# Loneliness

Bolton

## What is loneliness?



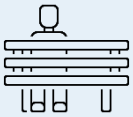
**Loneliness**[1] is a subjective, unwelcome feeling of **lack** or loss of **companionship**.

- A mismatch between the quantity & quality of social relationships that we have, & that we want.



Loneliness affects our **physical health**[1]

- It is associated with a greater risk of:
- Physical inactivity, smoking & risk-taking; coronary heart disease, stroke; depression, Alzheimer's



**Social Isolation**[2] is an objective state of having **few social relationships** or infrequent social contact

- Being alone isn't the same as being lonely. Some people can spend lots of their time on their own & be content.



**Social wellbeing**[1] is our personal relationships & social support networks

- These can bring happiness, comfort & resilience, adding to our overall wellbeing.

## Understanding loneliness[1]



**People differ** in their need for social connection but the following factors can influence feelings of loneliness



**Underlying factors** shape our expectations & needs for relationships & our actual relationships e.g.

- Social & cultural influences
- Identity & personality
- Situation



**Events/ life stages** can change the balance between the relationships we have & those we'd like e.g.

- Moving to a new town
- Losing your job
- Losing a loved one



**Personal thoughts & feelings** can shape how people see their situation & the intensity of their feelings e.g.

- Is it something to do with me?
- Is it within my control?
- Is it likely to last?

## Loneliness in Bolton



Loneliness among Bolton **adults**:

- **7% often or always** feel lonely (similar to England as a whole[3])
- **54% hardly ever or never** feel lonely[4]



Across GM among adults[5]:

- **16%** of those age **16-24 often/ always** feel lonely. The highest agegroup.
  **27% hardly ever or never** feel lonely
- **3%** of those **age 75-84 often/ always** feel lonely
  **67% hardly ever or never** feel lonely



Loneliness among Bolton **teens**[6]:

- **Too few to measure often or always** feel lonely
- **42% hardly ever or never** feel lonely



**Neighbourhood** loneliness among Bolton **young people**[7]:

- **Highest** levels in East neighbourhood
- **Lowest** levels in Central North, Central

## Who is most at risk?



**Younger adults** aged 16 - 29 are **more likely to report feeling lonely** 'often or always'[2]

- Milestones like further education, seeking employment, leaving home could all alter social networks
- This agegroup might have less experience of regulating intense emotions
- Low incomes may play a part
- Social media may be a factor



**Older adults** – may experience increasing risk factors for loneliness. This can make the experience **hard to change**[2].

- Key risk factors for older adults include:
- Bereavement, living alone
- Caring for a partner
- Low fixed income, digital exclusion
- Physical and mental health difficulties, making it harder to participate in activities and maintain relationships; reduced mobility & difficulties accessing transport

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## What can we do?[1]



**Individuals** can

- Include each other & to be open to new social connections.
- Get more involved with the community, e.g. volunteering.
- Look out for & keep in touch with friends, family and neighbours.



**Communities** can:

- Create opportunities to bring people together,
- Actively including the most isolated & vulnerable people & those from different backgrounds



The **voluntary sector** can

- Challenge obstacles that isolate people or groups.
- Equip people & communities with the knowledge and skills to recognise & tackle loneliness

## What can we do?[1]



**Councils** can:

- consider it in strategic planning e.g. through Health and Wellbeing boards,
- Work with local communities & VCSE
- Address practical issues around community space & transport



**Health** bodies can:

- explore how to identify, refer & better support those at risk of feeling lonely often.
  - share knowledge & best practice for tackling loneliness



**Employers** can:

- Help staff develop relationships in the workplace & outside.
- Support customers & the community e.g. provide community space out-of-hours

## References

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[3] OHID (2025). Fingertips Adult mental health & wellbeing. Adult mental health and wellbeing | Fingertips
[4] Active lives 2024-25 adult data. Active Lives | Results
[5] GMCA (2026). GM Residents' survey, login portal to wave 21
[6] Active lives 2024-25) children & young people activity data, year 7 – 11. Active Lives | Results
[7] Beewell neighbourhood profile (2025). Young people in years 7, 8, and 10. #BeeWell Neighbourhood Data Hive



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