home, seem to increase the risk of someone feeling lonely.[34]

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[25] UK Government, A connected society: A strategy for tackling loneliness, October 2018, pp18-19; Campaign to End Loneliness, Health impact.

[26] UK Government, A connected society: A strategy for tackling loneliness, October 2018, p19.

[27] Simetrica, Loneliness monetisation report, June 2020, pp1-14

[28] UK Government, A connected society: A strategy for tackling loneliness, October 2018, p19.

[29] UK Government, A connected society: A strategy for tackling loneliness, October 2018, p20.

[30] ONS, Living longer, 13 August 2018, figures 4 & 5

[31] Kantar Public, Trapped in a bubble, 2016, pp35-6

[32] UK Government, A connected society: A strategy for tackling loneliness, October 2018, p20.

[33] UK Government, A connected society: A strategy for tackling loneliness, October 2018, p20.

[34] UK Government, A connected society: A strategy for tackling loneliness, October 2018, p20; Carers UK, Loneliness Awareness Week, June 2021.

More detailed information on the impact and causes of loneliness is provided in the Library briefing on tackling loneliness and in the Library's loneliness reading list. [35]

1.5   Government policy

2018 loneliness strategy

In October 2018, the UK Government published A connected society: A Strategy for tackling loneliness – laying the foundations for change, which it described as "a foundation for a generation of policy work". [36]

The strategy set out three objectives:

- Improve the evidence base on what causes loneliness, what works to tackle it and how it can be measured.

- Embed loneliness and the importance of social relationships across government policies.

- Tackle stigma around loneliness and encourage reaching out for help. [37]

Key features of the strategy included:

- Encouraging 'Social prescribing', where people are supported to join community groups and activities. The strategy set out several commitments aimed at making social prescribing "a core element of local provision." [38]

- Using the housing and planning system to foster better communities, including by embedding wellbeing into planning and housing design.

- The role of community infrastructure in tackling isolation and preventing loneliness. The strategy set out several commitments aimed at unlocking community spaces.

- Commitments aimed at making the transport network "inclusive and accessible, in particular for older and disabled people." [39]

- Addressing digital inclusion.

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[35]   Commons Library briefing CBP-8514, Tackling loneliness; Commons Library briefing CBP-8632, Loneliness: a reading list.

[36]   UK Government, A connected society: A strategy for tackling loneliness, October 2018, p14.

[37]   UK Government, A connected society: A strategy for tackling loneliness, October 2018, p14.

[38]   UK Government, A connected society: A strategy for tackling loneliness, October 2018, p26.

[39]   UK Government, A connected society: A strategy for tackling loneliness, October 2018, pp40-41.

- Initiatives aimed at increasing opportunities for people to volunteer or take part in local activities.

- Targeted support for certain groups, including younger people, veterans, carers, care leavers and disabled people.

- Running several campaigns and programmes with the aim of reducing the stigma related to loneliness.

A detailed summary of the strategy, and developments up to June 2021, is provided in section four of the Library's briefing on tackling loneliness.[40]

1 Adult social care and promoting wellbeing

Under the Care Act 2014, local authorities in England have a duty to promote a person's well-being when exercising their adult social care functions.[41] They also have a duty to provide, or arrange for the provision, of services aimed at preventing the development of care needs by adults in their area.[42]

The Care and Support Statutory Guidance, published by the Department of Health and Social Care, says it is critical that the care and support system "works to actively promote wellbeing and independence, and does not wait to respond when people reach a crisis point." It adds that prevention services may include intervention and advice that reduce loneliness, such as befriending schemes or community activities.[43]

On 7 June 2023, the Government announced it was expanding the NHS Volunteer Responders programme into adult social care. Care volunteers will, among other things, contact people who have been identified as particularly vulnerable to offer a friendly voice to those who may be experiencing loneliness.[44]

Fourth loneliness annual report (2023)

The Government has provided updates on the progress made against commitments in the 2018 loneliness strategy in a series of annual reports published since 2020. The fourth annual report was published in March 2023.[45]

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[40] Commons Library briefing CBP-8514, Tackling loneliness.
[41] Care Act 2014, section 1.
[42] Care Act 2014, section 2.
[43] DHSC, Care and Support Statutory Guidance, October 2023, para 2.6.
[44] DHSC, Successful NHS programme to recruit care volunteers, 7 June 2023.
[45] DCMS, Loneliness annual report: the fourth year, 20 March 2023.

The report provided a summary of work undertaken in the previous five years under the strategy's three objectives and set out Government commitments for the next two years (between 2023 and 2025)

Reducing stigma

Actions taken since 2018 included:

- The Government launched the 'Let's Talk Loneliness' campaign in 2019 and this ran until 2021. In 2022, the campaign became part of the Better Health: Every Mind Matter campaign, the first phase of which focused on supporting young people aged 18 to 24.

