

# Have A Chat

## Looking out for loneliness

During the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, more people experienced loneliness than ever before.<sup>1,2</sup> For many across the UK and Ireland, lockdown was their first experience of isolation and loneliness. But even before lockdown, for millions of people, loneliness was an everyday reality.

Biopharmaceutical company Bristol Myers Squibb and the Campaign to End Loneliness have joined forces to address loneliness in the UK and Ireland to show how we can all benefit from something as simple as a quick chat. Together, we are passionate about supporting our communities and those affected by loneliness.

The thought of having a chat with someone new may be daunting, but it can result in a positive change to your mood, for everyone involved. People often underestimate how much the person they are conversing with is enjoying their company, and the benefits can go both ways.<sup>3</sup>

**During lockdown, more of us have been affected by loneliness than ever before.<sup>1,2</sup> Take the time to check-in with those around you. You never know the difference it could make.**

**#HaveAChat**

## How can I look out for the signs of loneliness?

Loneliness can affect anyone at any point in their life, regardless of age or background. It can be difficult to spot for a number of reasons:

- It can look and feel different for everybody, as feelings of loneliness are personal<sup>4</sup>
- Technology and social media can make it easy to hide emotions, limit social interactions and avoid real and meaningful conversations<sup>5</sup>
- People who are experiencing loneliness often don't want to admit how they are feeling, as this can be a daunting experience and pride and independence are important for a lot of us, so asking for help can be even harder<sup>4</sup>

We can all play a part in helping to tackle loneliness in the UK and Ireland. If you are worried that a friend, family member or colleague might be experiencing loneliness there are some signs to watch out for:

### Spending time alone

People who are feeling lonely are more likely to withdraw from social situations and less likely to look to others for social support.<sup>6</sup>

### Frequent illness or increased tiredness

Loneliness can contribute to many physical and mental health conditions, including cardiovascular problems, lowered immunity, cognitive decline among others.<sup>7</sup> On a day-to-day basis, lonely people may feel more tired and they are more likely to struggle to get a good night's sleep.<sup>7</sup>

### Lowered productivity

There is evidence that loneliness can impact performance, productivity and resilience at work.<sup>8</sup>



**We should never assume that people are lonely.** If you're worried a friend, neighbour or family member is lonely, ask if they've been in touch with any friends or family of late, or if they feel they have a friend they can talk to. What's often best is to simply take the time to talk to them yourself. If they are feeling lonely, over time, they might be able to have a frank and honest conversation about it. But the best place to start is to be there for them.

### References:

1. Office for National Statistics. *Coronavirus and loneliness, Great Britain: 3 April to 3 May 2020*. Available from: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/bulletins/coronavirusandlonelinessgreatbritain/3aprilto3may2020> Last accessed: October 2020. 2. Central Statistics Office. *Social Impact of COVID-19 Survey April 2020*. Available from: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-sic19/socialimpactofcovid-19surveyapril2020/introductionandsummaryofresults/> Last accessed: October 2020. 3. Boothby EJ., Cooney G, Sandstrom GM., et al. *Psychological Science*. 29(11): 1742-1756; 4. Hall K. (2013). *Accepting Loneliness*. Available at: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/pieces-mind/201301/accepting-loneliness>. Last Accessed October 2020. 5. WebMd. *Stop Hiding Behind Social Media*. Available at: <https://www.webmd.com/balance/features/stop-hiding-behind-social-media>. Last accessed October 2020. 6. Griffin J. 2010. *The Lonely Society: The Mental Health Foundation*. Available at: [https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/the\\_lonely\\_society\\_report.pdf](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/the_lonely_society_report.pdf). Last Accessed October 2020. 7. Kurina, LM et al (2011). *Sleep*, 34(11):1519–1526. 8. Ozcelik H & Barsade SG (2018). *Acad Management J*. 61(6) [ePub].