



East Suffolk Social Isolation & Loneliness Network

What's the idea?

Bring together a relevant group of people on a quarterly basis, with linked task and finish groups, to try to co-ordinate efforts to reduce social isolation and loneliness and to share knowledge and best practice





Why?

There's a growing body of evidence that social isolation and loneliness has a significant negative impact on people's health and wellbeing, on happiness, on productivity and on society as a whole. Different groups think about it and experience it differently, and it has a lot of different causes, so we need to look at it in the round if we're to significantly reduce it in East Suffolk. Social isolation and Loneliness is a priority for the Community Partnership Board (and several individual Community Partnerships) and has been since their formation in 2019.





Why does loneliness matter?

Can **increase the risk of early mortality** by 26%

Can put people at greater **risk of poorer mental health**, including depression

62% of lonely young people say that 'feeling lonely makes them **lose confidence in themselves**'

Is associated with '**poorer sleep quality**'

In early adolescence is associated with **lower educational attainment**

48% of lonely young people say that feeling lonely makes them '**less likely to want to progress in work**'

Higher loneliness levels among employees is associated with **poorer work performance**

A recent study estimates the **cost of severe loneliness** at around £9,900 per person per year, due to its combined impact on wellbeing, health, and work productivity



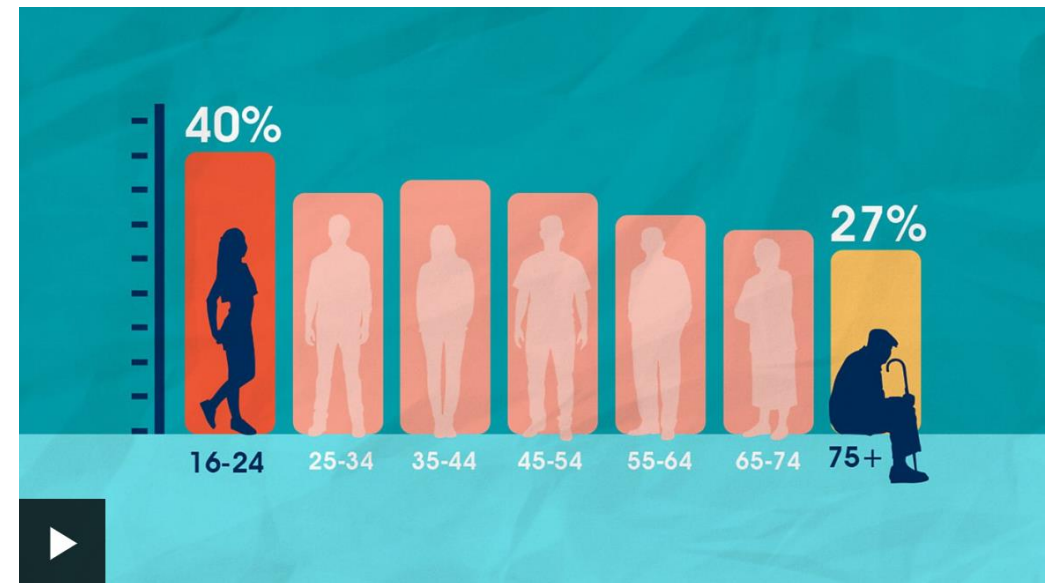
Definitions & who experiences loneliness most?

Loneliness is an emotional response to feeling alone, disconnected and lacking companionship

Isolation is the objective state of having few social relationships and minimal contact with others

Who is particularly lonely and/isolated?

- Single or widowed people
- Women
- People with disabilities
- Renters
- LGBTQIA+
- Carers





What causes loneliness?

- Major life events:
 - Going to university, moving to a new area, changing jobs, retirement, having a child
- Living alone.
- Lack of mobility due to a physical condition.
- Poor mental health.
- Living in a rural area with limited transport options.
- Not having enough money to pay for social activity.
- Spending a lot of time online.



What insight has been shared so far?

- Consistency is the key to building relationships. Interventions have to be long term and consistent to have any chance of working
- Handholding people to get them over the threshold and into a service, physically and psychologically, is hard but vital work
- Many young people are struggling. They can't move out of home, they lack motivation and aspiration and even lack the confidence to socialise. We need to normalise these behaviours again and really work on young people's confidence. Young people report as being the most lonely group
- There's a clear difference between generations in terms of self-sufficiency. We need to raise awareness of needing to support one another and how to do it.
- Meet up Mondays have been an extremely successful intervention
- Using social infrastructure to maximise connection and to encourage all local residents to interact is powerful. Shops, pubs and cafes can be optimised for connection.
- Micro-interactions – eg/ just saying hello – can be effective in reducing loneliness



Insight from a programme in Reading...

According to findings of 'Tackling Loneliness & Social Isolation in Reading, England' the best practices for alleviating & preventing SIL are:

- specialist support & safe spaces
- focused group activities
- making services & activities socially, financially and physically accessible
- advocacy & assistance, peer support
- befriending & volunteering, signposting to 'someone to talk to'
- support from healthcare professionals
- raising awareness about SIL & social anxiety, good neighbourliness
- befriending & faith communities



Customer personas of the kind of people often experiencing loneliness

Customer 1

Jenny is 70, she's been retired for 10 years and was previously a healthcare worker. She lives in a rural village and was widowed in her 60's. She's not in perfect health and her large family home is really too big for her. She doesn't drive and there's little public transport locally so she struggles to visit her family, even though they're relatively local. Her digital skills are limited and that's played its part in knocking her confidence so that she's started to struggle with the idea of attending local events and socialising. She had two close friends in the village, but both moved away to be nearer to their own families. She hasn't spoken to her family about feeling lonely, because she doesn't want to worry them.



Customer personas of the kind of people often experiencing loneliness

Customer 2

Cameron is 23 and lives in Woodbridge. He went to Bristol Uni and had to move back into his parents' house after graduating because he couldn't get a graduate job in his field. He lived for 6 months in a small, expensive bedsit in Felixstowe but he didn't know anyone locally and he felt really lonely. However, he now feels like a failure living with his parents and their relationship can sometimes be fraught. He's working in a low-paid job in Ipswich with people he doesn't really get on with. He had a girlfriend throughout his time at university but the relationship broke down when he moved home. He suffers from low mood and anxiety and feels lost.



Customer personas of the kind of people often experiencing loneliness

Customer 3

John is 55 and lives in Lowestoft. He worked at Birds Eye for 30 years but had to leave due to ill health. He was in an abusive relationship for 6 years and this has just broken down completely, with his coercive partner disconnecting him from the friends he had. He lives in a rented 1 bedroom flat and has no family anywhere that he's in contact with. He suffers from chronic pain, has limited mobility and is on a very low income. He can drive but he can't afford to run a car. He could be eligible for various different kinds of support but he feels overwhelmed by the idea of applying. He sometimes goes a couple of days without leaving his flat or seeing anyone.



Customer personas of the kind of people often experiencing loneliness

Customer 4

Katrina is 32 and lives in Felixstowe. She moved to the UK four years ago and has just had a baby. She works in insurance and has always been very focused on her career, taking a lot of meaning from it. But now, on maternity leave, she feels disconnected and isolated – her work friends haven't been to see her and she hasn't signed up or any parenting groups. Her and her husband only have one car and he needs it for work so, in the day, she can only do things locally – and there isn't much to do in her residential neighbourhood. Her family are all in Poland and while she does Facetime them, it's not the same.