- In 2021/22 the Loneliness Engagement Fund provided nine grants totalling around £260,000 to support groups in England most affected by loneliness during the Covid-19 pandemic. The fund is now closed for applications.

The report said the Government is "committed to continue the national conversation around loneliness through our public communications campaign." It said this included:

- Working with partners as part of the Better Health: Every Mind Matters campaign. In 2023, the target audience of the campaign was expanded to young people aged 16 to 34.

- Commissioning research to explore the relationship between stigma and loneliness. This research was published in June 2023: Research exploring the stigma associated with loneliness. [46]

Embedding consideration of loneliness across Government policy

Actions taken since 2018 included:

- The Government convened the Tackling Loneliness Network to help connect groups at risk of isolation. The network was launched in April 2020 and comprises around 150 organisations. [47] The Network published an action plan in 2021, which the annual report said had been "embedded in ongoing work by government departments and cross-sector organisations."

- DCMS worked with other Government departments to expand provision of volunteering opportunities and social prescribing, and to deliver the Tackling Loneliness with Transport Fund.

- The Government launched a "Preventing and tackling mental ill-health through green social prescribing" programme, with £5.77 million of funding, to "examine how to increase use and connection to the natural

[46] DCMS, Research exploring the stigma associated with loneliness, 12 June 2023.
[47] DDCMS, Government launches plan to tackle loneliness during coronavirus lockdown, 22 April 2020.

environment through referral to green and/or blue social prescribing to improve mental health."

- In March 2023, DCMS launched the Know Your Neighbourhood Fund, with up to £30 million of funding. The programme aims to increase volunteering and reduce chronic loneliness in 27 disadvantaged areas of England.[48] The fund will run until March 2025, with funding allocations taking place up until March 2024.[49]

- In November 2021, DCMS launched a £7 million Volunteering Futures Fund to help people access more volunteering opportunities across a range of sectors, including the arts and sport.[50]

- In June 2021 the Tacking Loneliness Hub was launched. The hub is funded by DCMS and delivered by Campaign to End Loneliness. It is an "online community for professionals working on loneliness" which aims to connect members through events and workshops.

The annual report said the Government would continue to take a cross-sector approach "to ensure the everyday services we use connect marginalised groups and those at risk of loneliness to support". It said the Government would:

- Deliver the Know Your Neighbourhood Fund alongside its arm's lengths bodies.

- The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) will improve its understanding of the links between loneliness and suicide and how to tackle it. Loneliness was also considered as a risk factor in the DHSC's suicide prevention strategy, published in September 2023.[51]

- As part of the Government's strategy to reform children's social care, the Department for Education is committed to increasing support to ensure care-experienced children have strong, loving relationships by 2027. This includes providing around £30 million over the next two years to increase the number of local authorities with family finding, mentoring and befriending programmes. Further information on this is provided in the Library briefing on Government's proposals for children's social care reform.[52]

Improving the evidence base

The annual report said the evidence base on loneliness had grown fast since 2018 and the Government had "developed a much greater understanding of

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48   DCMS, Major fund to tackle loneliness and boost volunteering in disadvantaged areas launched, 18 April 2023.
49   PQ 202998 [on loneliness], 20 October 2023.
50   Arts Council England, Volunteering Futures, November 2021.
51   DHSC, Suicide prevention strategy for England: 2023 to 2028, September 2023.
52   Commons Library briefing CBP-9818, Government proposals for children's social care reform.

which groups are more at risk of experiencing chronic loneliness." It said DCMS had "continued to contribute to the evidence base" and fill the gaps identified in the evidence review published by the government-convened Tackling Loneliness Evidence Group in 2022.[53]

Over the next two years, the report said the Government would:

- Continue to explore the impact of stigma on loneliness.

- Continue working with What Works Centre for Wellbeing to explore what interventions exist to tackle loneliness and what works.

- DHSC will publish evaluations of the primary care social prescribing model and the roll out of social prescribing in the NHS in 2025. It will also seek to commission research into the links between loneliness and self-harm and suicide.

- The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs will publish an evaluation of the green social prescribing programme.

- The Department for Transport will publish an evaluation of the Tackling Loneliness with Transport fund in autumn 2023.

A full list of Government commitments for the next two years was set out in Annex A of the annual report.[54]

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[53]   DCMS, Tackling loneliness evidence review, January 2022.
[54]   DCMS, Loneliness annual report: the fourth year, 20 March 2023.

Parliamentary material

1.6   Parliamentary Debates

Tackling Loneliness and Connecting Communities
21 June 2023 | Westminster Hall | 734 cc351-376WH

Contact in Care Settings
27 October 2022| House of Commons | 721 cc470-495

1.7   Parliamentary Questions

Loneliness
20 October 2023 | UIN 202998

Asked by: Colleen Fletcher

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment she has made of trends in the levels of loneliness and social isolation in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England; and what (i) financial and (ii) other steps her Department is taking to tackle loneliness and social isolation in those areas.

Answering member: Stuart Andrew | **Department:** Department for Culture, Media and Sport

DCMS collects data on levels of loneliness in England through its annual Community Life Survey (CLS), which suggests that prevalence of loneliness in 2021-22 remained similar to pre-COVID levels, with 6% of adults reporting that they are always or often lonely. Levels of loneliness in the West Midlands in 2021-22 were similar to levels in England (7% always or often lonely). Data is not available to estimate loneliness levels at a constituency level.

The government launched the Know Your Neighbourhood (KYN) Fund in March 2023, an up to £30 million package of funding designed to widen participation in volunteering and tackle loneliness in 27 disadvantaged areas across England. The KYN Fund will run until March 2025, with funding allocations taking place up until March 2024. A key focus of the programme is to generate and share learning on how people in disadvantaged areas can be supported to volunteer and improve their social connections, which will help to support sustained action beyond the lifetime of the Fund. Four areas in the West Midlands fall in scope of the KYN Fund: Wolverhampton, Sandwell, Stoke-on-Trent and Cannock Chase.

Furthermore, the government continues to take action to tackle loneliness across England through public communications to reduce the stigma about loneliness, building the evidence base on loneliness and supporting other government departments and external organisations to consider loneliness in their work.

Copies of the fourth annual report on the government's world-first tackling loneliness strategy are available in the Libraries of the House of Commons and Lords and online.

UK Men's Sheds Association
14 June 2023 | UIN 188294

Asked by: Seema Malhotra

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the impact of the UK Men's Shed Association on loneliness rates among older men.

Answering member: Stuart Andrew | **Department:** Department for Culture, Media and Sport

Many older men experience loneliness and social isolation. Having strong social relationships play an important role in our physical and mental wellbeing, and there are a number of local voluntary and community sector organisations, such as the UK Men's Shed Association, that are playing an important role in tackling this.

The Government is also taking action to tackle loneliness and social isolation, particularly among older men. This includes investment in our national loneliness campaign, building the loneliness evidence base, and supporting the Tackling Loneliness Hub. In March 2023, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport launched the Know Your Neighbourhood Fund of up to £30 million, with £19 million of funding from Government, to widen participation in volunteering and tackle loneliness in 27 disadvantaged areas across England. The fund will run until 2025.

Loneliness: Older People
14 March 2023 | UIN 159047

Asked by: James Daly

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce isolation of elderly people in local communities.

Answering member: Helen Whately | **Department:** Department of Health and Social Care

The Government is working with partners to support local areas to share and learn from best practice examples. This includes working with the Local Government Association to provide guidance on how local councils can tackle

loneliness and providing a space for organisations to share resources on the Tackling Loneliness Hub.

The Levelling Up White Paper set out ambitions to improve wellbeing and pride in place across the country. We know that connected communities that provide people with opportunities to develop strong social relationships are an important part of delivering those ambitions.

In addition, social prescribing is a key component of the National Health Service Universal Personalised Care and is a way for general practitioners or local agencies to refer people to a link worker. Link workers connect people to community groups and statutory services for practical and emotional support. Social prescribing can work well for those who are socially isolated or whose wellbeing is being impacted by non-medical issues.

2　Press articles

As UK landlines go digital, fears grow for vulnerable people whose home phone is a lifeline
The Guardian
20 November 2023

WHO declares loneliness a 'global public health concern'
The Guardian
16 November 2023

People never visited by loved ones more likely to die earlier, study finds
The Guardian
10 November 2023

New research reveals more than half of over 50s in Scotland experience loneliness
Age UK
22 June 2023

More than 1,000 volunteers sign up to call vulnerable or lonely patients
The Independent
6 March 2023

Left in isolation: how the online revolution failed our elderly people
The Guardian
31 October 2022

Loneliness-related mental health problems impact vulnerable communities
Local Gov
16 May 2022

The vulnerable people who have spent the last two years shielding
Metro
18 April 2022

3   Further reading

Campaign to End Loneliness (Campaign website)

Rural Mental Health
Fourth report of session 2022-23
HC Paper 248
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee
18 May 2023

Community Life Survey 2021/22: Wellbeing and loneliness
Department of Culture, Media and Sport
3 May 2023

Loneliness annual report: the fourth year
Department of Culture, Media and Sport
30 March 2023

Tackling loneliness and social isolation for LGBT+ older people
National Health Federation
20 July 2022

Being silenced, loneliness and being heard: understanding pathways to intimate partner violence & abuse in young adults. a mixed-methods study
BMC Public Health
17 August 2022

Combating loneliness: a guide for local authorities
Local Government Association
15 March 2018